

## E-SESSION 3



### **America and Communication**

To be successful in a call center career, you must know the likes and dislikes of the Americans regarding communication. In this session we present two things: one, a long list of tips on communicating with the Americans; and two, an account of the country USA (geography, climate, time zones, politics, economics) and its people, their history, culture, festivals, ways of life.

## SESSION Objectives

In this session, you will learn about:

- The likes and dislikes of the Americans for business communication
- USA and its people

## Part I: The American Style of Communication

In this session you will get to learn about two aspects of America: one, certain typically American ways of communicating and two, the history and culture of USA. The second one would help you to better understand the Americans. If you are to speak or write to an American customer, say, speaking over the phone or writing an e-mail, then you should be aware of certain basic characteristics of the way the Americans write and also their common likes and dislikes, their ways of solving problems, the value system of their society, etc.

For example, in the Indian society, time-wasting old-styled pretension and avoidable procedural prevarication are considered as “giving respect”. But the Americans are clear and straight in business matters, **they dislike pretension and undue prevarication**. Further, the temperament of an average American is truly logical than speculative, they don’t waste time speculating about what should have been done, they just act.

There are certain typically Indian writing habits that may come in your way of developing into a successful call center executive. You must be aware of these writing habits and avoid if necessary. Given below is a list of such typically American styles (and typically Indian styles) of writing, along with the respective Do’s and Don’ts.

## NOTE

At many places in this training kit and elsewhere, you’d find that the terms—America and USA, American and US—are used alternatively. In fact, there is no single country called America. There are two continents: North America and South America. The country USA falls in North America. The name (noun) of the country is USA and the adjectival form is US (*cf.* Indian, Mexican, Nepalese, Japanese). But for some reason, maybe because of the economic and political supremacy of USA, the words America and American have become synonymous with USA and US. The country name USA is used more than America, but the qualifier US is used only for official purposes like names of institutes etc. The qualifier American has become very usual for something related to USA.

- ♦ You have been probably taught a certain style of business-letter writing at your school, like starting with “humble submission” and all those paraphernalia. There is absolutely no need to stick to those trivia in commercial dealings with the Americans. Just use the basic conventions of salutation once when starting a conversation or a letter and once when ending.

- ♦ Don't use heavy qualifiers like "Respected" or "Revered" etc. when starting a letter. It's too outdated a style and is usually suspected to be a veil to hide shortcomings in the product. You can use "Sir", but you can also use just "Dear" followed by first name (to an Indian that might appear to be arrogance, but no American is going to mind). Use a colon after the name rather than using a comma (colon is for business letters, comma for personal letters).
- ♦ Do not qualify yourself with words like "obedient" etc. (because you are no more a school child). You need not use the word "Yours" as well. Use just "Sincerely," etc.
- ♦ If you want to use the quotation mark for any purpose (either for directly quoting or for emphasizing), always use double quotation marks (""). Only when you are using quotation marks *inside* the primary quotation marks that you can (and must) use single quotation marks. For emphasis, however, better use italics.
- ♦ "Period" is what the Americans call a "full stop" or a "full point".
- ♦ Comma and period, if at the end of a quotation mark, go *inside* the closing quotation marks; colon and semicolon are set outside the closing quotation mark.
- ♦ Use a comma before "and" in a series of three or more. This the Americans call "series comma".
- ♦ Use comma as less as possible; the Americans have a tendency to omit a comma if the pause required in speech is even slightly less than long enough. They have even coined a name for the excessive use of commas: comma commotion. Develop the habit of using comma only in strong and confirmed cases of pause than going by the reasons of the grammar book. There is a common refrain among the Americans about grammatically correct yet practically avoidable uses of comma: "It's nice, but not necessary."
- ♦ Use the article "the" as less as possible. The Americans have a tendency of dropping "the" from wherever they get a slight chance to do so. But you need to develop a sharp sense of the essentiality of "the" so that you don't drop it where it is essential for the meaning to come through.
- ♦ The Americans tend to drop the prepositions "to" and "in" at places where you would surely use it. But the evolution of the American kind of English has been strongly influenced by their speaking habits. They write almost exactly the way they speak.
- ♦ "different than" is valid.
- ♦ In orthodox English, the nouns ending with "a" are pluralized by adding an "e". But the Americans use **s** for the same purpose. For example, **antennas** for "antennae", **formulas** for "formulae".
- ♦ Use "various" where the subject is about the number of occurrences of differences; use "different" where the subject is the difference itself.

