



TURKISH CULTURE AND SOCIAL LIFE

Turkish culture shaped by thousands of years of its history and the colorfulness of Anatolian territories continues to take shape and evolve even today with migrants from 192 nations living in Turkey. Accordingly, Turkish social life is developing and transforming.

Along with the fact that there is a number of social behaviors accepted and applied throughout Turkey, some behaviors can vary from region to region in Turkey having a wide geographical area. In this case there are many factors ranging from the region's climate to geography and vegetation.

Interpersonal relations in Turkish social life are powerful and social life is based on such behaviors as mutual tolerance, understanding, and helpfulness. In our society where family and kinship relations are strong, the concepts such as neighborhood and fellow citizenship remain important.

93% of the country's population lives in cities. There has also been transformation in social life due to high urbanization, some behaviors have changed and some have disappeared. Below, you can see some of the behavior patterns and practices that are still up-to-date today;

Turkish behaviors and practices

Kissing each other on both cheeks and handshake: When greeting and saying goodbye people shake hands and kiss each other on both cheeks. On the other hand, people, regardless of their gender and reputation, can embrace each other. You can experience this when greeting Turkish people.

Hand Kissing: This kiss is a sign of respect and love shown by younger people to older people. Normally, children and adolescents kiss the hands of their grandparents or other respected persons. The elders kiss the cheeks of those who kiss their hands to express their love.

Tea and coffee consumption: These are the most frequently consumed drinks in daily life. The tea and the Turkish coffee, which both have their own glasses and cups, are drunk until late at night from breakfast. Teahouses and cafes offering only these drinks are often found along the roadsides. If you are invited, tea can be offered to you without asking you.

Food consumption: Before eating "afiyet olsun" (enjoy your meal) is said. After eating, the persons who prepared the food or set the table are told "elinize sağlık" (health for your hands, thanks for the food). Turkish people often ask questions like "Would you like a little more?" or "Would you like something of that?" in order to make sure you have tried everything. As a rule, the host gives the food on the plate and serves it to the guest. In Turkey you should not leave food on the plate.



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Good Wishes

There are many good wish quotes and sayings in Turkish social life. These quotes and sayings can also replace with greetings or farewells. Therefore, you may hear other expressions instead of "merhaba" or "selam" (hello). Some of these uses do not have proper translations in other languages. However, they can be expressed differently.

Kolay Gelsin: This is a great way to acknowledge another person's labor, even a stranger on the street, who has a difficult task at hand. This expression can also be used when saying goodbye if the person continues to work.

Hayırlı olsun: If something new has been bought or to wish all the best for a development, it is said "Hayırlı olsun".

Hayırlı işler: "Hayırlı işler" is usually said to the shopkeeper after shopping. The term means that you store owner to make a lot of profit and customers. You can use this when entering and exiting the store.

Allah korusun: One uses this expression if one does not want the person or object to face something bad again.

Sağlık Olsun: The term "Sağlık olsun" is used to refer to something negative in a positive matter. Even if an unsuccessful or negative situation has arisen, it is desired to stay healthy.

Sihhatler Olsun: This term is very similar to "Sağlık olsun" and is said to men after a haircut or shaving. It is rather pronounced "Saatler olsun".

Allah analı babalı büyütsün: With this expression, it is desired that the child will grow up in a healthy family, with much love.

Allah rahmet eylesin: One uses this expression to wish that the deceased will be forgiven by God.

Geçmiş olsun: This is most often said after hearing that someone is ill. However, the term is also used when something bad happens.

Hayırlı yolculuklar: This is most often said to people who are about to travel in order to wish a good travel.

Allahaismarladık: One uses this expression to say goodbye.

Çok yaşa: When someone sneezes in front of you, it is said "çok yaşa". This means long live or live well. You can also use the expressions with same meaning "iyi yaşa" or "güzel yaşa". The sneezing person usually responds with "hep beraber" (all together).

Maşallah: This term is used to protect a successful or beautiful person or an object from the "evil eye".

Communication with facial expressions:

In communication, people use facial expressions as well as language. Below are some examples of the movements used by Turkish people in communication:

Moving your head downwards: It is a confirmation and means "yes".

Moving your head and eyebrows upwards: It is a rejection and means "no".

Shaking your head: Not only means "no" or "not there" but also express disapproval, dissent, or annoyance.

Leading the hand to the heart: This gesture is a greeting, but it is also used to express gratitude.

