

## DAS TÄGLICHE LEBEN / DAILY CUSTOMS

13 THINGS FOREIGNERS DO THAT MAKES GERMANS  
REALLY UNCOMFORTABLE

## Making small talk

Germans are not unfriendly; far from it. But try having a bit of light-hearted banter with a supermarket worker or restaurant server in Germany, or attempt to ask a stranger how their day is going, and they will look at you like you're from another planet.

Small talk is just not Germany's strong point. As we discussed in a recent Local article, there is no exact translation of "small talk" from English to German. One of the translations – *oberflächliche Konversation*, means superficial conversation and signals how this concept is viewed here: a bit meaningless.

Small talk is more often used in Germany as a way to get to know someone better, rather than a colloquial concept.

So if you start a polite little chat with someone in Germany, they're likely to think a) that you really like them and want to start or progress a friendship with them, b) that you're speaking for the sake of it and are probably a bit daft or c) that you're being insincere.

## Apologizing all the time

"Sorry, I'll move for you" "Sorry, is that okay?" "Sorry, can I help you" "Sorry, can I get past you?"  
"Sorry, can I sit here?"

For some nationalities (especially the Brits and Americans), sorry is NOT the hardest word, it is one of our most-used words. And, sorry to break the news, but Germans don't understand this.

If Germans are really sorry about something, they will say "Es tut mir Leid" but it would have to be quite serious to use this expression. "Entschuldigung" is the equivalent of "excuse me" or a less serious sorry, with many Germans just using the English word "sorry".

But while some countries have made apologizing an everyday part of culture, this just isn't the case in Germany. Germans will use their sorries much more sparingly. You won't hear it often in customer service situations, for example.

It's not even super common in awkward public situations.

If a German person, lets say, bumps into you on the U-Bahn they might (although not always) not even apologize because they view it as nobody's fault. – it's just a busy train, isn't it, what do you expect?