

Tour Guide Training

Module 2: Building Rapport

Participant Guide

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Activity 1: Tuk Tuk Safaris

Read the story below, then answer the question at the end.



Tripadvisor Reviews

Tuk Tuk Safaris: Vientiane


What is the product?

Tuk Tuk day-tours around Vientiane, with different themes – culture, food, farming, etc., including hands-on experiences such as Hmong embroidery, planting rice, cooking, etc.

Tourists write about the guide and driver, Ere:

- spoke really good English and knew lots about the places we visited;
- was a lovely guy, chatting very comfortably with us;
- had good English and his understanding of Western needs make him an excellent guide;
- was a great Tour Guide; translating for us, making sure we understood what was happening, and answering our many, many questions;
- is an entertaining, knowledgeable and very friendly Tour Guide;
- was bright bubbly and enthusiastic making the day a total winner;
- was an absolute champion; was very knowledgeable about the city and fun;
- was great value, lots of good stories;
- didn't get sick of answering our questions; and we had quite a few for him;
- is a great guide, full of enthusiasm and knowledge;
- personalised professional service and your care and respect on the streets ensuring our safety and enjoyment; and
- has clearly built relationships with the people we visited today.

What tourists enjoyed about the tour:

- great value for money trip around the capital of Laos, which included a sumptuous lunch and provided us with an understanding of the Vientiane culture;.
- highly recommend this authentic tour offering an understanding of the history of the hospitable Lao people, enlightening the efforts and much needed awareness of the COPE centre;
- really more off the so called beaten track than the usual run of the mill;
- brilliant food along the way;
- good stories, nice information;

- the communication beforehand was good;
- this gave us behind-the-scenes access that we would not otherwise have had - even though everyone on the tour were seasoned travellers; and
- the tour also focussed on hands-on experiences and places with a story.

Conclusion:

- this tour was recommended by friends who live in Vientiane as they had taken other friends and family on this tour;
- comes highly *highly* recommended. I wish we could tour the whole of South East Asia like this;
- we would recommend the Live Lao for a Day tour to everyone who wants a taste of the city; and
- thanks Ere for a fantastic tour of Vientiane that gave us a true insight from a well-respected local.

Questions:

1. What did you notice about Ere's way of guiding, that make the Western tourists so happy with him?
2. What did they really like about the tours?
3. How does this affect Ere's business?

Topic 1: Understanding our Tourists

1.1 Introduction

What is 'Rapport'

A close and harmonious relationship in which people or groups understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well.

Building rapport with tourists is a very important part of a Tour Guide's job as it leads to a better experience for the tourists as well as for the guide. In order to build rapport, you need to understand more about the tourists you work with every day.

1.2 Getting to know our tourists

Tourists are on holiday – and they have general expectations of what they want to do and experience on a holiday. This includes how a Tour Guide should give service to them during their tour.

Let's learn more about our tourists so that we can give them the great service they expect on their holiday.

What do tourists want?

- To experience a different culture
- To go to a place that is not very well known – not a mass tourism destination
- To learn new things
- To have new and interesting experiences
- To receive good service
- To be safe and secure (their property and themselves)
- A guide that understands the tour (sites, people, food, etc.) well

Understanding our tourist:

You need to develop a better understanding of the people you have on your tour groups, and what their background is in terms of their travel adventure to Laos.

In general, our Western tourist....

- **Came from far away to be here** – a long flight, at high cost, so they want to feel that coming to Laos was worth the long, hard journey to get here. Due to the effort, time and cost they have put into getting to Laos, they expect to be rewarded by a new and special experience.
- **Had to earn the money to pay for the trip** – wants value for money, high standards and to feel that they made a good choice of tour, tour company and country.

- **Has very little time off work**, and wants to experience the best and as much as possible during their tour.
- **May be a (retired) professional with high education who wants really good information on Laos** – the higher their education and position at work, the higher their demand for and expectation of really good quality information to be provided by the guide.
- **Has travelled a lot** and can compare the standards of touring in Laos with many other countries in the world.
- **Have Western values with regard to Responsible Tourism** – being sensitive to the environment, the people and the economy.
- **Wants to learn about daily life and Lao culture**
- **Wants to leave the world a better place!**

Some general characteristics of Western tourists:

- **Education:** usually well educated –so they want good information on many different subjects, and well informed answers to their questions;
- **Interests:** wide range of interests even on a general tour: history, culture, architecture, food, people, religion, etc.
- **Enquiring minds:** will be curious about many things and will ask a lot of questions about things that local people wouldn't think were interesting.