- ♦ The Americans extensively use the “-ing” form of a verb as a noun, which is in grammar books called gerund or infinitive. These are valid substitutes of “-ion of” but the Americans use them far too often than an average Indian does. So if they are using a gerund or infinitive preceded by “to”, don’t doubt it for a meaning.
- ♦ Two acronyms they use quite often: ASAP (As Soon As Possible) and FYI (For Your Information). FAQ means “Frequently Asked Questions”. They often spell out the phonetics of OK as “okay”. The original meaning of OK is “All Correct”.
- ♦ Write simple, straight English. Indians have a tendency to convolute sentences unnecessarily. Try to avoid doing this.
- ♦ Use simple words. Indians, again, have a tendency to use strong, bombastic words. Try to avoid doing this.
- ♦ Do not overstate. Do not overemphasize. Use superlatives carefully (very, most, etc.). The way Americans write shows two distinct styles. One, careful understatement if the meaning could, to any smallest extent, affect anybody’s sensibilities. For example, an admonishment. The purpose is to hurt, which may of course have legitimate reasons. But not by using a series of harsh words. The way they write could be called “sweet yet piercing”. Probably you wouldn’t need to write such stuff but if you receive you must be able to understand the message.

The other style is using really bombastic qualifiers in pleasing circumstances; the context or circumstances may be pleasing but the qualifiers are usually overstatements.

- ♦ They use the qualifier “great” every here and there. You may in cases feel that’s diluting the original meaning of such a strong qualifier, but that’s the way they write and speak.
- ♦ Mind the meaning/use of certain expressions typical of Indians:
  - ♦ The expression “good name” is still a mystery to me. It may be an inappropriate translation of the Indian expression “*shubh naam*”. Do not use it with Americans.
  - ♦ Be careful using “as to”. People trained in the Indian English-medium schools use it far too often than it could be correct.
  - ♦ The expression “you see” is a way of speaking. Do not write it.
  - ♦ In writing, better use “well” as less as possible, never use if possible. This also is a way of speaking and has no apparent meaning.
  - ♦ Do not write, “Let me tell you one thing”. This is a typical Indian expression and a straight literal translation of some Indian expression.

- ◆ The Americans are not unduly concerned about whether you use “Sir” or “Madam” to address them. If a client wants you to call him by first name, do not hesitate doing so. They usually like being called by first name, both men and women.
- ◆ The Americans still use old-styled units such as mile, pound, ounce, etc.
- ◆ The American date format is MM/DD/YY. You can also use four digits year.
- ◆ What we call “petrol pump” is a “gas station” in American.
- ◆ What we call “railway station” is a “train station” in American.

## Part II: Discover America

The past matters to every country. The history of USA is a record of continuous change from the colonial to one of the most progressive nations in the world. Christopher Columbus, having discovered this land in 1492, promised King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella that he would give them as much gold as they want and as many slaves as they shall order and find thousands of other things of value. Columbus thought he was close to India and so he called the primitive inhabitants “Indians”. But more than 20 years since Columbus discovered America, the land proved to be a big disappointment for him: there was no sign of developed civilization or substantial wealth along the thousands of miles of coastline.

The birth of one of the largest nations of the world and its history from the 16th century is one that creates great interest—knowing the history of the United States of America will help you understand this country better.

### History of the United States of America

What makes the Americans different? In spite of repeated efforts over the last 200 years, few have succeeded in explaining on this question, because the United States is unlike any other country in the world. Americans are different because their history is different from that of other countries.

Though there are many such happenings that could explain the difference, there are four milestones in history that could be attributed to the shaping of the United States to what it is today.

1. Americans have truly utilized their natural resources effectively to cross over from a nation of farmers to the richest industrial country in the world.
2. They had very few people and a great amount of land and other natural resources. So they opened their doors wide to immigrants from all over Europe and other continents. These people settled in USA and became integrated with the American nation and now form a large part of that nation. Thus came to existence what is called the “nation of nations”.

