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## Fate of the Handshake amid the Global Pandemic

Since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, our world has changed irrefutably. Our daily commutes, in-person classrooms, and weekend trips have been replaced by telecommuting, online learning, and travel restrictions. One of the most consequential changes has been the need to socially distance to decrease the chance of virus exposure and infection. As a result, the way we greet each other has changed. For now, no hugs, no kisses on the cheek, no pressing forehead to forehead or nose to nose, and no handshakes.

### Origin of the Handshake

Humans have been shaking hands in one form or another for thousands of years, but the origin of the handshake has been lost to history. One of the earliest depictions was found on a stone relief sculpture from the 9th century B.C., that shows the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III and King Marduk-Zakir-Shumi I of Babylonia shaking hands. A popular theory suggests that by extending their empty right hands, strangers could show that they were not armed and had peaceful intentions. Additionally, the up-and-down motion of the handshake could dislodge weapons hidden under the sleeves. Clasp hands after swearing oaths or making promises also symbolized that people were acting in good faith and that their words were a sacred bond.

Some say that the shaking gesture of the handshake started in Medieval Europe. Knights would shake the hand of others in an attempt to shake loose any hidden weapons. In ancient Rome, handshaking was a symbol of friendship and loyalty; while in ancient Greece, it represented trust and commitment. Its use as an everyday greeting is a more recent phenomenon. In America, it is believed that Quakers popularized handshaking because they saw it as more democratic than bowing, curtsying or doffing their hat.

### Greeting Customs Around the World

Kissing as a greeting also has a long history. It was incorporated into early Christianity and used during religious ceremonies. During the Middle Ages, a kiss showed fidelity and sealed agreements. Today, a quick kiss or peck on the cheek, "la bise" as it is called in France, is a standard greeting in much of the world, and ranges from one (1) to four (4) kisses, alternating between cheeks. In many parts of the Arctic, including Greenland, the traditional greeting by the Inuit people, or Eskimos, is known as a "kunik". The traditional kunik is mainly used among family members and loved ones and involves one person pressing their nose and upper lip against the other person's skin and breathing.



In some Middle Eastern countries, placing the palm of the hand over the heart is a popular way of greeting. On the Indian subcontinent and in Southeast Asia, the "Añjali Mudrā" is a sign of greeting and respect. The history of this gesture also dates to antiquity, and it was first mentioned in the Rig Veda, the oldest of the sacred books of Hinduism. The palms are pressed together and placed over the heart with the thumbs close to the chest and the fingers pointing up. A small head bow follows, often accompanied by the greeting "Namaste" ("I bow to you").

In some African cultures bowing, kneeling, or lying prostate (flat on your belly) are greeting rituals and gestures that signify respect and deference for the elders and the royal court. In some parts of Western and Central Africa, male friends use the head-bump to greet each other, by gently pressing one's forehead to the opposite side of the other friend's forehead, and alternating to the other side of the forehead. Ethiopian men touch shoulders!

In addition to shaking hands, Zambians also use touchless greeting by cupping their hands together and clapping a few times while saying "mulibwanji," "hello". In Kenya, the Maasai greet their guests with a vibrant welcoming dance. The Maasai dance - called "adamu," the jumping dance, begins by telling a story and concludes with dancers forming a circle and competing to jump the highest, demonstrating to visitors the strength and bravery of their tribe. (Continue on page 2 under "Briefs and Notes.")

We are pleased to return after a brief hiatus in August. During this era of social distancing imposed by the global coronavirus pandemic, we have reassessed our approaches to the most basic form of social etiquette: saying hello with a handshake.

Handshakes are ubiquitous. It is a form of greeting that conveys intimate emotion, warmth, goodwill, and connectedness. It also signals a motive of trust, cooperation, and cementing relationships. But, according to health experts, a handshake is a medium of spreading germs from person to person.

Humans are social species and social connection is essential to nearly every aspect of our health and well-being. Greeting one another is an expression that is innate in humans and there is an amazing diversity of greeting customs around the world. However, long-held norms, beliefs, habits, and traditions have vanished, due to the pandemic.