While our tourists are our guests in Laos, remember that they :

- are far away from home;
- are in a foreign country with different culture, language, food, atmosphere; and
- they may be scared of how different Laos culture is to their own – 'culture shock'

You are the person who needs to help them to understand this new country they are visiting and you need to meet their hopes and expectations.

Remember: conflicts and complaints are the result of somebody's expectations not being met.

You need to know their expectations so that you can meet them!

1.3 Cultural characteristics of our main tourist groups

Cultural differences between you and your tourists can be expected– after all, they have probably come to Laos to learn about the culture!

Remember to:

- 1 respect the other cultures in the tour group;
- 2 make an effort to learn about the country and cultures of your groups – so you have a better understanding of their culture, preferences (what they like), society (the people) and their ways of living;
- 3 learn some basic words and phrases from countries you often do tours with. This shows the tourist that you have made an effort and value them being here.
Start with the basics such as “Hello”, “How are you?”, “Nice to meet you”, “Please”, “Thank you” and “Goodbye”.

Different nationalities have different characters and needs that you should understand, know, and respond to on a tour. For example, British tourists worry about getting sick from the water, and will only drink bottled water. You must therefore make sure that they have enough bottled water, or tell them which safe brand of water to buy.

The following tables give a general description of our main source markets (where your tourists come from), as experienced by the tour operating sector in Laos.

French

General characteristics:

- careful with their money;
- tough, independent; and
- on time (punctual)

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polite manners • Culture, philosophy, the big picture • Local food • Cleanliness – a place must be clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not being straight and honest: e.g. telling them the food is very good when it isn't, making up excuses and thinking they won't understand • Not knowing your topic • Not explaining something and how it relates to a larger topic e.g. laws and the role of government • Being untidy or disorganised • Not dressing properly in clean and neat

	clothes • Insects and mosquitoes
Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is a problem, solve it straight away no matter why there is a problem. • Listen to their complaint/s and solve it quickly • Accept their invitation to sit at their table for lunch or dinner, but remember that for French people meals are not only for eating, it's also the time for long and deep talks, debate etc.. They will expect you to participate in the talk. • It's okay to refuse their invitation one or two times, but if they insist and you still refused they may find you rude. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think that people mean what they say such as 'Please come and visit me in France'. French can say things to be polite, but are not serious about them.

German

- They come from far away
- Expect everything to work very well
- Can look like they are unfriendly
- Well organised
- Can look like they are rude
- Respect traditions and culture
- Like drinking!

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straight and clearly said communication • Factual information • Being truthful even when it is uncomfortable (but don't overdo it!) • Punctual – they like you and the tour to be on time • Clean and orderly hotels, clean restaurants • Beer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being late, running behind schedule • Not being told what is going on • Making up information, or saying something when you don't know the answer. • Doing too much, or going the extra mile American style. • Too much unnecessary service, or doing things for them that they can or want to do themselves, can feel disempowering or patronising to Germans. This will irritate them.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell them the facts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave out uncomfortable information like government, politics, royal family, etc. • Talking too much: know when enough is enough

British (English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh)

- The British have high expectations, and will often and easily complain if their expectations are not met.
- They are usually friendly, but can be pompous (snobbish, self-important)
- They come from far away
- Many have been to Bangkok, Singapore, or Kuala Lumpur on the way to Australia or New Zealand, so they know a bit about Asia
- Other holiday places: Europe, America and Africa
- Most can swim – maybe some older people cannot swim. Always check!
- Come from a country with four seasons:
 - Cold winters with short days and sometimes snow
 - Summers pleasant but not humid (they battle with high heat and humidity)
- Independent
- A bit arrogant (high ego)
- Organised
- Safety conscious
- Very demanding

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm weather – but do not like humidity • Friendly • A high level of service • Good manners and courtesy • Bottled water • May be willing to try new, exotic foods, but older ones may not • Luxury • Learning new, interesting things • Their own food • Hygiene and cleanliness • Fun and entertainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older British tourists do not like eating new types of food that are too exotic • Some may not like spicy food • Taking risks • Too much information • Mosquitoes • Noise • Being touched • Holding hands
Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask tourists how they would like to be addressed – older British tourists can be a lot more formal than tourists from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be too casual with them – they may be a bit more formal than other nationalities • Be upset/offended by their humour, or

<p>other countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that most tourists from this country are in Laos as part of a multi-country Asia holiday • Understand that sarcasm is often a part of British humour • Talk about sports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cricket • Rugby • Soccer/football • Tennis • Golf 	<p>take things personally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much money they have income/ salary • weight • age • marital status • Think that their good manners is an invitation to treat them like a friend
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What is 'sarcasm'?