3. Once they secured independence from Great Britain as an outcome of the Revolutionary War, they decided to create a government that was different and not like that of any other country at that time. They opted for a republican form of government, with a written constitution, organized on a federal basis. There is no other government exactly like it anywhere in the world.
4. The biggest difference that has this country different is its location. Being located in the Western Hemisphere, it was separated for many years from the wars and political quarrels of Europe by the Atlantic Ocean. The Americans took advantage of this geographic isolation and developed their resources, moved further towards the west and enlarged the nation up to the Pacific coastline, and resolved their domestic problems without any interference from the other countries of the world.

Understanding the events in the history of America named after an Italian merchant, adventurer and explorer Amerigo Vespucci would help in further understanding the evolution of this country. It is said that the first European to reach North America was a Norwegian explorer called Leif Eriksson who landed at least 500 years before Christopher Columbus and discovered "Indians" in Hispaniola. But not until 1565 was the first permanent European settlement found in St Augustine, Florida. But in Jamestown (Virginia) the first permanent British settlement was founded in 1607. The next period saw the advent of slaves and the formation of thriving settlements all under the rule of the British. These settlements evolved into 13 original colonies which were spread in the North, South and Middle. However, it was only in 1757 that the British decided to assert its power and authority over these colonies, which led to their unity and the beginning of war. The war led to newer taxes and its opposition by these colonies led to the battles of Lexington and Concord, which sowed the seeds of the American revolution and the Great War of Independence. It was finally on the 4th of July 1776 that the Declaration of Independence was signed at Philadelphia and the United States of America came into being. Since then began another chapter in the creation of modern America.

### **The Birth of an Industrial Society**

United States' economy evolved out of an agricultural society. With more than 90% of them being farmers, throughout the colonial period they made a living by tilling land and harvesting its fruits.

### **The Process of Change**

There were two wars that played great role in changing the United States. The war of 1812, fought against the British, cut off for 3 years the supply of British manufactured goods to the United States. Americans had to build their own factories. Since the war was fought mainly on the seas, it almost destroyed the American shipping fleet. Merchants who had formerly invested their money in ships now invested in the new cotton and wool mills. The long period of peace between the war of 1812 and the civil war gave Americans the chance to prepare for an industrial revolution. People moved westward and filled up the area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River.

The Civil War completed the work that began in 1815. During the war the Union Government bought large amounts of foodstuff, clothing and firearms. To meet the demand, new factories were built, and old ones expanded. The Civil War created millionaires who then used their money to invest in new industries.

The West, once considered useful only for rearing cattle and growing wheat, produced gold, silver, copper and lead. All these developments led to the revolution that changed the United States from an agricultural to an industrial nation.

### **The Birth of Corporations**

There were very few individuals who had the money to assemble under one roof the machines and men required to produce steel or make tractors. But the requirement existed. This led to the birth of the corporations that came into existence to do the work formerly done by small businessmen. Industrialization did not mean the end of farming, rather it industrialized farming too. In 1860 more than 50% of all Americans were making their living out of agriculture. In 1960 only 5.6% were employed in farming. Those not needed on the farms moved to the cities to take up jobs in the new factories.

The process of change of the American economy from agriculture-based to an industry-based economy has not yet ended. The farms of the United States continue to get larger, more efficient, and more mechanized. They produce more and employ fewer and fewer farmers. The business corporations of the United States continue to get bigger. Large corporations produce most of the America's manufactured goods. And while these companies get bigger, they become more efficient and employ more machines and fewer men. More than half of all the people employed in the United States today are offering services rather than producing goods. They work as clerks, salesmen, doctors, teachers and managers.

The Americans of the colonial times, who made all their own goods and produced all their own food with a few simple tools, would find today's world a strange one. But they would surely find it easier, more prosperous, and more comfortable.

### **Some Important Milestones in the History of America**

- 1492 : Discovered by Christopher Columbus.
- 1565 : First European settlement founded.
- 1607 : First British settlement founded.
- 1620 : Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact.
- 1775 : Beginning of the American Revolution.
- 1776 : Declaration of Independence.
- 1789 : Government under the Constitution begins. George Washington elected as the first resident of U.S.A.
- 1791 : Bill of Rights becomes part of the Constitution.
- 1800 : Capital moved to Washington, D.C.
- 1812 : War of 1812.

