

## Finland: dos and don'ts

Compliment Finns, even though they don't take compliments well and don't necessarily know how to reply.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Offer to buy a drink if you've made a new friend in a bar. But keep in mind, Finns can hold their drinks well, and you may not be able to keep up the pace of drinking.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Keep in mind that two things are expensive: alcohol and gas. And yet, both are consumed in high volumes.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Remember that Finnish women are independent and believe in equality.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Shake hands with everyone present-men, women and children-at a business or social meeting. Shake hands again when leaving.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Maintain eye contact when speaking to someone.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Keep your hands visible when eating. Keep your wrists resting on the edge of the table.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

At a dinner party, bread, shrimp and crayfish are the only foods eaten by hand. Even fruit is eaten with utensils.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

At a dinner party, accept second helpings.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

At a dinner party, when passing salt and pepper shakers, put them on the table within the person's reach. Do not give them directly.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

At a dinner party, men should keep their jacket on at meals unless the host removes his.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

At a dinner party, finish everything on your plate. Finns do not appreciate waste.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns take punctuality for business meetings very seriously and expect that you will do likewise; call if you will be more than five minutes late.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

The Managing Director is the decision maker.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns do not make small talk; they get right to business.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Two- to three-minute pauses of silence are common. Don't interrupt this silence.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

The sauna is a venerated Finnish tradition. Business discussions may be held in a sauna, or a business lunch may be preceded or followed by a sauna.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns insist on punctuality for both business and social occasions.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Conversation may continue approximately one to two hours after dinner. Never leave until coffee/dessert/cognac is finished.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Checks in restaurants are never split. If you make the invitation, you pay.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Gifts are normally not exchanged in business meetings, but small gifts may be appropriate at the successful conclusion of negotiations. Books, cognac, local/national gifts, recordings, art, glass, liquor are appreciated gifts.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

When invited to someone's home, always bring a small gift for the hostess. Give: flowers (odd numbers are best; white and yellow flowers are for funerals only; tulips are a favourite), wine, chocolates. Do not give: potted plants.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

The office dress code is conservative and fairly informal.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

A foreign businesswoman may invite a Finnish man to dinner and pay without any difficulties.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Good topics of conversation - cross country skiing, ice hockey, Formula 1, sailing, fishing, the Finnish educational system, the weather, travelling, everything related to nature and sauna.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

It's ok to drink ridiculous quantities of alcohol in Finland, so be prepared to have an "open-minded" attitude towards it.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

If a meeting is scheduled for one hour, it usually ends after one hour.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

In Finnish meetings, people state facts, even unpleasant ones, rather bluntly without any softening or beating around the bush.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Punctuality. A visitor should apologize even for being late for a few minutes. Being late for longer usually requires a short explanation. 15 minutes is usually considered the threshold between being "acceptably" late and very late. Some will leave arranged meeting points after 15 minutes. Send a text message even if you are only a few minutes late. Being late for a business meeting, even by 1-2 minutes, is considered bad form.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Everyman's right – the freedom to roam means that you can pick wild berries, mushrooms and flowers, as long as they are not protected species and fish with a rod and line anywhere that is not private property.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Practically every Finnish house has a sauna of its own.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Business negotiations in Finland are often held in offices, business meetings or negotiations in restaurants are very rare.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Gifts are opened when received.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Business cards are exchanged without formal ritual.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't compare Finns to Swedes as there is a firm rivalry between these nations. Finns are very proud of their distinct cultural identity.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

When Finns get together for a chat, coffee is invariably part of the scene. But note that the coffee in Finland is usually not as strong as in Central and Southern Europe.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't wonder out loud why Sweden has more world-famous products, artists, and athletes than Finland, or why the western neighbour always beats Finland in ice hockey. Too much to handle for the touchy Finns.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't hesitate to talk to the person next to you in a bus, metro or a tram. The almost-hostile look is deceiving, and in most cases you'll get a response, which could be the start of a real conversation. Finns follow the news, both domestic and international, and have strong opinions about the events. No such attitude as "whatever."



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finnish zither (kantele) is the national instrument.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

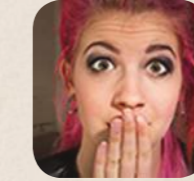
Finns recycle 90% of the cans and bottles. Recycling stations are found in most grocery stores and you receive between 10c and 40c per item.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Make an effort and say, "Excuse me," if you want to pass someone. But don't expect a reaction.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

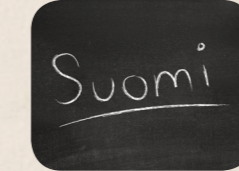
Refrain from discussing architect Alvar Aalto or composer Jean Sibelius; instead, talk about contemporary talent, like singer Karita Mattila or conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen. Know a few athletes' names, and you've made friends for life.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Learn a few words in Finnish, even though it's hard. It's an ego-booster for a Finn to hear a foreigner speak his language.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Keep some physical distance from Finns. Respect their shyness and desire for privacy.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Do poke fun at yourself and your country, but never make fun of others. Finns appreciate dry wit and enjoy self-deprecating humour. They tend to enjoy irony and have a rather subtle sense of humour.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

At a dinner party, when you have finished eating, place your knife and fork across your plate with the prongs facing down and the handles facing to the right.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