A 'nasty/rude' remark that is meant to be funny, usually when someone says the opposite of what they mean.

Examples:

- When something bad happens: "That's just what I need, great! Terrific!"
- When you expected something to happen, especially after warning someone about it; "Well what a surprise!"
- When someone says something that is very obvious or stupid; - "Aren't you clever!"
- When someone does something wrong: "Very good, well done, nice!"
- When something happens that you don't want or need: "That's just what we need!"

American

- Come from very far away
- Major travel is not part of their culture – most Americans don't have passports
- If they go on holiday, it is often to places near to the United States of America (USA), such as:
 - Caribbean cruise or island holiday (e.g. Jamaica)
 - Mexico
- Some have been to Europe
- Most can swim
- Weather in the States: differs across the country – huge country!!
 - Hot summers (Jun to Aug),
 - cold winters in North,
 - mild in South & Southwest)
- Very demanding travellers
- Even older Americans are young at heart

- Fun, entertaining
- Tend to show off a bit
- Careful with their money, but still generous

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Go the extra mile' with tourists from the USA – who receive very high standards of service in their own country • Willing to try new foods – to a point! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad guides • Asking about age • Walking too long • Stepping out of comfort zone: e.g. risk taking, food, activities, etc.
Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that their service expectations are the highest of all English-speaking clients • Understand that most tourists from the USA who are in Asia are here for the first time (for many, it is the only time in their life they will come here, due to distance, short holidays etc.). • Understand that tourists from the USA usually know less about Asia than tourists from other Western countries • Talk about sports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseball • American football (gridiron) • Basketball • Ice hockey • Golf • Tennis • Swimming • Love children, pets • Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how much money they have (wealth) • income/ salary • weight • age • marriage status

Remember:

All your clients have come to Laos because they want to experience this country and learn about its people, customs and culture! You are their host to help them do this!

1.4 Ideas for Building Rapport

Good rapport-building costs nothing but does take a bit of effort. Here are some ideas to build rapport with your tour group members:

- 1 Build on conversations when you greet people – like:
 - remember and use the person’s name;
 - talk about something you remember from an earlier conversation; and
 - check that something they asked you about earlier has been solved/ fixed to their satisfaction.

- 2 Using anecdotes – these are short stories about the site, location or up-coming tour and are used to add interest and provide a better understanding into the experience.

- 3 Use humour (joking/being funny) when talking with people – most tours contain some fun and using suitable humour at the right times make the tourists feel more relaxed and generally make the tour more fun for everyone.

- 4 Check on people’s welfare –ask if they need anything, check if they are okay and prepared and help them solve their problems.

- 5 Always use person-to-person communication skills:
 - smile;
 - make eye contact;
 - show interest;
 - answer questions;
 - explain information; and
 - involve them in what is happening – this can include:
 - tell them what is about to happen;
 - give them something to do – this may even include giving them something to do to help you, like taking part in a demonstration; and
 - give them something to look at or read.

Build your credibility

What is ‘credibility’?

Being trusted and believed in

Build your credibility through a few simple actions:

- 1 **dress properly** – neat, clean and in whatever uniform is required by the Tour Operator;
- 2 **act and speak professionally** – while you need to interact and speak to tourists, you must still keep a ‘professional distance’ from them;
- 3 **be organised** – and keep the tour on schedule;
- 4 **give relevant and interesting information** – and speaking from your own personal experience/s;
- 5 **act as a role model** – about how tour group members should act/behave, about where they can go and cannot go, how to talk to others;
- 6 **direct, steer and move people** where they go, what they do, how long they spend in an area/on an activity; and
- 7 **show people what to do** – such as how to use safety equipment, how to dress at a temple, how locals eat certain foods, etc.

1.4.1 Linking to tourist characteristics

You can build rapport by making strong and direct links between the information you give during the tour and the characteristics of the tour group. These links may include:

Geographic
Origin

Cultural
background

Age

Educational
Level

As discussed in section 1.3, different groups and people from different parts of the world have different characteristics. This is why it is important to try and find out as much about your group so that you can help them enjoy the tour as much as possible. For example, when you have a German tour group you might want to tell them more about how beer is made in Laos as it is made from rice, not barley like in other parts of the world. The beer is based on locally grown jasmine rice; the hops and yeast used are imported from Germany.

1. **Home country:** Include comparisons with the tour groups ‘home country’: for example:
 - if Laos uses metric measurements and the tour group country uses imperial, then measurements need to be given in imperial (or both) not just metric (e.g. kilograms and pounds);
 - you need to make conversions of references to currency – so prices in Laos Kip are given in the currency of the home country for the tour group members (e.g. 8000 Laos Kip = 1 Dollar); and
 - include terminology, words, phrases and references applicable to, and known by, people from the country of origin (e.g. in the USA they call jam “jelly”).