Raising the thumb: This is a universal gesture and means raising thumb "Okay, great or very good."

Kissing the fingertips: A person uses this gesture if they like the food, the environment or a message.

Writing in the air: When you see a person in a restaurant or a cafe making a typing gesture with his thumb and forefinger in the air, you will not be surprised. This means in Turkish society that the bill is required by the waiter.

Imitating a telephone receiver on the ear with thumb and forefinger: If a friend turns you on with this gesture in a noisy place, it means "I'll call you" The fingers represent a telephone receiver.

Shaking your fist in the air: A person who makes a fist and shakes it 3-4 times in the air has achieved something long awaited. The gestures are used, for example, when the favorite team scores a goal or when you get a good grade in an exam.

Traditions related to death

There are different traditions in Anatolia, starting with the day of death and the 3rd, 7th and 40th day thereafter. The funeral is usually done the same day. The news of death is spread through the mosque with modern means of communication and the "sala" (death prayer).

The deceased person is brought to the place of prayer (namaz) in coffin. The coffin is covered with a carpet or similar green coverings with names of saints and Arabic scriptures. In addition, a headscarf or a hat or a jacket or the like is placed on the casket to indicate the sex of the deceased. On the coffins of young girls or brides are placed wedding dresses, veils or a part of the bridal outfit. To make the profession clear, religious men use imamah, soldiers hats, medals and flags.

The funeral prayer is made in the courtyard of the mosque or in the cemetery, after which the burial takes place. After the funeral, visits are made to the family of the deceased in the cemetery or at home to wish condolences. The term "başınız sağ olsun" is most commonly used to express sympathy. For the relatives of the deceased the mourning process begins depending on the region. During this time friends and relatives of the family visit relatives of the deceased to express their condolences.

Some items (clothes, shoes, etc.) of the deceased are kept as souvenirs in the house and the rest is often distributed to the poor.



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SOCIAL RULES

There are rules to be followed in social relations. Following such rules ensures respect, kindness and tolerance among people. Some rules of courtesy to be followed in social life are as follows:

General Rules of Courtesy

- ▶ Greeting makes communication easier if the addressee is not known.
- ▶ It is polite to say "lütfen" (please) and "teşekkür ederim" (thank you).
- ▶ Private matters should not be discussed loudly to avoid being heard by others.
- ▶ One should not wait, sit down or stand in a way which prevents passage of others in areas such as streets and bridges that are frequently used by people.
- ▶ Public toilets should be left clean.
- ▶ One should avoid littering streets, parks and recreational areas.
- ▶ Senior citizens, disabled people, pregnant women, and children always have priority while getting on and off vehicles. One should give their seat to senior citizens, ill persons, pregnant women or persons with babies, avoid talking too loud or disturbing other passengers in public transport. One should avoid leaning the seat rest of their chair at a degree that disturbs the passenger in the back seat.

Rules to Follow in Government Offices

- ▶ There are certain rules to follow to avoid upsetting the working system of government offices and to ensure that the officials provide assistance in the best way.

- ▶ If the organization has an appointment system, an appointment should be set and attended in a timely manner.
- ▶ Government offices are only open within work hours. Work hours differ among organizations and are usually from 08:00 to 17:00.
- ▶ It is necessary to take a queue number in some organizations.
- ▶ It is not taken kindly to make noise or talk loudly on the phone while waiting in the line.
- ▶ You should listen to the officers that will help you without interrupting them. Officers should not be kept busy unnecessarily.
- ▶ It is prohibited to offer presents, tip or bribe to officers to facilitate the procedures.
- ▶ It is not appropriate to make requests against the legislation and insist on such requests.

Rules to Follow in Communities

Harmony with neighbors is only possible when each neighbor obeys certain rules. Neighborhood relations are important in Turkey. The matters to pay attention are listed below:

- ▶ Late at night, early in the morning and generally Sundays are resting time in Turkey. One should avoid listening to loud music, run loud appliances such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, doing repairs, moving in, which may cause noise and disturb others in such resting times.
- ▶ It is not polite to shake carpets, table cloths etc. from the balcony. One should not smoke on stairs of apartment blocks. One should not throw cigarette butts out of balconies or windows.
- ▶ It is not safe to ventilate the house by keeping the apartment door open.
- ▶ One should pay maximum attention to keeping the building and backyard clean.
- ▶ Owners of pets such as cats or dogs should pick up the litter of their pets.

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