1818	:	United States and Great Britain agree to an unfortified border between Canada and the United States.
1849	:	Gold rush to California begins.
1860	:	Abraham Lincoln elected as President.
1861	:	Civil War begins.
1865	:	Civil War ends. Lincoln assassinated. Slavery abolished.
1876	:	Invention of the Telephone.
1903	:	Wright brothers make the first successful airplane flight.
1917	:	U.S. enters World War I.
1929	:	Stock market crashes and depression begins.
1941	:	Japanese attack Pearl harbor, U.S. attacks Germany and Japan. Beginning of World War II.
1945	:	First atomic bomb dropped. World War II ends.
1950–53	:	Korean War.
1959	:	Alaska and Hawaii become the 49th and the 50th states.
1964	:	Civil Rights Act passed.
1969	:	First manned moon landing Apollo 11.
1970s and 80s	:	Began the period of technological advancement and decline of industrialism.
1991	:	Collapse of the Soviet Bloc and emergence of the United States as the World's only superpower.
1992	:	The Gulf War.
2001	:	The largest act of terrorism and the subsequent war on terrorism.

## Facts and Figures

**Official name:** United States of America. The short form “United States” is used as both noun and adjective. The acronym is U.S.A. or USA (the latter is more often used). The more often used adjectival form is US. To better understand the meaning of adjectival form of a country name, consider the name “India” and the adjective “Indian”. Examples of use: Indian citizen, US citizen. Note that periods are in some cases used in the noun form but they are not used in the adjective.

**Capital:** Washington, D.C.



**Location and size:** 49 states and the District of Columbia are on the continent of North America. The 50th State of Hawaii is in the North Pacific Ocean.

**Language:** English

**Religion:** Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish

**Population:** 27 crore, i.e., 270 million (1998).

**Physical features:** **Highest point** - Mt. McKinley. Alaska

**Lowest point** - Badwater, Death Valley, California

**Main rivers:** Missouri, Mississippi, Arkansas, Colorado, Rio Grande, Red, Columbia, Ohio, St. Lawrence, Tennessee and Yukon.

**Main Mountains:** Mt McKinley, Mt Whitney, Mt Elbert.

**Government:** Federal Union of 50 states.

**Head of the Government:** President. The legislative body is called the Congress. There are two houses—the House of Representatives or the lower chamber with 435 members and the Senate or upper chamber with 100 members.

**Motto:** "In God we trust"

**National Symbol:** Bald eagle

**National Anthem:** "The Star Spangled Banner" written by Francis Scott and adopted as a national anthem in 1931.

**National Holidays:** New Year's Day (Jan 1), George Washington's birthday (Feb. 22), Memorial Day (May 30), Independence Day (July 4), Labor Day (first Monday in Sept.), Veterans Day (Nov. 11), Thanksgiving day (fourth Thursday in Nov.), Christmas Day (Dec. 25).

**Monetary Unit:** Dollar 1 \$ = 100 cents. The dollar bills are in the following denominations - \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$ 50, \$100.

1 cent is called a penny, 5 cents a nickel, 10 cents a dime, 25 cents a quarter, 50 cents half-a- dollar, and \$1 a piece.

**National Flag:** Known as 'Old Glory'. It has 13 equal horizontal stripes of red and alternating with white. It has a blue rectangle in the upper hoist-side corner bearing 50 small white pointed stars. The stars represent the 50 states, the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies.

**Political parties:** There are two main political parties: the Democrats and the Republicans.

## States and Territories

The USA comprises of 50 states and two territories. Puerto Rico in the Gulf of Mexico, and the Island of Guam in the South Pacific Ocean, are the two territories.

### States and their Capitals

States	Capitals
1. Alabama (Ala.)	Montgomery
2. Alaska (Ak.)	Juneau
3. Arizona (Ariz.)	Phoenix
4. Arkansas (Ark.)	Little Rock
5. California (Calif.)	Sacramento
6. Colorado (Colo.)	Denver
7. Connecticut (Conn.)	Hartford
8. Delaware (Del.)	Dover
9. Florida (Fla.)	Tallahassee
10. Georgia (Ga.)	Atlanta
11. Hawaii (Hi.)	Honolulu
12. Idaho (Ida.)	Boise
13. Illinois (Ill.)	Springfield
14. Indiana (Ind.)	Indianapolis
15. Iowa (Ia.)	Des Moines
16. Kansas (Kans.)	Topeka
17. Kentucky (Ky.)	Frankfort
18. Louisiana (La.)	Baton Rouge
19. Maine (Me.)	Augusta
20. Maryland (Md.)	Annapolis
21. Massachusetts (Mass.)	Boston
22. Michigan (Mich.)	Lansing
23. Minnesota (Minn.)	Saint Paul