In this edition, we explore greeting customs around the world with emphasis on the origin of the handshake. How can we stop doing something that is so ingrained? Could the handshake die out? And if it does, what could replace it?

The jury is still out. In the meantime, we encourage any contactless form of greeting such as a bow, "namaste," a wave, or simply placing your right hand over your heart. Please be safe, always.

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Download a copy of the 2020 [Courtesies of Port Handbook](#) - a guide to understanding the important work of the Protocol and International Affairs Division of Miami-Dade Aviation Department in assisting dignitaries, diplomats, delegations, and official guests through the Miami International Airport. The handbook also outlines the procedures and processes of our protocol expedite service.

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## ABOUT US

The core mission of MDAD’s Protocol and International Affairs Division is -

*To facilitate the movement of official guests, delegations, dignitaries and VIPs through MIA and support the airport’s international programs and initiatives.*

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The sacred greeting of the Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand is the “hongi.” This greeting involves pressing foreheads and noses together to exchange the “ha,” the breath of life, and is a symbolic show of unity. In Thailand, the traditional greeting is the “wai.” The hands are pressed together in a prayer-like fashion while the greeter makes a slight bow. The higher the hands are held in relation to the face and the deeper the bow, the more respect is shown.

In the Philippines, the “Mano” salute is used to greet and show respect to the elderly. The greeter gently takes the hand of the elder, usually the right hand, and presses it against his or her forehead.

In Japan, people traditionally greet each other with a bow “Ojigi.” It is the act of lowering one’s head or the upper part of the torso, commonly used as a sign of salutation, reverence, apology or gratitude in social or religious situations. The deeper the bow, the higher the respect. While women place their hands on their thighs, men bow with their hands at their sides.

A traditional Polynesian greeting used by Tuvalu islanders, is to press their face against the other’s cheek and inhale deeply. The Tibetan custom of slightly sticking their tongues out when greeting each other is rooted in their belief in reincarnation. Since a cruel 9<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan king had a black tongue, letting others see their tongue, shows that they are not the reincarnation of this king. When Mongolians receive a new guest in their home, they offer a “hada,” a cut piece of cotton or silk. The guest receives the “hada” with both hands and bows slightly.

## Famous Handshakes

### *Astronaut Tom Stafford and Russian cosmonaut Aleksey Leonov (July 17, 1975)*

Almost 6 years to the day after the space race ended when Apollo 11 landed on the moon, Soyuz and Apollo capsules docked in orbit. NASA Astronaut Stafford and cosmonaut Leonov shook hands in the interface between the two capsules indicating a new spirit of cooperation and détente between the two nations during the Cold War.

### *Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin (March 26, 1979)*

The symbolic handshake between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin after signing the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty that ended the 30-year state of war between the neighboring countries.

### *Nelson Mandela and François Pienaar (June 24, 1995)*

Although rugby was closely linked to the white apartheid leaders, the slogan of the 1995 Rugby World cup was “one team, one country”. By supporting the South African team, congratulating them after their victory and shaking hands with team captain Pienaar, newly elected President Mandela helped to unite the country.

## World Hello Day

During the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Michael and Brian McCormack realized that sometimes the first step toward improved communication, mutual understanding, and respect can be a simple greeting. To spread this message, they encouraged world leaders to participate in the first ever World Hello Day on November 21, 1973. Their goal was to show how personal communication was vital for maintaining peace, and that conflict should be resolved through communication, not by use of force. Their idea caught on, and on November 21, 2020, the world will celebrate the 48<sup>th</sup> annual World Hello Day. No fancy parades or large celebrations may take place, but you may simply say hello to at least ten (10) people.

## Accolade for Miami International Airport



In recognition of its health and safety response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Miami International Airport is the first airport in Florida, second in the United States and third in North America to be accredited under the Airports Council International (ACI) Airport Health Accreditation program. ACI-North America (ACI-NA) is the voice of North American airports, representing local, regional and state governing bodies that own and operate commercial airports in the United States and Canada. ACI-NA is the largest of the five worldwide regions of the ACI. Its members represent more than 300 airports operating in the U.S., and Canada and nearly 400 aviation-related businesses.