Show that you know some basic facts and information about the home country of tour group members for example:

- basic geography – major cities and geography;
- distance from Laos;
- important personalities (e.g. political, sports, royalty, etc.);
- weather; and
- currency

2. Cultural background – during your tour be sensitive to issues such as:

- religion (e.g. never say things like “you Christians”);
- race and ethnicity (e.g. never say things like “you Europeans/Americans”);
- social status: (e.g. never say things like “people like you who are rich and well educated”); and
- food and beverage likes/ dislikes and/or special requirements due to health/medical needs (e.g. vegetarians, allergies)

3. Age – think carefully about:

- the words you use– which may need to change between younger and older tour groups; and
- references made to events and/or people – older people have a lot of experience compared to younger people: young people may have no idea what you are talking about.

4. Educational level –always:

- match the standard/level of what you say to the level of the tour group: the higher the level of education, the more detail and amount of information they usually want;
- use words/terms which the tour group will understand;
- know if the group or people in the group have some specialised knowledge/skill for example about architecture, food, etc.; and
- stimulate and challenge people with interesting facts during the tour – ask them questions such as “Did you know” or “Can anyone guess how old this is/what is in this dish/what this is made of?”

1.4.2 How to find out a group’s needs

The ways to monitor/assess the tour group and their possible needs while on tour are:

1. watch the group and people to see what their needs are and if there are any problems:

- watch and interpret their body language, especially their facial expressions;
- see if they look tired or distressed? Do they have drooped shoulders, pained expressions, and slow movement and may be holding onto others. They may walk slowly and have dropped off from the main tour group; and
- if they look comfortable and happy? They will have shoulders back, be alert and smiling, and be talking (perhaps, joking) with others.

2. **listen** to comments made – these are comments made by people to other tour group members, or their friends or in small groups.
 - Comments like “I’m tired”, “I need a rest” or “I am not feeling well” must be acted on; and
 - an outburst from one tour group member at another tour group member would also be a sign that you may need to step in and help.

3. **direct information:** being told directly by someone – this may be from a tour group member:
 - saying they are tired and asking for a rest break;
 - saying they are feeling ill and want help; and/ or
 - saying they are angry or upset by someone else in the group.
 - ask questions of the group or group members to check if they are OK or not; and
 - be open to them so that they will feel comfortable to come to you if they have any issues, concerns or personal requests.

1.4.3 Include the needs and wishes of the group

You will build excellent rapport and provide a great tour experience if you allow for the following:

- **quiet time** – to allow people time to relax and enjoy a view or experience;
- **free time** – for people to do their own thing: most tour group members will want some free time to do what they want and not always doing what has been organised for them;
- **a time for people to talk**– this may involve talking to each other, talking with other people they meet on the tour (locals, shop keepers, other venue staff) or talking with you;
- **personal enjoyment of site** – this is time for tour group members to enjoy the tour in a way they suits them, rather than as forced by the tour schedule/itinerary: some free time at a site to take more photos, walk slower, use the restroom, buy souvenirs, etc.; and
- **tour group members to have a rest** – it is important to watch the group to see if they need more/less rest breaks and important that *your* level of fitness does not make the *tour group* have to rest and recover.

- **Photo opportunities** – remember that tourists will always want to stop for photos:
 - many of these photo opportunities will be the same for every tour but there are always special moments that people will want to take pictures of – e.g. a beautiful sunset on the Mekong; and
 - not being able to take photographs to suit each group member can make some people upset so try to help tourists where you can. For example:

- allow extra time where everyone is taking photographs – if there is a need to save time to keep the tour on schedule try to save it somewhere else and not at the expense of restricting photos taken by the group;
 - offer to take photographs for people so they can be in the photo;
 - be part of the photo – many people will want their Tour Guide in their photo; and
 - help with photos by holding bags and other items
- **‘Up close and personal’ opportunities** – tour group members often expect a Tour Guide to get them access to things which are not available to people who are not on a tour. This means that you may ask for:
 - a meeting with other staff/people at the site or venue;
 - access to areas which are ‘off limits’ to other people/those who are not part of a tour;
 - introductions to and/or more contact (more time) with people who are available so they can talk more with them, ask them questions and/or watch them at work; and/ or
 - special photo opportunities e.g. with animals, special people or sites.
 - **Special treatment** – this can often be something small but is important to the tour group members, such as to:
 - be served first when queuing for food – instead of having to stand in line with the general public;
 - be able to sit together for meals/drinks – instead of sitting in different places;
 - get the ‘best’ seats’ when dining – seats with the best view, very few people walking past;
 - go to the front of lines/queues for rides, activities, displays, events, etc.; and
 - be loaded first onto transport so they can sit with each other and get the best seats.