At a dinner party, do not begin eating until the hostess invites you to start.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Doing business in Finland takes time and patience.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Business can be discussed at any time during lunch, but is not discussed during dinner, only after coffee.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Women are treated as equals in business and at home.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

The seemingly serious Finns have a dry but sharp and sarcastic sense of humour.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Your host might say "Kiitos" (thank you) after having eaten a dinner together with you to thank you for the great company.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

July and August are the best summer months and practically everyone is on vacation in July. Nothing much gets done then.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finland's regular working week is 37.5 hours long. Workers in Finland cannot be required to work overtime without their consent. Finns earn four to five weeks of paid vacation each year.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

In business, Finns dress conservatively, usually dark business suits in the winter and light suits in the summer for both men and women. Dress codes depend very much on the industry and workplace traditions though they have relaxed substantially over the years. Men typically wear suits or jacket and shirt, often leaving the tie out.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns are very minimalistic in giving compliments. After some time, a foreigner gets a feeling that compliments are almost non-existent. On getting compliments, Finns just thank and don't dwell on it.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns never interrupt when someone is speaking and tend to distrust those who talk too much.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns usually use first names, unless there are big differences in age or rank or it is a very formal setting.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

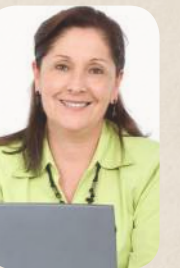
The working style is individualistic, and people are used to working alone and hard. Team working is becoming more common, though, and interest in social and communication skills is growing.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns believe in continuous learning and work very hard to upgrade their skills continuously. Usually Finns are rather pragmatic and not very conservative when it comes to new ideas as long as the ideas make sense.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns are typically analytical thinkers and tend to focus more on technical facts rather than emotional appeal.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

An agreement is considered final when a paper contract is signed. The country has an independent judiciary to take care of contract disputes.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

The typical pace of business in Finland is rather brisk with things happening in clearly visible phases. Finns at work are thorough and sincere. Their saying that makes it clear is, "Everything that is worth doing, is worth doing well".



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Sisu is a concept used to describe a certain feature that is considered by Finns to be typically Finnish. Sisu is what makes a Finn grit his teeth against all odds; continue fighting against an overwhelming enemy; clear the forest with his bare hands; go on to win a race even after falling over. Sisu is "what it takes"- guts, determination.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

When a Finn says something, he/she really means it and rarely changes his/her mind about decisions already made earlier.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finland is an egalitarian society, which is reflected in their language, which employs gender-neutral words.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns believe there is a proper way to act in any circumstance and always expect courteous behaviour.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Talk in moderate tones and do not do anything to call attention to yourself.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Serial conversation is the rule - i.e. listen to the speaker, wait for them to finish and then reply. Interrupting is rude.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns are transactional and do not need long-standing personal relationships in order to conduct business.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns do not require face-to-face contact and, in fact, are quite comfortable using e-mail.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns are excellent time managers who prefer to organize their workday in order to accomplish as much as possible.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

What someone says is accepted at face value and this is a culture where "a man's word is his bond" and will be treated as seriously as a written contract, so verbal commitments are considered agreements.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

It is extremely difficult to meet with people without a formal appointment. Appointments should be made in advance by telephone or e-mail.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Professional differences are not viewed as personal attacks.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns are direct communicators. Expect your colleagues to tell you what they think rather than what you want to hear.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't complain or criticise. It is never in your interest to be critical or opinionated as any kind of negativity will offend your Finnish colleagues.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finns seldom ask questions. The presenter is expected to make his/her case with sufficient detail that their Finnish colleagues do not need to ask questions.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

There is no taboo on humour in the business environment.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Treat someone's business card with respect as it symbolizes the way you will treat them.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't show strong emotions. Finns view this as unprofessional and being too emotional might harm your relationship with your Finnish business colleagues.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't be offended if your Finnish partners seem rather blunt and to the point. This is typical in Finnish communication as Finns prefer to tell the truth directly and take pride in their matter of fact attitudes.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

You should arrive at meetings on time or slightly early.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Finland uses 230 volts with 50 Hz electrical power.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't make the mistake of asking if Finland once was a Communist country, like Estonia, Poland, or Hungary. End of conversation, right then and there.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Keep your shoes on if you are invited to someone's home. First thing after entering a house or an apartment: shoes off. Also, don't even think about leaving before kahvi and pulla (coffee and bun) have been served.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't visit without calling first. The door may not open without a prior notice, especially on weekends.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't make empty promises. If you say to a Finn, "Let's do lunch," he or she truly believes you have set up a lunch meeting and expects to hear from you.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't be surprised if you see Finns order and pay things with their cell phones. They are not just for talking anymore.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't be confused if you see people walking with poles even if there is no snow on the ground. It's called Nordic Walking, and it's a very popular activity among all ages.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't hug, kiss or touch a Finn.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't talk to anyone with your hands in your pocket.



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## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't brag. Finns are modest and downplay their own accomplishments and hardly make a fuss about anything. In Finland humility and grace will get you far, as they view modesty as the biggest virtue.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't ask personal questions, such as those related to someone's religion, job or political party.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Don't show emotions in public.



## Finland: dos and don'ts

Rye bread is the most popular bread in Finland.

