

Curious Question #16 – Kisses in Canada

Transcript

Robin: Hi everyone, this is Robin...

Harp: And Harp...

Robin: And we're back once again at Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Harp: And we're here with the **Curious Question** podcast. So this is the podcast where we take one of your questions and we answer it.

Robin: And if you want to get any more information about this podcast go to our website and check out Lipservice. In that section of our website, you can get the transcripts, the Detailed Explanations, all the goodies, so go check it out. So what's today's question? What are we looking at?

Harp: So today's question is from Asami who is originally from Japan, but she is currently living in Montreal and she's asking about Canadian culture, I guess, and she is saying: *What is the custom when saying goodbye or hello in Canada?*

So she wants to know about how to greet someone in Montreal and in the rest of Canada. She says that she often sees people **kiss** each other on the cheek, but she has also seen people **hug** or do nothing. So what do we do here in Montreal?

Robin: She says she has often seen people **kiss** each other on the cheek, but she has also seen people **hug** or do nothing. So what do we do here in Montreal?

Harp: Exactly, so now just so you understand, this is a cultural question, she is not asking about English, but she wants to know the action that people do, whether they **kiss** on the cheek, whether they **hug** or whether they do nothing.

Robin: Well I guess that it changes from place to place. You lived in Europe for a little bit?

Harp: Yeah.

Robin: In France, and I imagine there it was similar to here.

- Harp: Yeah, exactly, it was very similar to Montreal. So they did the **kissing** on the cheek, yeah. And you lived in Japan?
- Robin: Yes, I did.
- Harp: So **kissing** on the cheek there or no?
- Robin: Actually you would see people **bow** quite often.
- Harp: Yeah, OK.
- Robin: So **bowing** is quite a custom there for saying hello or goodbye. Montreal is an interesting place, I think, because it's in the French part of Canada. It has connections to Europe and it has connections to France and for this reason I think you see a lot of people **kissing** each other on the cheek.
- Harp: Definitely, for sure, I agree with that because, for example, when I was in France they **kissed** on the cheek, but the part of France that I was in, there was **no set rule**. In Montreal I think you **kiss** two times, one on each side.
- Robin: Absolutely!
- Harp: But I was in the northern part of France and there was no one time, two times, three times. It changed every time. So sometimes I would **kiss** one time and I would crash into someone's face because they were going for the second **kiss** and it was just confusing. But Montreal is definitely like Europe.
- Robin: When you **kiss** on the cheek here you often see men **kissing** women, and you also see women **kissing** women but...
- Harp: **Rarely do you see men kissing men.**
- Robin: It happens, but it is not as common.
- Harp: Yeah, don't expect it.
- Robin: Yeah, don't expect it. What else?
- Harp: I guess it's awkward for us a little bit to do the **kisses**. For me it is because I am from Alberta, from the English part of Canada, and we don't do the **kisses** there. Do you do the **kisses** in Toronto?

- Robin: No, not at all. I have some friends whose parents come from Europe and they may do it in their families, but you don't see it so often in the street in Toronto for example.
- Harp: Yeah, definitely, so I would normally **hug** my friends or if I see them all the time I don't think I would do anything, I would just smile and if they're leaving, if they're saying goodbye, I would just smile and **wave** at them.
- Robin: Absolutely, those are typical ways of saying goodbye in the English-speaking parts of the country. Now how about **professional** contexts?
- Harp: **Professionally**, I have never seen anyone **kiss** on the cheeks or **kiss** on the lips, but no...
- Robin: That would be an interesting **professional** environment.
- Harp: Exactly, so they normally shake hands. Do you agree?
- Robin: Yes, yes. **Kissing** on the cheek is probably a little less appropriate in Canada, in Quebec, and in English-speaking Canada as well.
- Harp: Definitely, so here we shake hands or...
- Robin: Nothing.
- Harp: Nothing.
- Robin: Or just **wave** to say, "Well, talk to you later, take care, goodbye."
- Harp: Typically shake hands, I guess.
- Robin: I would like to add, actually, that **hugs** are not really that appropriate in professional contexts as well.
- Harp: No definitely, shake hands or nothing.
- Robin: Shake hands or nothing.
- Harp: Yeah.
- Robin: I think that about answers Asami's question. Asami, if you have any more questions, send us some questions to our email addresses, they are posted on our website.

Harp: Yeah, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com

Robin: Yup, and I hope you check us out again next week 'cause we will have some more podcasts up for you, but for now this has been Robin...

Harp: And Harp...

Robin: And we are signing off.

Harp: Bye everyone.

Detailed Explanation

How to say goodbye or hello

Asami asks about how to say goodbye or hello, or more specifically what gesture, or body movement, goes along with goodbye and hello.

