

Politely does it



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Reading: Mobile phone manners

- 1 Do you feel annoyed when people have loud conversations on their mobile phones on the train? In what other situations are mobiles annoying?
- 2 Read the article about mobile phone manners. Does it mention any of the situations you thought of?
- 3 Work in pairs or groups. Close your books and try to remember the cities and countries mentioned in the article. What did it say about each one?



Manners on the move

There are more than 3.3 billion mobile phone users in the world today. That's more than half the planet. Phones are ringing all the time and researchers have found that people everywhere are complaining about bad manners.

Conversations during a movie are the top complaint in Hong Kong. People in the Czech Republic can't stand phones interrupting business meetings and in Thailand they hate phones ringing in restaurants. In Japan, it's rude to make calls on trains but interestingly, using your phone to play games isn't annoying.

Researchers have also found differences in the way people handle calls. When a phone rings in a restaurant in Paris, the owner usually ignores it. In Madrid they may accept the call but then try to include everyone at the table in the conversation. In London, people often take the call but then take their phones outside to talk and they often stand near traffic. This seems a surprising habit in view of the noise and danger but apparently they don't like speaking where other people can hear.

In some cultures, people don't mind leaving voicemail messages but in others they aren't keen on them. Spanish callers prefer speaking to a human being so if you don't answer, they usually want you to call them back. Calling people back is good manners in Mumbai, too, but for different reasons. Men often ignore a call from their girlfriend but then call her back immediately so that they pay the bill. It's the polite thing to do.

Mobile phone manners may be different in different parts of the world but there's one thing that is true everywhere: people love their mobile phones and they aren't going to stop using them. In Ireland, when someone dies, traditionally people bury* a treasured possession* with them. These days it's often a mobile phone.

bury: put something under the ground, e.g. a dead body
treasured possession: something you own which is very important to you