24. Mississippi (Miss.)	Jackson
25. Missouri (Mo.)	Jefferson City
26. Montana (Mont.)	Helena
27. Nebraska (Nebr.)	Lincoln
28. Nevada (Nev.)	Carson City
29. New Hampshire (N.H.)	Concorde
30. New Jersey (N.J.)	Trenton
31. New Mexico (N.Mex.)	Santa Fe
32. New York (N.Y.)	Albany
33. North Carolina (N.C.)	Raleigh
34. North Dakota (N.Dak.)	Bismarck
35. Ohio (Oh.)	Columbus
36. Oklahoma (Okla.)	Oklahoma City
37. Oregon (Oreg.)	Salem
38. Pennsylvania (Pa.)	Harrisburg
39. Rhode Island (R.I.)	Providence
40. South Carolina (S.C.)	Columbia
41. South Dakota (S.Dak.)	Pierre
42. Tennessee (Tenn.)	Nashville
43. Texas (Tex.)	Austin
44. Utah (Ut)	Salt Lake City
45. Vermont (Vt.)	Montpelier
46. Virginia (Va.)	Richmond
47. Washington (Wash.)	Olympia
48. West Virginia (W.Va.)	Charleston
49. Wisconsin (Wis.)	Madison
50. Wyoming (Wyo.)	Cheyenne

## Places of Interest

**New York city:** The terminus of major sea, land and air routes of the nation. Also called the 'Big Apple' this city beats any other in population, industry, banking, wholesale and retail trade, shipping and specialized business services. Founded in 1625 by Dutch settlers lies at the mouth of river Hudson. The main attractions are the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Times Square, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art.

**Chicago:** The city lies along the Lake Michigan and stands at the nation's transportation crossroads- rail highway, water and airline. It is one of the nation's richest markets. The World's busiest airport- O'Hare airport is in Chicago. Besides it also consists of the river Chicago which is famous for its backward flow (artificially engineered flow to prevent sewage from flowing into the fresh water lake). Also known for its highest crime and pollution rate, this city's problems seem never ending.

**Los Angeles:** It is the third largest city of nation. Los Angeles is a major center for oil production, oil refining and aircraft manufacture. The city is famous world over for its Film and TV industry. The city where dreams are manufactured is one of the busiest ports on the west coast L.A. also has some of the most beautiful tourist sights such as sunset strip, Rodeo Drive, Melrose, Venice Beach, Malibu and the famous Star homes in Beverly Hills.

**Philadelphia:** Philadelphia was founded by William Penn (a Quaker), that's why also called Quaker City. It is a city of great historical interest, Independence National Historical Park covers several square blocks. It has a great diversity of manufacturing textiles, iron & steel, shipbuilding and chemicals. It was the capital during American revolution (1775-1783).

**Detroit:** Detroit is the fifth largest city in the United States known for the automobile industry.

**San Francisco:** Known as "America's Favorite City" has also one with the largest population of Asians. The climatic conditions are much more milder than the other parts of the country. What's unique is that, this city is built on and around 40 hills and one uses cable cars as a means of transport. One of the key tourist spots in ones itinerary to the U.S. San Francisco remains as one of the most interesting cities of the world.

**Washington D.C.:** It is the capital of the United States. It is not part of any state. Instead, it occupies a separate federal district called the District of Columbia.

### Prominent Landmarks

1. Capitol: It is the epicenter of Washington D.C.
2. White House - Every President since 1800 has stayed in this memorial building.
3. Vietnam Veterans Memorial - Designed by a 21year old architecture student of Yale University Maya Yang Lin is the most visited memorial.
4. Statue Of Liberty - Built by Parsian Republicans is the honor of New York.

5. Times Square - With its bright lights and called the "Great White Way".
6. Plymouth Rock - The weathered ball of granite that has attracted thousands of visitors to Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts.
7. Disneyland - Founded by Walt Disney is one of the premier amusement parks.

## **The Geographical Boundaries**

The United States the fourth largest country in the world in terms of area is spread over 3.61 square miles.

### **Land**

United States is divided into three major physiographic regions. These are the highlands in the east, the mountains in the west, and a vast plains region lying in between. These three major regions can be further divided into many smaller regions, or landforms. Some of these are the following.

