

Etiquette 101

HOW TO: TELL SOMEONE TO BUZZ OFF IN IRAQ . . . INVITE A PAL FOR A DRINK IN POLAND . . . COMPLIMENT SOMEONE IN ITALY



How many ways are there to offend someone? You'll need more than two hands to count. Crooking your finger may signal "Come here" in America (1), but in Indonesia, it's for soliciting prostitutes. Oops. And you may think your story's a hoot (2), but when you see someone doing this in France (3), it means he considers you a fabulist, and in the Netherlands (4), a bore. See this sign (5)? In Egypt, it means "Let's sleep together." And this is how you say "Go to hell, pal" in parts of the Arab world (6) and the United Kingdom (7), respectively. Don't point (8) in China, Japan, Latin America, and Indonesia; it's rude. And finally, you can be misunderstood with even the simplest gesture—this guy (9) isn't pretending he has a gun; he's just signaling he wants two more beers . . . or he would be were he in Germany or Austria. Which he's not, the beer hall ambience aside. He's in the new Radegast Hall and Biergarten in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (113 N. 3rd St.; 718-963-3973).

The dictionary of
hand gestures (or how
to communicate
without saying a word)

Reported by Boris Kachka