

Cross-Cultural Communication — Workbook

This workbook is your hands-on companion to the Cross-Cultural Communication course. Each section maps to one course module and gives you exercises, worksheets, and checklists you can apply immediately to real work situations. Complete these activities as you go through the course, not after — the reflection and practice are where the learning happens.

How Culture Shapes Communication

Apply Hofstede's dimensions and Hall's high/low-context model to cultures you actually work with and audit your own non-verbal habits.

Exercise: Your Cultural Dimension Snapshot

Choose two cultures you regularly interact with at work. Look up each country's Hofstede scores using the free Hofstede Insights Country Comparison Tool (hofstede-insights.com). Compare them to your own country's scores. Then answer the reflection prompts below honestly.

- For each of the six Hofstede dimensions, where does the gap between your culture and your counterpart's culture feel most noticeable in day-to-day work? Give a specific example.

- Think of a recent interaction with someone from a different cultural background that felt off or uncomfortable. Which Hofstede dimension might explain the friction?

- Which of the six dimensions do you know the least about in the cultures you work with? What would help you close that knowledge gap?

- Hall's high/low-context spectrum: where do you place yourself, and where do you place your most frequent international counterpart? What is one thing you could do differently in your next interaction based on that gap?

Worksheet: Culture Profile Card

Complete one row per culture you regularly interact with. Use Hofstede Insights and Erin Meyer's Culture Map to fill in the scores and behavioral notes. Keep this card as a quick-reference before important meetings or communications.

Country / Culture

PDI score (0-100)

IDV score (0-100)

UAI score (0-100)

High/Low Context (Hall)

Disagreeing style (Meyer: 1=confrontational, 10=avoids)

Decision style (Meyer: 1=top-down, 10=consensual)

One key non-verbal norm to remember

One email/meeting adaptation I will make

Checklist: Non-Verbal Calibration Checklist

- Before my next cross-cultural video call, I looked up standard eye contact norms for my counterpart's culture.
- I identified whether my counterpart's culture uses silence as a thinking tool or fills it — and planned how I will respond.
- I checked whether my default conversational pace (fast/overlapping vs. measured/turn-taking) matches my counterpart's culture.
- I reviewed one non-verbal gesture or physical space norm for the culture I am meeting with.
- I have identified a trusted cultural insider who can give me honest non-verbal feedback after important cross-cultural interactions.
- I scheduled a reflection journal entry for 24 hours after my next cross-cultural meeting to note what I observed and what I would adapt.

Navigating Hierarchy and Directness

Map the PDI and directness profiles of your key relationships and build scripted language for the moments that most frequently go wrong.

Exercise: Hierarchy Gap Analysis

Identify three to five people from different cultures that you communicate with regularly at work (colleagues, clients, or partners). For each person, estimate whether their cultural PDI is higher, similar, or lower than yours, and identify one behavior you currently display that may be misread given that gap.

- For your highest-PDI relationship: describe a recent interaction where hierarchy norms may have shaped the outcome. What did you do? What might your counterpart have expected instead?
- For your lowest-PDI relationship: have you ever been perceived as too formal, too deferential, or overly title-conscious? What happened and what would you change?
- Write out a specific scenario where you need to deliver critical feedback to someone from a high-face culture. Draft two versions of your opening sentence — one that protects face, one that does not — and identify the specific difference.

Worksheet: Directness and Face-Saving Script Builder

For each common communication scenario listed below, write your default phrasing AND a culturally adapted version for a high-face or high-PDI context. The goal is to build a personal phrase bank you can use in real situations.

Scenario: Delivering bad news about a missed deadline

Your default phrasing

Adapted version for high-face context

Scenario: Disagreeing with a proposal in a meeting

Your default phrasing

Adapted version for high-PDI context

Scenario: Asking a senior person to clarify something

Your default phrasing

Adapted version for high-PDI + high-face context

Scenario: Saying no to a request

Your default phrasing

Adapted version for conflict-avoidance culture

Notes: what patterns do you notice across your adaptations?

Checklist: Meeting Preparation Checklist for Cross-Cultural Situations

- I identified the most senior person attending and confirmed whether their culture expects them to open the meeting.
- I checked whether the meeting culture is likely top-down or consensual and adjusted my expectation for when a decision will actually be made.
- I prepared a face-saving exit ramp in case I need to retract a position or deliver unexpected news.
- I confirmed the preferred language for the meeting and prepared any key terms in writing to avoid audio-quality misunderstandings.
- I identified at least one potential face-loss risk in my agenda and planned how to handle it privately if needed.
- I know whether my counterpart's culture expects small talk before business and have prepared two or three genuine conversation-starters.
- I have a plan for what to do if the meeting ends without a clear decision (consensual culture norm).

Written and Digital Communication Across Cultures

Audit your current email and digital communication habits and build culture-specific templates for your most frequent written touchpoints.

Exercise: Email Audit — Your Default vs. Their Expectation

Find a real email you sent recently to an international counterpart. Print it or copy it into a document. Then annotate it using the five-archetype profiles from the course (US/Canadian, German/Swiss, Japanese/Korean, Brazilian/Latin, Middle Eastern/North African). Mark every element that might land differently in your counterpart's cultural context.