1.4.4 Specialist groups

Sometimes you will have special interest groups (they have come for one type of interest) such as culture, study, history, food, golf, architecture, and so on.

In this case, you will probably get a lot of information from your employer on what tour group needs, expectations and interests are, and how to handle these. The briefing will include:

- what they are there for;
- what their interests are; and
- who will be able to help you provide the right type of information for them: e.g. site guides, professors, teachers, government officials such as nature experts, etc.

If you have some special interests in a (upcoming) group, then research a bit on their topics of interest and include this in your tour talks.

This means there must be a level of *general* information (to set the scene, give context and meet general expectations) but you need to add more information about the topic, such as:

- facts and statistics;
- information and detail;
- anecdotes;
- comparisons;
- prices;
- dates; and
- examples.

1.4.5 Don't take offence

Remember that your tourists come from a different culture where things that may be alright to do/say in their culture is not alright to do/say in yours. For example, they may show their feet, or step over someone. Do not get upset, as they don't know that it will cause offence, and don't do it on purpose to offend you or anyone else.

If a tourist does something that upsets or offends you - think about if they really meant to offend you, or are you taking it personally because of your culture. Try to be able to tell the difference. In this way you could stop difficult or unhappy situations.

Also remember about the British sense of humour – maybe they were being sarcastic (funny) and did not mean to be insulting.

1.5 Good topics for conversation

When guiding and talking with tour group members – like at meal times, it is better to avoid any topics that could upset people or cause an argument. Here are some guidelines on what to do, and what to avoid in conversations:

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stick to general information and topics: weather, sports, events, etc. • Explain the government system in Laos as part of tour information if necessary • Ask about families, children, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't ask women their age • Don't ask how much money people earn • Discuss political opinions • Make offensive remarks about certain groups such as homosexuals, vegetarians, different religions or beliefs, ethnic groups, etc.

Types of questions that you could ask in general conversations:

- where they live;
- about their families or jobs;
- personal interests and specific interests for this tour;
- their reasons for being on tour; and/or
- their previous experiences and tours.

Topic 2: Communication

The foundation for tour guiding is communication.

You communicate to tourists	Tourists communicate to you
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To change behaviour: e.g. support the local economy by buying local products • To get action: e.g. the time to meet at the bus • To make sure they understand: e.g. safety procedures • To give information: e.g. tour information and activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get help: directions, medical help, safety, etc. • To get information: asking questions • To make sure they understand: e.g. the time to meet at the bus

2.1 Process of communication

How communication takes place:



The process of communication is about one person sending a message to another. The person receiving the message must be able to understand it properly and respond to it.

It is put into different types of communication – words, pictures, gestures. The receiver has to “hear” (or see) and understand the words, pictures or gestures in order to understand the message.

It is important that you understand communication is a two-way process. You have not effectively 'communicated' with a tour group member until you have received verbal (talking) or non-verbal (showing) feedback from them so you know they have received and understood the message you have sent them.

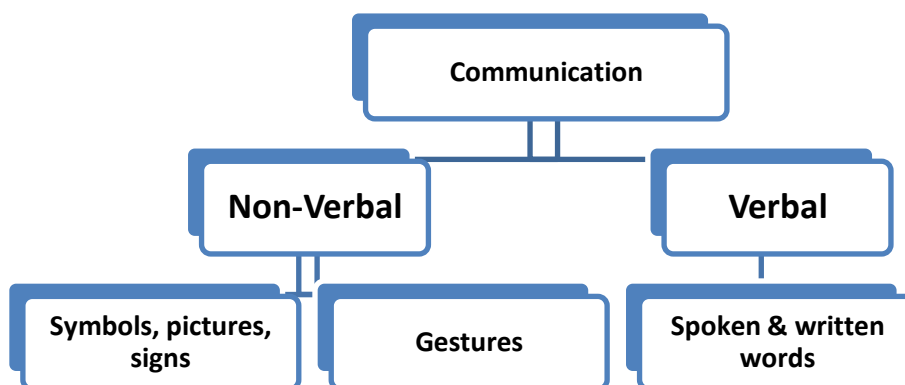
2.2 Barriers to Communication

Sometimes, you can't effectively get your message across to your tour group (the receivers) due to barriers between us. In tour guiding, these barriers could be:

