

Coexistence in Switzerland

Every country has its own cultural characteristics. Likewise in Switzerland, there are certain forms of etiquette that you should know.

Different Cultures

There are different cultures and mentalities in Switzerland. This also due to the four national languages. What may be normal in German-speaking Switzerland could be quite different in French-speaking Switzerland. The differences between the cities and the countryside can also be significant. Nonetheless, there are traditions that all of Switzerland shares.

Greetings

How we greet each other in Switzerland: We usually shake hands and look each other in the eyes. Men and women also look each other in the eyes. In Basel, we say "Griezi". If people know each other well, they may also say "Sali" or "Hoi". In the countryside, people greet each other on the street even if they do not know each other. Politeness is important in Switzerland. That is why we often say "Danke" and "Bitte". For example, we may say "Danke" and "Bitte" multiple times in shops or restaurants.

Punctuality

Punctuality is very important in Switzerland, especially at work. If you arrive five minutes too late, please let the other person know in advance. When you want to meet someone, you should first agree on a time.

Indirect Communication

In Switzerland, we usually do not express criticism directly. We often only make a suggestion. Nonetheless, we assume that the other person understands the criticism. If you do not yet understand German very well, you may find this particularly difficult. Moreover, we sometimes avoid conflict. For example, if your neighbours feel disturbed, they might not knock on your door in person but may write you a letter. If you are ever unsure of whether you have understood something correctly, it is best to ask for clarification.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-baselstadt.ch/en/good-to-know/coexistence-in-switzerland