- What is the first sentence of your email? Does it open with the point (low-context default) or with a relationship anchor (high-context preference)? If your counterpart is high-context, rewrite the opening.
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- How do you handle the salutation and sign-off? Do they match the formality level your counterpart typically uses when they write to you?

- Is your email structured linearly (point then evidence) or does it build context first? Does that match what your counterpart's culture expects?

- Choose one email you will send this week to an international counterpart and apply at least two specific adaptations from the course. Document what you changed and why.

Worksheet: Digital Communication Protocol Planner

Complete this planner for each key international relationship or team. Use it to agree on shared norms before misunderstandings occur. Ideally, share this planner with your counterpart and complete it together.
Counterpart name / team

Country / primary culture

Preferred platform for quick questions

Preferred platform for formal requests

Expected response time (business hours in their time zone)

Camera on/off norm for video calls

Preferred meeting opening style (straight to agenda vs. small talk)

Any platform they do NOT use for business

One written communication norm I will adopt for this relationship

Checklist: Document and Presentation Readiness Checklist

- I identified the document structure preference for my audience (linear/Anglo, thesis-antithesis-synthesis/French, context-first/Japanese) and adjusted my structure accordingly.
- I checked slide density preference: data-dense for German/Japanese audiences, visual/narrative for US/British, story-led for Latin and Middle Eastern audiences.
- I reviewed color and symbol choices for any culturally sensitive meanings in my audience's context.
- I included appropriate credibility markers (titles, organizational affiliation, logos) if my audience is from a high-PDI culture.
- I had at least one native speaker or cultural insider review the document or deck before sending.
- All currency, date formats, and measurement units match the convention used in my audience's country.

Building Cultural Intelligence for the Long Term

Design your personal CQ development plan and build the habits and network that will keep your cultural skills growing after this course ends.

Exercise: CQ Self-Assessment and Development Plan

Rate yourself honestly on each of the four CQ factors (1 = very low, 5 = very high) based on your actual behavior over the past three months. Then identify your lowest factor and complete the development plan for it.

- CQ Drive (1-5): How often do you proactively seek cross-cultural learning experiences? What is one example from the past month that justifies your score?

- CQ Knowledge (1-5): For the three cultures you interact with most, how accurately could you predict their communication norms? Test yourself: write down five norms for each and then look them up to verify.

- CQ Strategy (1-5): In your last five significant cross-cultural interactions, how many times did you deliberately think through cultural factors beforehand? What pre-interaction habits would raise this score?

- CQ Action (1-5): Think of a moment in the past month when a cross-cultural interaction was heading in the wrong direction. Did you adapt in real time? What would higher CQ Action have looked like in that moment?

Worksheet: 90-Day CQ Development Tracker

Use this tracker to log your daily 10-minute CQ practice for 90 days. Record the activity, the culture focus, and one thing you learned or observed. Review weekly to identify patterns in your growth.

Date

Practice type (Read/Reflect/Adapt/Immerse)

Culture focus

Activity description (1-2 sentences)

One thing learned or observed

Follow-up action (if any)

Checklist: Cultural Intelligence Network and Habits Checklist

- I identified two or three cultural insiders from my most frequent target cultures and have invested in genuine reciprocal relationships with them.
- I have a pre-interaction checklist of five questions I ask myself before any significant cross-cultural meeting or communication.
- I completed a CQ self-assessment (Cultural Intelligence Center free version or equivalent) and recorded my baseline scores.
- I set a calendar reminder to re-assess my CQ scores in six months and compare to my baseline.
- I bookmarked at least three ongoing resources for cultural learning (Hofstede Insights, Culture Map, a culture-specific podcast or newsletter).
- I shared at least one cross-cultural learning — a framework, a tip, an insight — with a teammate or direct report this month.
- I added a "cultural context" note field to my project or client briefs for international work.
- I have a protocol for recovering from cross-cultural miscommunications (diagnose, acknowledge privately,

invite perspective, adjust) and practiced it at least once.

Your Action Plan

1. Complete the Hofstede Country Comparison for the three cultures you interact with most and record the key dimension gaps in your Culture Profile Card.
2. Build your personal phrase bank for the five most common cross-cultural communication scenarios you face (disagreement, bad news, feedback, requests, no).
3. Audit one recent email to an international counterpart and rewrite it with at least two culture-specific adaptations.
4. Complete the Digital Communication Protocol Planner with your top two international relationships — ideally share it with them and align together.
5. Take the free CQ Self-Assessment at the Cultural Intelligence Center website and record your four factor scores.
6. Identify your lowest CQ factor and commit to one specific daily habit (10 minutes) targeting that factor for the next 30 days.
7. Identify two cultural insiders in your network and schedule a casual conversation specifically to ask about one communication norm you are uncertain about.
8. Prepare and use a pre-interaction checklist of five cultural questions before your next high-stakes cross-cultural meeting.
9. After your next cross-cultural interaction, write a 5-minute reflection: what went well, what felt off, and what you would change.
10. Share one cross-cultural insight or framework from this course with a colleague or team — teaching accelerates your own learning and builds team CQ.