- **Noise:** in a noisy place, they simply cannot hear us properly.
 - **Suggestion:** move to a quieter place if possible. If not, then keep the communication for a later, quieter time. Or use an electronic tool like a microphone to increase the volume of your voice.
- **Language:** understand and interpret language and words. You may have different understandings of words.
- **Accents:** it may be difficult for tourists to understand you as you speak English as a second language, with an accent (how you say the English words).
 - **Suggestion:** improve your accent as much as possible: learn how to say words correctly using Dictionary Apps on your phone, by Internet, or by asking your tourists to help you. Some Apps have the words sounded out – practice these!
 - Ask tour group members to tell you what you just told them so that you can check that they understood you. Important things to repeat are times (what time to meet), places (where to meet), etc.
- **Culture:** our understanding and interpretation of things may be very different from what our tourists from different cultures understand and interpret. Even among Western tourists, their interpretation between, e.g. American vs German tourists would be very different.
 - **Suggestion:** listen carefully to what is being said and try to understand it from a different point of view. Do not take things personally – understand that culture has differences and that these may cause difficulties between people
- **Physical:** body language (how different ways the body/face looks gives a message): differences in cultural body language may lead to you to not being able to read and understand the body language of your tourists or vice versa.
 - **Suggestion:** learn the tips on body language on this course, and ask the tourist to explain what they are thinking or feeling if you can see that something is affecting them, but you cannot interpret it.

2.3 Types of communication

When you work with foreign guests, you will use communicate in different ways:



2.4 Non-Verbal Communication

2.4.1 Symbols, pictures and signs

Pictures are used to create common understanding: e.g. signs for no-smoking, for Ladies and Gents restrooms, etc. These help everyone understand basic instructions or notices that are known all over the world.

Pictures on menus also help tell guests about dishes if they cannot read the menu items because it is in a different language.

2.4.2 Gestures

These are hand signals given instead of words. There are many that are used by different cultures, and sometimes a gesture can mean something completely different in different cultures.

2.4.3 Body Language

Body language is about people being able to watch each other and see things like expressions and gestures to understand some communication – for example nodding the head to say ‘yes’, and shaking the head to say ‘no’ or smiling to show happiness.

Body language is important so that you can read the body language of the tourists, and they will also be able to read your body language. This includes the way you use and hold yourself/your body, your face expressions and how fast or slowly you walk and talk.

You must look out for these signals from tour group members as you will be able to see a lot of things by noticing how they are using their bodies.

Your job as a Tour Guide is to recognise and respond to non-verbal communication such as gestures and body language. Learning some of these can help you to understand some of the barriers of communication already discussed.

Different countries and cultures may use the same gestures or body language for very different meanings and then people don't understand what the person is trying to communicate or even insults people of different cultures. You need to learn about the body language of your tour group members so that you can understand them better.

What is body language?

- Type of nonverbal communication, where thoughts, intentions, or feelings are expressed by physical behaviors, such as:
 - facial expressions;
 - body posture;
 - gestures;
 - eye movement;
 - touch; and
 - the use of space.

Look at tourists and their body movements – you can read how they feel or what they need. For example face expressions can tell you the feelings of the person – angry, happy, frustrated, etc. The following list will help you identify some common body language that you should be able to pick up on and respond to:

Body language	Meaning (Western culture)
Eye contact	Honesty, engagement
Lack of eye contact	Distrust, dishonest, not trustworthy
Looking around, breaking eye contact, eyes darting around	Boredom, uncomfortable
Closing eyes	Frustration, irritation, and impatience
Rubbing eyes	Frustration, irritation, and impatience
Narrowed eyes	Tiredness
Rolling their eyes	Threatening, angry
Raised eyebrows	Mockery, disrespect, scorn
Hand over the mouth	Surprise or shock
	Shock, surprise, dismay

Thin folded mouth	Disapproval
Tilt head to the side	Confusion – not understanding
Nod head	Agreeing or confirming
Shake head	Disagree or denying
Sitting, leaning forward	Engaged and listening
Stroking the chin	Evaluating or making a decision
Clearing throat	Anxiety or nervousness
Restless hands, drumming fingers	Irritation or impatience
Tapping feet	Irritation or impatience, lack of time/hurry up
Hands on hips	Irritation, frustration, anger, not happy about something
Rubbing hands together	Expecting something positive – looking forward to something
Hands balled into fists	Anger
Showing palms of hands	Telling the truth
Using hands with downward facing palms	A calming action – slow down, be calm
Arms crossed across chest	Either they are comfortable, or withdrawing/tuning out or not wanting to hear or accept what is being said, closed-off, not engaged
Walking quickly	Confidence and purpose
Running	In a hurry
Bad posture – shoulders drooping	Depression or tiredness
Waving arms around	Anger, fury
Pointing	Considered rude – don't point at people unless for a reason like to point someone out in a crowd
Looking at their watch	Impatient, in a hurry, worried about time

