

Body Talk

Q My fiancé and I are bound for Britain on our honeymoon. We're pretty good at converting dollars to pounds and can't wait for a taste of fish and chips. Anything else we should know?

A Watch your gestures. You'd think a country sharing the same spoken language with us would also share the same body language. But you'd be wrong. Body language differs greatly from country to country, even between us and our Brit brothers. Take the two-fingered "V" sign. Here in America we'd strike that pose (à la Nixon) to mean "victory" or "peace"—or to generally spoof on the whole hippie 60's era. But if you flash those fingers in England—with your palm facing inward—you've just done the British equivalent of an upraised middle finger. Note to self: Skip the peace sign when visiting the U.K.

England's not the only country where you should watch your body language. Let's say you're on a romantic French honeymoon and you slap your right fist into the palm of your left hand to motion "Let's go!" or "Chop, chop!" to your new hubby. Seems harmless, yes? No. If a native French person saw this he'd think you just said "up yours" to your main man. Oops! Even something as simple as shaking your head from side to side could be misinterpreted. In the States the meaning is clear, "no." In Greece the meaning is not so clear. Depending on which way you start the motion it could mean "yes" or "no." And in Turkey it means, well, absolutely nothing—there you have to raise your eyebrows, tilt your head back, and stay that way for a moment to convey "no." (No, we're not making this up.) We do share one body-language signal with the Turks—the "okay" symbol. But don't try it in Brazil. If you do, well, let's



just say you'll seriously insult the natives. We're not suggesting that you and your new husband walk around a foreign country in straight jackets—that never seems to send the right signal—just read up on the country you're going to visit and find out which gestures are okay and which you should stay away from.

Passports, a.s.a.p.

Q My fiancé and I need passports in a hurry for our overseas honeymoon. Is it possible to get them faster than usual?

A Left this important little detail for the last minute, did you? Well, tsk, tsk; shame on you; and we're telling your mom! Now that the scolding is over, here's the answer: Yes, it is possible to obtain a "quickie passport" in only two weeks through The National Passport Information Center—or as short as a day if your city has a passport center and you go in person. Had you been responsible it could have taken five or six weeks (sorry, guess we had a little more scolding left in us). You'll still need: a completed passport application form (you can pick one up from a travel agent or post office); two identical passport-size photos (taken

within the last six months); a birth certificate with a raised seal; and a copy of your driver's license (or another valid form of photo ID). You must also pay a price to expedite the process: an extra \$30 fee on top of the regular \$65 fee. For more information on getting a "speedy passport" call The National Passport Information Center at 900-225-5674 (it costs 35 cents per minute).

The Air Up There

Q I've heard that the air in an airplane cabin is loaded with germs. The last thing my fiancé and I want is to get sick on our honeymoon. How can we protect ourselves?

A It's true, the air circulating around you in an average airplane cabin is only about 40 to 60 percent fresh. And germs sail right through the air filters used in planes. But don't let these germ-y facts dissuade you from flying to a faraway honeymoon hideaway—there are some precautions you can take. Ward off colds by taking vitamin C before you leave and after you've reached your destination. Echinacea—a trendy herbal cold remedy produced by the eponymous blossom—may also help fend off viral infections. Starting two days before your trip, mix about half a dropperful (or a full dropperful if you're over 150 pounds) in a glass of water or juice morning and night. And while you're in the air wash your hands frequently so the germs you'll inevitably come in contact with won't make it to your eyes, mouth, and nose should you touch your face. Some savvy travelers even dab a bit of mineral oil in their nostrils. The coating prevents drying and cracking which makes you more vulnerable to viral infections. Yes, it's a germ-y world out there, but reaching your honeymoon destination—sans illness—is well worth the exposure. ■