

**Educafe Chatty Corner Volunteer Cultural Reference Guide**

This guide helps Educafe volunteers welcome visitors from different backgrounds. It covers languages, religions, customs, celebrations, do’s & don’ts, and sensitivities. Use it as a quick reference before or during Chatty Corner sessions.

# Main Cultural Reference (Quick Table)

| **Region / Country** | **Main Languages** | **Religions / Beliefs** | **Cultural Notes & Customs** | **Key Celebrations & Festivals** | **Do’s** | **Don’ts** | **Sensitivities (esp. refugees/asylum seekers)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Afghanistan | Dari; Pashto | Islam (Sunni & Shia) | Strong hospitality; family‑centred; tea offered to guests | Nowruz; Eid al‑Fitr; Eid al‑Adha | Ask about family; show respect for elders; enjoy Afghan food | Avoid political debate; don’t probe women’s rights | Ongoing war; Taliban rule; trauma; separation from family |
| Ukraine | Ukrainian (and some Russian) | Orthodox Christianity; some Catholic | National pride; music & dance; embroidery crafts | Orthodox Christmas (Jan); Easter; Independence Day (Aug) | Learn a Ukrainian word; show interest in traditions | Don’t conflate Ukraine with Russia; avoid asking about ‘when the war will end. | War trauma; loss of home; grief |
| Hong Kong (SAR) | Cantonese; English | Buddhism; Taoism; Christianity | Respect for elders; collectivist mindset; education valued | Lunar New Year; Mid‑Autumn Festival; Dragon Boat Festival | Enjoy talking about food and culture; be curious | Avoid political opinions about China/HK | Migration stress; identity uncertainty |
| Eastern Europe (e.g., Poland; Romania; Bulgaria) | Polish; Romanian; Bulgarian; etc. | Mainly Christian (Orthodox; Catholic; Protestant) | Folk traditions; community gatherings; hearty food | Christmas; Easter; Saints’ days; Harvest festivals | Ask about traditional foods/music | Avoid stereotypes about poverty | Economic hardship; stigma; separation from families |
| Southern Europe (Spain; Italy; Portugal; Greece) | Spanish; Italian; Portuguese; Greek | Christianity (mostly Catholic/Orthodox) | Warm; family‑focused; lively gatherings | Carnival; Saints’ days; Easter; Christmas | Be warm & open; enjoy lively conversation | Don’t rush; avoid being overly formal | Economic migration; homesickness |
| Turkey | Turkish | Majority Sunni Islam; strong secular traditions too | Tea/coffee culture; hospitality; respect for elders | Ramadan; Eid (Bayram); Republic Day (Oct) | Accept tea/coffee; admire Turkish food | Don’t confuse Turks with Arabs; avoid politics (esp. Kurdish issue) | Political issues; earthquake trauma; refugee experiences |
| African countries (varied) | Arabic; Swahili; French; English; local languages | Christianity; Islam; indigenous beliefs | Oral storytelling; music/dance; community bonds | Independence Days; Eid; Christmas; cultural festivals | Ask about music; food; family traditions | Don’t generalise Africa as one culture | Conflict; famine; displacement; colonial history |
| South America (e.g., Colombia; Brazil; Venezuela) | Spanish; Portuguese | Christianity (Catholic/Protestant); indigenous faiths | Expressive; warm; music/dance central (salsa; samba) | Carnival; Independence Days; Christmas; Easter | Enjoy music/dance conversations; learn a phrase | Avoid stereotypes (e.g., drugs or crime) | Political instability; economic hardship; migration stress |

# Positive Talking Points (Conversation Starters)

* Food & Drinks — “What’s your favourite dish from home?”
* Festivals & Celebrations — “How do you celebrate New Year?”
* Music & Dance — “What music reminds you of home?”
* Family & Traditions — “What’s an important tradition in your family?”
* Language — “Could you teach me a word in your language?”

# Volunteer Reminders

* Listen more than you speak — some visitors just need a safe ear.
* Respect privacy — don’t press for details about journeys, trauma or politics.
* Focus on joyful, everyday things (food, festivals, hobbies) to help people feel valued beyond their asylum status.
* Be mindful of trauma triggers — some visitors may not want to discuss home at all.

# Quick Greetings & Polite Phrases

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Region / Language** | **Hello** | **Thank you** | **Notes** |
| Afghanistan (Dari/Pashto) | Salaam | Tashakor (Dari) / Manana (Pashto) |  |
| Ukraine | Dobry den | Dyakuyu |  |
| Hong Kong (Cantonese) | Nei hou | Mh’gōi (service) / Dōjeh (gift) |  |
| Poland | Cześć | Dziękuję |  |
| Romania | Bună | Mulțumesc |  |
| Italy | Ciao | Grazie |  |
| Spain | Hola | Gracias |  |
| Portugal | Olá | Obrigado/Obrigada |  |
| Greece | Yassas | Efharistó |  |
| Turkey | Merhaba | Teşekkürler |  |
| Swahili (East Africa) | Jambo | Asante |  |
| French (West/Central Africa) | Bonjour | Merci |  |
| Brazil (Portuguese) | Olá | Obrigado/Obrigada |  |
| Spanish (South America) | Hola | Gracias |  |

**Last updated: 23 August 2025**