Remember that your own body language is also important:

- **use open body language** – open arms instead of crossed arms, facing people rather than being sideways, open hands rather than clenched fists, and making eye contact;
- **use positive not negative** body language;

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand upright • Direct eye contact • Lean slightly forward • Smile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sigh • Slumped shoulders • Look around not at them • Drum fingers on a table, desk or other object

- understand many people will see you when they cannot hear you – so what they see needs to be correct and positive. You need to understand you are always on public show/people are always looking at you so the way you look is important.

2.4.4 Handshakes

This is the general form of greeting for Western tourists. How you shake hands tells a lot about you! Tips to get it right:

- **too hard:** don't hurt someone with too strong a handshake
- **too soft** is thought of as weak;
- **not too long and not too short:** one or two shakes up and down is enough, do not hold the hand longer than that;
- Make sure your hands connect at the 'web' between the finger and the thumb.
- make sure your hands are clean and not sweaty;
- **firm handshake**, with a smile, and looking the person in the eye; and
- **handshakes** can be used between men and women

2.4.5 Personal space

Interpersonal space is the space 'bubble' that is around every person. You see this space as your own, and most people feel unhappy or uncomfortable when people come into their personal space.

This is very important as Westerners feel very uncomfortable when people are too close to them. There are four different zones of interpersonal space:

Zone	Distance	Who
Intimate distance	Inside arm's length (less than an arm away): 45cm	Lovers (husbands, wives, etc.), children, close family members, friends, and pets
Personal distance	Arm's length 45 - 120cm	This space is used in conversations with friends, to chat with associates, and in group discussions. Also applies during consenting close activities such as contact sports, and crowded places such as parties, bars, concerts, public transport, queues and entertainment and sports spectating events. Non-consenting intrusion into this space is normally felt to be uncomfortable at best, or very threatening and upsetting at worst
Social distance	(1.2 m - 2.4 m)	Space for strangers, newly formed groups, and new people

		you have met.
		Handshaking only, no other touching
Public distance	Anything more than 2.4 m	Reserved for larger audiences; people avoid touching each other

2.5 Verbal Communication

Communication is more difficult because often you and your tour group members will speak in a language (English) that is not the home languages for either of you. For example a Lao-speaking Tour Guide with a group of German tourists - the chance of communicating the wrong message is quite high, especially when you consider the effect of accents as well.

When you talk to tour group members, **tips for good verbal communication** include:

- Do not shout– unless there are noisy barriers to communication, if there is danger or emergency situation;
- never swear or use rude, offensive or suggestive language;
- say your words clearly;
- do not cover your mouth when talking – unless this is necessary when using a microphone etc.; and
- match your communication style to the type of group: what is appropriate for older tourists may not be right for young tourists.

Tips for interpersonal skills:

- when you meet someone, give them a **firm handshake** (not a limp hand) and look them in the eye and smile and say a suitable greeting such as “pleased to meet you”;
- **address a person by their name** whenever possible;
- **face** the person you are talking with – this shows you are paying attention;
- **look directly** at the person 60 – 70% of the time you are talking to them – give them your attention and they will feel it and appreciate it;
- **do not stand too close to another person**;
- make sure that you **smell nice**, this includes making sure that your breath is fresh, your teeth are brushed often, and you have not eaten fish, garlic or onion foods, smoked or been drinking alcohol just before you deal with clients;
- keep **eye contact** – this tells the other person you are paying attention;
- keep **‘open’ body language**. If you fold your arms, it sends a non-verbal message that you are keeping the client away, or that you are closing yourself off when talking with them. Rather keep your arms at your sides in a comfortable position.

- **keep a good posture** – posture is part of body language and it is important you do not give off the wrong signals such as ‘I’m bored’, ‘I’m in a hurry’, or ‘I wish they’d stop asking questions’;
- do not chew gum, stand with your hands in your pockets or scratch, yawn or anything like that;
- **listen carefully**;
- **speak in a moderate tone of voice**, not so loud that you seem like you are shouting, and not so softly that they cannot hear you properly;
- provide some **non-verbal feedback** when clients are talking to you – nod your head, smile, look interested – don’t look around or get distracted by the phone or other people. Give them your full attention;
- **ask questions** within the topic of conversation – this shows your interest in what they are talking or asking questions about: for example “Have you been to other temples before?”, “Have you seen these before?”, “Which ones do you like best?”

