**Lesson 13 10 January 2014**

**Visiting the UK – tipping and etiquette**

*adapted from: http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk*

**Tipping**

**Context**

Tipping is not always expected in the UK. All staff in the UK, must by law, be paid at least the National Minimum Wage 2013 (£6.19/hr).

British people have a reputation for not tipping and many believe that the cost should be included in the price of the service.

**Taxis**

It is not a requirement to tip in taxis, but it is customary to round up to the nearest pound on metered taxis, more as a convenience to both passenger and driver than as a tip. On an airport journey in a booked minicab you might tip two or three pounds if the driver helps with your bags. If taking a licenced London taxicab to or from Heathrow or in London a 10% tip is normal.

**Fast food, cafes and coffee shops**

No tips are ever offered in fast food restaurants. In a cafe, you may receive waitress service to bring your tea, coffee, sausages, or whatever you have ordered to the table. In these establishments tipping is not usual. If you feel the service has been especially pleasant you can leave a pound, or your change in appreciation. In coffee shops, such as Starbucks, there may be a tip jar on the counter, but very few customers offer tips. In casual cafeterias, where you collect your food and place it on a tray, commonly found in tourist attractions, tipping is never appropriate.

**Restaurants**

In casual restaurants, where you pay for your order at a counter, but food is brought to your table, tipping is not common. You are welcome to leave a pound or two if you wish. In restaurants where you place your order with your waiter/waitress and receive food, and your bill, at your table, it is usual to tip around 10%. If you have been unhappy with the service, you should not leave a tip. In some restaurants, a service charge may be added to the bill, typically 10% or 12.5%. This should be noted on the menu. If it is not, you have the right to object, to ask that it be removed. If you are unhappy with the service, you should also request that it be removed, explaining your unhappiness.

In any case where a service charge is added, or the menu notes 'service included', you should NOT add any further tip. Beware that in some cases a service charge may appear on your bill, and if you pay by credit card the machine may then ask if you want to add a tip. Check your bill to see if a service charge has been added before paying, and if it has, be sure not to add any more on at the machine.

In some cases a restaurant may print 'service not included' on the bill or menu. This is a request for a 'tip'! You are not obligated to offer anything, but 10% would be normal if the service you received was satisfactory.

Keep your voice down! The British do notice if someone's voice is raised and if other people can hear your conversation, they will think you are very rude.

**Hotels**

As in any other country in the world, a porter bringing your bags to your room expects to receive a cash tip. Around £2 would be reasonable.

You should not tip room service bringing food/drinks to your room.

Sometimes guests leave a tip for their chambermaid, especially if they have left a mess in their room, but it is not a requirement.

In smaller hotels and guesthouses tipping is not expected as they are usually family-owned. Such places appreciate loyal customers or positive feedback on recommendation sites.

**Etiquette**

* Avoid controversial conversation topics if you don't know the people you're talking to. For example, religion, racism, homophobia, and criticism of government should be avoided. Also, do not discuss the cost of things, for example your holiday or dinner at a restaurant. If you do that, people in the UK will get a bad impression of you
* When you first meet someone a greeting such as 'Hi, I'm (your name), how are you?' usually breaks the ice well and makes people friendly. A handshake is considered impolite in informal relations. Only in a business setting is hand shaking generally the norm. Hugging and kissing in public is not proper, either.
* When talking or listening to someone, eye contact is a good idea. It shows interest in the conversation. Don't stare at people. Avoid talking loudly on your mobile/cell phone. It is considered very impolite, especially in places such as a train, bus or library.
* In the UK, younger people like to be on first name terms almost immediately. However, do not take this as a sign of life-long friendship, it's just a way of breaking the ice and opening up discussion. Older people like a little more formality and many object to a younger person calling them by their first name.
* On escalators and moving pavements, stand to the right and walk to the left, as a general rule. When waiting in line for an ATM, stand at least 1 metre (3ft) away from someone using the ATM.
* Use the proper nationality when referring to a resident of the United Kingdom. Remember that the nationalities are: the English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish. Never refer to someone from for example Scotland, as "English" .

An easy way to begin a discussion with a stranger (in a pub, queue, train, etc.) is to talk about the weather. Most British people can tell you what the weather will be like in the next 4/5 days. Being knowledgeable about the British weather is an essential part of living / visiting here. You will sometimes see people carrying umbrellas (brollies) on hot, sunny days because they know that it will rain intensely later in the afternoon for about 45 minutes. You ignore this expert knowledge at your own risk.  Remember - **in Britain, there is no such thing as bad weather: there are only the wrong clothes**. Avoid this by checking the forecasts, a good website for a 5 day outlook is <http://news.bbc.co.uk/weather/>