

Turkish Etiquette Cheat Sheet

A quick-reference guide to a few everyday customs that can make visiting or living in Türkiye feel easier. You do not need to memorize every rule—pay attention, be kind, and follow the lead of the people around you.

Greetings & Everyday Encounters

Merhaba

mehr-hah-bah | **Hello**

A simple merhaba works almost anywhere. Friends may greet with cheek kisses or a hug; a handshake is common in more formal situations.

Hoş geldin / Hoş geldiniz

hosh gel-deen / hosh gel-dee-nee | **Welcome**

Hoş geldin is informal singular; hoş geldiniz is polite or plural. The traditional response is “Hoş bulduk” (hosh bool-dook).

Kolay gelsin

koh-lie gel-seen | **May your work come easily**

Say this to someone who is working—a cashier, cleaner, delivery person, security guard, shopkeeper, or maintenance worker. You may hear “Merhaba, kolay gelsin” when someone enters a shop, and the phrase is also commonly used when leaving.

Visiting Someone's Home

Expect to remove your shoes near the door; your host may offer slippers.

A small host gift is thoughtful, especially for a meal—flowers, sweets, a small plant, or something from home all work well.

Hospitality can be generous. You may be offered tea, coffee, fruit, snacks, or another helping even after you are full. A warm thank-you is enough when you have had enough.

When unsure, watch what your host and the other guests do.

Mealtime Etiquette

Afiyet olsun

ah-fee-YET ol-soon | **Enjoy your meal / May it be good for you**

People say this before, during, and after eating—and often repeatedly throughout a meal. You can say it to anyone who is eating.

Ellerinize sağlık / Ellerine sağlık

el-leh-ree-nee-zeh sah-luhk | **Health to your hands**

This thanks and compliments the person who prepared the food. Use “ellerinize sağlık” as the polite/plural form and “ellerine sağlık” informally with someone you know well. It is for the cook or preparer—not everyone sitting at the table.

Everyday Courtesy

Offer your seat on crowded public transportation to someone who needs it more, and let passengers exit before boarding.

Ask before taking close-up photographs of people, especially children, vendors, artisans, or people at work.

Treat the Turkish flag, images and memorials of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and national commemorations respectfully.

At mosques, dress respectfully, remove shoes before entering the prayer area, keep your voice low, and avoid walking directly in front of someone who is praying. Women should be prepared to cover their hair.

Tipping in Türkiye

Restaurants: around 10% is a common way to show appreciation for good table service; check whether a service charge is already included.

Cafés: small change or rounding up is usually sufficient if you wish to tip.

Taxis: rounding up the fare is common.

Hotels, tours, hamams, and personal services: tipping for helpful or personalized service is common but discretionary.

Keeping a few smaller Turkish lira notes on hand makes tipping easier.

Quick Turkish Reference

Merhaba — Hello

Hoş geldiniz — Welcome

Hoş bulduk — Response to welcome

Teşekkür ederim — Thank you

Lütfen — Please

Pardon — Excuse me / Sorry

Kolay gelsin — May your work come easily

Afiyet olsun — Enjoy your meal

Ellerinize sağlık — Thank the person who prepared the food

Quick Etiquette Checklist

- Respond to hoş geldin / hoş geldiniz with hoş bulduk.
- Use kolay gelsin with people who are working.
- Remove your shoes when entering someone's home.
- Say afiyet olsun around meals; thank the cook with ellerinize sağlık.
- Let passengers exit public transportation before boarding.
- Ask before taking close-up photographs of people.
- Dress and behave respectfully at mosques and memorial sites.
- Keep a little cash available when you want to leave a tip.

The Easiest Rule: Follow the Room

You will not always know the custom. That is okay. Watch what people around you are doing, try a little Turkish, ask when appropriate, and accept corrections graciously. Most everyday etiquette is less about a perfect rulebook than showing people that you are paying attention and that you care. Kindness translates remarkably well.