2.6 Match your verbal and non-verbal language

What you say with words must match your body language or else your tourists will get mixed messages from you and not understand what you are trying to tell them.

Imagine a guide saying ‘I am very excited to do this’ in a low voice, not looking at the people, and with slumped shoulders. Will the group really believe that he is excited??

They will rather believe your body language than what you are saying.

3 Topic 3: Introductions

In any tour situation, you will have to introduce yourself as well as your tour participants to each other. Some guidelines will help you with this.

3.1 Greet and Welcome participants

To give tour participants a positive and welcoming greeting Tour Guides must:

be prepared: this means:

- you have organised everything you need to for the tour;
- you have got and put together any materials you need to hand out on the tour; and
- you have got and studied all information about the group so that you know all about the tour group profile, needs, arrangements.

be there: Tour Guides must be there before the promised starting time:

- this means being at the meeting point 20 – 30 minutes early;
- this lets participants know you expect them and are ready and prepared for them; and
- this makes them trust you and believe you right from the start.

3.1.1 Greet tourists

Meet and greet: the first thing you need to do is meet and greet your tour members. Meet them with a friendly face and a smile so that they know you are pleased to see them and that you are easy to talk to and a friendly person.

Booking checks: you will need to do a bit of administration now:

- check tour members on the passenger or booking sheet to make sure that all the tour members who have booked are there. You might also need to follow up on any missing tourists with the booking office or if you have a contact number for them.
- you should also check the following:
 - Are tourists on the right tour?
 - Have they paid?
 - Do they know that they are leaving and not coming back for a few hours/days?
 - Have they made restroom stops?
 - Are they wearing the right clothes?
 - Are they carrying the right gear? (water, hat, sunblock)
 - Are there any tourists who have medical conditions and if they do, do they have their medicine with them? Are any overweight? Are any too hot and sweating very much?
 - Is anyone in the group beginning to get worried, show special interests or difficult expectations?

It is at this point that you need to speak to the tourist if they are not properly dressed. For example, if you take a hiking trip and someone arrives wearing sandals then you should talk to that person and ask whether he or she has shoes that would be better for the activity. It is best to take someone aside (where other people can't hear your conversation) if there is an issue with them (such as the wrong shoes, or a health risk), and not do it in the group or in front of the group. If you do tell someone they cannot come on the tour, give your reason to them in private too.

This 'meet and greet' time is good for you to:

- confirm any logistical information with the tour members; and
- consider the ability of your tour members to go on the tour.

3.1.2 Welcome tour members

Get your tour members together and welcome them as a group. Always start on time, even if you are still waiting for latecomers.

Let tour members know what's going on. For example, 'Hi everyone, it's 9 am which is the start time for our tour. We are still waiting on a few people who are running late, so I hope you will be okay if we wait another five minutes before starting.' This way, you have greeted those tourists who did arrive on time.

Tours are run on tight time lines, so it is important that from the beginning you keep good time. This is more important on long tours, so you need to make sure your tour members understand how important it is to follow the times that are set by you. If you are relaxed with your times, tourists will also be relaxed (and late) with time.

3.2 Introduce yourself

It is important to make the right impression from the start of the tour.

- **Information:** give the right type and amount of information about yourself.
- **Formality:** strike the right level of formality: don't be too formal or too informal. If you have done any research before on the tour group, you should have an idea of how formal to be with them.
- **Role and responsibilities:** be clear from the beginning on what your role is that they know what you can and cannot do on the tour.

Make your group like you! Share your personality! This builds the rapport you are looking for!

Guidelines on what to say:

1. My name is..... and I will be your Tour Guide today/for the next 10 days/duration.
2. On behalf of Adventure Tours I would like to welcome you to the Amazing Laos Adventure Tour!
3. Thank you all for choosing our wonderful tour; we hope that we will provide you with an "Amazing Laos" experience!
4. Give a short background of yourself:
 - a. I come from (mention local place or show other place on map)
 - b. I have been a Tour Guide in Laos for 3 years. I studied English for three years in Vientiane, and I specialise in adventure tours. I have been lucky to travel to some other countries to learn more about adventure travel. I have been a Adventure Tours Guide for the last 2 years, and I love my exciting job!

- c. I am proud to represent my country and culture, so please feel free to ask me questions about Laos!
5. My job is to show you around our beautiful country and tell you all I can about it. I will be helping you with all the organised activities on our itinerary. If there are other activities you would like to do in your spare time, you can ask me to arrange these for you, but I will not be leading those tours. I will also not be driving you – for that we have an experienced driver, who I will introduce you to soon.