Of course we say “goodbye” and “hello” using the “goodbye” and “hello” words, or other similar expressions, but in most countries there is also a gesture that is done at the same time.

The gesture could be a **kiss** (or two), a **hug**, a **wave**, a **bow** or something else.

Hug

A “**hug**” happens when two people come together and put their arms around each other. Some good friends, or friends who haven’t seen each other lately, **hug** when they greet each other and when they say goodbye.

We also **hug** each other when we have received happy news or to congratulate someone. People also **hug** a friend when the friend is sad about something. **Hugging** someone can make them feel better!



Maura has talked about this with a couple friends (Quebecker and European) and they find that **hugging** is more intimate than **kissing**. Generally, in North American English culture, **kissing** (even just on the cheek) is more intimate than **hugging**.

Bow

“**To bow**” is to bend your body forward at the waist. People in a performance often **bow** at the end of the show. They **bow** towards the audience.

It is also a Japanese tradition to **bow** to someone when you greet them, or when you are saying goodbye. **To bow** is a sign of respect. Robin experienced this **bowing** in Japan and so did Maura when she was there.



We also have another noun “**bow**” which is pronounced differently (with a short “o” sound) and has a different meaning. A **bow** is a piece of material that is tied with usually two loops. The best example is when tying your shoe. You take the strings, or shoe laces, and make a **bow**.

Wave

Does anyone already know what this is? Robin and Maura did an episode about the word “**wave**” some time ago. If you are interested, look back in the episodes to find the Catch Word Podcast – **Wave**.

In this case, a “**wave**” is to lift your hand in the air and move it back and forth. It is a gesture that is usually done from some distance. A **wave** is used all over the world for greetings.

No set rule

Harp talks about her experience **kissing** in France. In the area where Harp lived, they **kissed** each other on the cheek. In Montreal, we **kiss** two times, once on one side of the cheek and the second **kiss** is on the other.

Where Harp lived in France, there was “**no set rule**.” This means that there was not a custom or a regular number of times to **kiss**. “**No set rule**” can be used for any situation where there are no guidelines, and where people can create their own rules.

Each time Harp exchanged **kisses** she didn’t know how many times she should **kiss**. This is the reason for the “crashes.” Some people would stop **kissing** and others would continue. They would “crash” into each other’s faces. There was **no set rule** as to how many times people should **kiss**.

Here is another example:

Joan: Do you know about this game? How many times can we carry the ball?

Ryan: There are **no set rules**. Carry as many times as you want.

Rarely do you see men kissing

In some “**kissing**” cultures, everyone **kisses** everyone else. In some Middle Eastern countries, men **kiss** each other on the cheeks as well.

In Quebec, women **kiss** women and women **kiss** men, but it is not very common to see two men **kiss** each other on the cheeks. Like we say in this episode, it can happen, but it is not expected. When you see two francophone women meet, or a francophone man meeting a woman, **kissing** on the cheeks is quite common.

Professionally

If we talk about greeting **professionally**, the best advice is to shake hands. In a professional environment people do not **hug** or **kiss**, unless they are also good friends.

When Maura left previous jobs, her employers **kissed** her on the cheek on her last day of work. Maura is also from English Canada, like Robin and Harp, and so she found this weird!

English North America

Robin, Harp and Maura are all from the English part of Canada and like they said in this episode, they do not **kiss** on the cheek there. They **hug** a good friend, or **wave**, but they do not generally **kiss** on the cheeks. Some families **kiss**, but not with friends.

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this Lipservice)

- 1. How do people usually say goodbye and hello in Montreal (and the province of Quebec)?**
 - a) a hug
 - b) a handshake
 - c) kisses on both cheeks
 - d) a high-five

- 2. Do all Canadians greet each other with kisses on the cheek?**
 - a) yes
 - b) no

- 3. Which combination of kissing is the LEAST common?**
 - a) woman and woman
 - b) man and man
 - c) woman and man

- 4. Where is bowing a traditional greeting?**
 - a) at Robin's house
 - b) across Canada
 - c) Japan
 - d) France

- 5. Why did Harp say that people sometimes crash into each other in France?**
 - a) because there is no set rule on the number of kisses
 - b) because there is a set rule on the number of kisses
 - c) because they bow and kiss
 - d) because they are clumsy

6. What is another gesture used to say goodbye or hello?

- a) a jump
- b) a clap
- c) a wave
- d) a kick

7. Which gesture is more appropriate in a professional environment?

- a) kisses
- b) high-fives
- c) hugs
- d) handshakes

Answers: 1.c 2.b 3.b 4.c 5.a 6.c 7.d