

## Getting to Know Americans

“Who are these ‘Americans’? What makes them act the way they do? How can you tell whether or not puzzling American behavior is because of cultural conflict or individual differences?”

There are no simple answers to these questions. So many factors can account for individual diversity — ethnic background, regional differences, religious or political orientation, socioeconomic class and more. It is possible, however, to examine mainstream American values and culture in order to begin to understand some Americans, some of the time. This brief exploration of some of the most influential values from mainstream U.S. culture should help you in your quest to get to know Americans and the American way of life.

A bit of advice though: As with all generalizations - apply this information carefully. Sometimes it will apply and sometimes it won't. And above all, as you read through it, do so with an open mind. A discussion of cultural values is not about right or wrong. It's about different ways of doing things. Remember, different can just be different.” - Yale University

### **Individualism:**

1.. What does one need to be successful in America?

### **Time:**

1. What is a virtue in the U.S.?

2. How do you feel about American's concept of time, and punctuality? Do you agree? Why, or why not?

3. As a tenured high school student give examples of how you have been “wired” to be punctual. Do you disagree with the truancy, or tardy, policies of Littlestown High School even though they prepare you for the reality of “time conscious” adulthood?

### **Privacy:**

1. List 3 interesting American concepts of privacy.

2. Do you agree with the three questions that seem to violate the privacy rule?

### **Directness/Openness:**

1. Do you believe that American “directness/openness” has declined due to social networking? Is being direct and open a virtue that you believe most Americans should have?

2. What does “directness” imply in American culture?

3. Give an example of when you have used “constructive criticism” to give advice, or change the outcome of an event? Did it work? Was it a selfish act to get what you wanted, or genuine help?

**Social Mobility:**

1. The author states, “Social mobility is not as fluid as the ‘Dream’ may suggest”. Please explain how he/she came to this conclusion.

**Equality/Informality:**

1. At this exact moment, look around the room. Are you, or any of your peers in pajamas, or very informal dress attire? How do you believe students in recent year have come to be so informal in such a public place? Can you relate it any social changes that have taken place through media, art, or T.V.?

**Competition/Achievement:**

1. Individualism also leads to what trait in some Americans?

**Taboos:**

1. Which “Taboo” do you most agree with?

2. Do you agree that all of these are rude? (Understand that these are rude conducts for college students. I see and hear half of this stuff every 5 minutes in the high school setting, which exemplifies the cultural transition that some of you will be going through in the next couple of years.)

3. Can you add to this “Taboo” list? Give at least one more example.