#### **The Coastal Plain**

The coastal plain extends along the eastern United States from Massachusetts on the Atlantic Coast to Texas on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

#### **The Appalachian Highlands**

The Appalachian Highlands extend from the Gulf of Saint Lawrence on the north to central Alabama. The highest peak in the Appalachian Highlands is Mount Mitchell (6684 feet) in North Carolina.

#### **The Central Lowland.**

It extends from the Appalachian Highlands on the east to the Great Plains on the West. The Great Lakes, with the exception of Lake Superior, lie within this region

#### **The Great Plains**

The great plains lie to the west of the central lowland. Most of the land surface consists of vast treeless plains

#### **The Rocky Mountains**

The Rocky Mountains consists of three groups of mountains divided by a high plateau known as Wyoming Basin. In general, Rockies are high and rugged. Where there is sufficient moisture, the mountainsides are clothed with forests up to the tree line.

In the dry Regions the mountaintops are bare of vegetation

#### **Intermountain Plateaus**

The intermountain plateaus lie between the Rocky Mountains on the East and the Sierra Nevada and the Cascade Range on the west. This region is divided into three areas - The Columbia Plateau, the Basin and Range region, and the Colorado Plateau. The largest and best-known gorge- Grand Canyon of the Colorado River lies in this region. Also with the famous salt lake- Great Salt Lake in Utah.

### **The Pacific Mountain System**

The Pacific Mountain System consists of three regions- the Cascade Range, The Sierra Nevada, and the Pacific coastal region.

#### **Alaska**

Alaska, the 49<sup>th</sup> state, occupies the extreme northwestern portion of North America. Two of the world's highest active volcanoes- Pavlov and Veniaminof lie in this region. Also called the land of otherness Alaska holds a special place in the imaginations of people.

#### **Hawaii**

Approximately 2400 miles of water separate Hawaii from the mainland of the United States. Hawaii consists of a long chain of islands in Mid-Pacific. Hawaii is a mountainous state.

### **Climate In America**

The latitude, altitude, distance from oceans, and the prevailing winds have a significant effect on the climate in the United States.

From extreme cold in northern Alaska to semitropical in southern Florida and Hawaii the climatic conditions vary a lot. The coasts of Oregon and Washington are among the rainiest places in the world. The Mohave Desert in Arizona and California is one of the driest.

The West Coast is affected by prevailing westerly winds. These winds bring rain to the coastal regions and westward sides of the mountains. On the eastern coast the prevailing westerly winds blow from land to sea. Thus, the tempering influence of the ocean on climate is much less than it is along the Pacific coast.

Climate over most of the Atlantic states is humid continental. The range in temperature from summer to winter is wide. Winters in New England States and in New York are usually cold and snowy.

### **Time Zones**

The United States is distributed into six Time Zones.

1. Eastern : Detroit, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Atlanta, Orlando, Miami.
2. Central : Chicago, Kansas City, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Oklahoma, Memphis, Dallas, New Orleans, Houston.
3. Mountain : Salt Lake City, Denver, Phoenix.
4. Pacific : Seattle, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Diego
5. Alaska : Anchorage
6. Hawaii : Honolulu

The time difference is approx. an hour between each of these zones.

**Example:**

If the time in the eastern region is GMT- 5

Then the time in the Central would be	GMT - 6
In the Mountain would be	GMT 7
In the Pacific would be	GMT 8
In Alaska would be	GMT 9
In Hawaii would be	GMT 10

## People and the Way of Life

The people of the United States represent nearly every race and every nation of the world. It is therefore called "The land of equal opportunity". English is the official language of the land and spoken throughout the country.

### Religion

The three principal religions are the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish. Other religious groups in the United States include Russian, Greek, Polish Nation Catholic, Serbian Eastern, Syrian Antiochian and Muslim.

**Languages spoken:** English and Spanish

### Living Standards

The United States is a nation of workers with the average American standard of living being probably the highest in the world.

### Hours at Work

In 1920 the average workweek in the United States was 50 hours. Today it is 40 hours. Americans engage in a vast variety of leisure-time activities. These range from gardening to coin collecting, from painting to do-it-yourself crafts.

### Sports

Americans are great sports lovers. Golf, tennis, horseback riding, swimming, skiing, skating, boating, bowling, hunting, and fishing are enjoyed by millions of people. But baseball is still the 'national pastime'. Besides ice hockey and the grand prix also draw huge crowds.

