

What Did You Say?

Gestures are a form of non-verbal communication as they convey a message by using body language instead of words. Around the world, however, simple gestures can have very different meanings.

- Rocking the head slowly, back and forth, side to side in India means, “Yes, I am listening.” Westerners, however, may confuse that gesture to mean, “No.”
- To express appreciation in Brazil, pinch your earlobe.
- A sign of apology in India can be made by grasping your ear.
- In England, the nose tap is a signal to keep something confidential, while in Italy it is more of a friendly warning to “take care.”
- Wiggling your nose in Puerto Rico is a way to ask, “What’s going on?”

Since gestures can have very different implications in various parts of the world, it is important to do your homework before traveling to a new location. There is one gesture, however, that is universally recognized, will never get you into trouble, and conveys welcome and friendliness. What is this worldwide sign? That would be the smile.

Source: *Gestures, The Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World* by Roger E. Axtell