### Fine Arts

New York, known as the cultural capital has credit for hosting large number of concerts, rock shows to country music. People like Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson etc. have made music out here.

Painters, sculptors and other artists have kept alive more than 400 art museums in America. American art form has evolved from the colonial form to the neoclassical form, with most of the Americans taking it up as a form to express creativity.

With hundreds of theatres presenting professional plays Americans find this as a source of recreation. However if one is in New York one should visit the Broadway the theater district.

Thousands of Americans are audience to motion picture in the United States. And the average American family spends 3 to 5 hours a day watching television. Westerns and comedies has always remained the preferred choice.

Americans are great travelers too. Individuals in the United States than in any other nation in the world own more automobiles.

### **People at Work**

Americans are punctual and precise about deadlines Being conscious about personal space Americans believe in maintaining distances. To the point and believe in appreciating good effort Careless attitude is frowned upon. Americans expect people to keep commitments and appointments and address all communication promptly. Prefer use of first names and avoid nick names & short names.

### **Events**

- ♦ New Year's Eve : to be a part of in Times square where a huge giant ball is dropped at the stroke of midnight.
- ♦ Mardi Gras : Started by the French is celebrated mainly in New Orleans in February & March. It is known for its rowdy, touristy, bacchanalian party.
- ♦ St Patrick's Day : in Mid March is celebrated with parades and pitchers of green beer mainly in Boston, New York & Chicago by those of the Irish background.
- ♦ Independence day : July the 4<sup>th</sup> celebrated with lot of flag-waving patriotism and fire-works.
- ♦ Halloween : on 31<sup>st</sup> October is an event for kids who go around the neighborhood tricking or treating others wearing ghoulish costumes and exchanging candy handouts.
- ♦ Thanksgiving : Associated with the "Pilgrim Fathers" who thanked God to help them survive a hard winter in 1621. Americans go home to their Mom & Pop on the last Thursday of November to share a traditional meal of stuffed turkey. Thanksgiving also begins the start of the Christmas season.
- ♦ Christmas : Celebrated religiously as well as commercially by practicing or nominal Christians.
- ♦ Kwanzaa : Celebrated by the African- Americans between December 26<sup>th</sup> to January 1<sup>st</sup> is meant to celebrate the oneness & goodness of life.



## Major Sporting Event

- ♦ NBA Finals (Basketball) : Mainly seven games between the top basketball league teams.
- ♦ World Series (Baseball) : Played in October between two teams the winner of which is the best Major League baseball team determined over seven games.
- ♦ Super Bowl (Football) : Played to determine the best team in the National football league brings the entire country to a standstill in the last Sunday in January.
- ♦ Ice-Hockey : A game enjoyed mainly by the white audience in the Northern United States is an extremely violent game.
- ♦ Rodeo : Dressed as cowboys in western wear the event includes bare back riding, bronco riding, bull riding, barrel racing, calf roping etc.

## Important Information You Should Know

**Money** : Credit cards are widely accepted. ATM's are easily accessible.

Rupee to a Dollar conversion is Rs48/49 per \$1.

Public transport is expensive. Eating out is expensive.

Tips in restaurants not required due to service charges but you need to tip the cab driver.

**Shopping** : a favorite past time. There are shopping malls which are one-stop lifestyle. Combined with entertainment these are windows to the way Americans behave & think. Wal-Mart & K- mart are some of the popular ones. Besides there are Strip Shopping centers, there is catalogue shopping and internet shopping.

**Food** : 'Fast food' is America's contribution to the world. Chains like McDonalds, Pizza Hut, Burger king, Wendy's are known world over. However steaks, burgers, piles of ribs, salads are some of the most popular foods. Besides Californian cuisine and Mexican cuisine are preferred.

**Telephone** : All telephone numbers have a ten digit format starting with 1 (which is a prefix before dialing a number). Outgoing international calls are 00 and local calls are free from private telephones. Direct calls are cheaper. 911 is the emergency number. 800,877 & 888 are toll free numbers.

## Postal Service

The postal service delivers mails according to zip codes which could be 5 digit or 9 digit. The mails are classified as First class, Second & third class and parcel post.

## Newspapers

US Today, New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, International Herald Tribune.

## Airlines

United Airlines, TWA, American Airlines