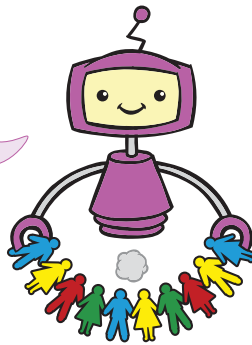


# All the right questions

Yesterday, I ran into an old friend in town who asked me when I was going to be upgraded! Imagine the nerve! I was so offended. I wonder what sorts of questions it would be OK to ask someone from Indonesia. Let's find out ....



## LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 4

Learning Object 3: *Could you please help me?*

## PRIOR LEARNING:

### Stage 3

Module 1 Work Sheet 1: *A few simple questions*

## 1 Is that really what you're wearing?

Have you ever been asked a question that you felt uncomfortable answering? Or have you refused to answer a question someone asked you?

The questions we ask each other, and the information we feel comfortable sharing with friends, relatives, government agencies and our employers is heavily influenced by our cultural heritage, and our ideas about privacy and politeness.

Differences can also occur within a culture, particularly along the lines of class, race, religion, age and gender. For example, a question that would be appropriate to ask a child may not be appropriate to ask a teacher, and while you might ask your neighbour quite personal questions about their health or family, it may not be suitable to ask the same questions if you ever had the opportunity to interview the Prime Minister!

These complex, subtle distinctions between what we should and should not ask can also vary depending on whether the person we are interviewing is from another country or culture. Sometimes, people may ask questions of an Australian, for example, that are based on assumptions about the values, attitudes or beliefs of Australians.

For example, a person from another culture or country may show their genuine interest in an Australian visitor by asking about their age or income. They may even ask questions that will make an Australian feel quite uncomfortable, such as how much rent they are paying, or how much their possessions cost. However, it could be inappropriate for an Australian to respond by asking the same questions of them. In other words, the saying, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do', is not necessarily good advice!

## 2 Please fill in this form

While some of the contexts in which we ask, or are asked, questions are social, at other times we are asked questions in a more formal context. Government agencies, schools and universities, landlords, employers and researchers may ask you to complete forms or surveys, or invite you to participate in interviews.

The questions you are asked in such contexts will partly be guided by rules and regulations about what questions these organisations can ask, and whether they can store or redistribute that information, what information they feel they need to assess your situation, as well as by culturally specific ideas about what is appropriate.

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An Australian social security form, for example, might ask your age, date of birth, address, contact phone numbers, tax file number, details of your income and education, whether you are in a relationship and with whom, any people you live with, and so on. The agency that collects this information is legally obligated not to disclose it to other people without your consent.

In Indonesia, personal privacy is not always considered to be important. While this issue is very important in Western countries, Indonesians are often asked to fill out forms that ask personal details such

as name, address, place and date of birth, religion, marital status, and so on, without a clear indication of how this information will be used. There is no guarantee that this information is not going to be made available to persons who have no right to this information. In the 21st century, where information has become a valuable commodity, Indonesia's trading partners may have different expectations about how information should be handled. Different expectations about privacy can result in a breakdown in trust between trading partners and have serious consequences for international relations.

## Exercises

### Exercise 1

Below are some questions that you might be asked in an informal social situation. Read through them carefully and then answer the questions that follow, in English.

*Apa kabar?*

*Bagaimana kesehatan Anda?*

*Bagaimana keadaan keluarga Anda?*

*Kapan Anda akan selesai sekolah?*

*Kapan Anda akan menikah?*

*Mengapa Anda tidak mempunyai anak?*

*Berapa umur Anda?*

*Saya dengar Anda diberhentikan dari pekerjaan Anda. Apa yang terjadi?*

*Saya lihat Anda membeli mobil baru — bagaimana Anda sanggup membayarnya?*

*Kapan kakak perempuan Anda pulang?*

*Siapa yang Anda pilih pada pemilihan umum terakhir ini?*

*Apa pekerjaan Anda?*

**1.1 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Australian person would feel comfortable asking another Australian? Give reasons for your answer.**

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**1.3 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Indonesian person would feel comfortable asking another Indonesian person? Give reasons for your answer.**

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**1.4 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Indonesian person would feel comfortable asking an Australian? Give reasons for your answer.**

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## Exercise 2

Below are some questions that you might be asked in a more formal interview, or in an official form. Read through them carefully and then answer the questions that follow, in English.

*Berikan semua nomor dan alamat kontak Anda.*

*Berikan nama lengkap dan nama lain (alias) Anda.*

*Berikan tanggal lahir Anda.*

*Berikan rincian mengenai semua orang yang tinggal bersama Anda dan jelaskan hubungan Anda terhadap mereka.*

*Apa status perkawinan Anda?*

*Berapa orang yang menjadi tanggungan Anda?*

*Berapa anak Anda? Berikan rincian mengenai umur dan jenis kelamin mereka.*

*Berapa pendapatan Anda yang dipajak pada tahun anggaran yang baru lewat?*

*Berikan rincian mengenai semua rekening bank Anda.*

*Berikan rincian mengenai pendidikan Anda, termasuk yang diselesaikan dan yang tidak.*

*Berikan rincian mengenai semua kekayaan dan utang Anda.*

*Apakah Anda pernah terbukti melakukan pelanggaran? Kalau ya, berikan penjelasan.*

**2.1 Which of the questions above, if any, would an Australian feel comfortable answering on a form provided by an Australian government agency? Give reasons for your answer.**

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**2.2 Which of the questions, if any, would an Australian feel comfortable answering on a form from a prospective Australian employer? Give reasons for your answer.**

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**2.3 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Indonesian person would feel comfortable answering on a government form? Give reasons for your answer.**

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**2.4 Which of the questions, if any, do you think an Indonesian person would feel comfortable answering on a form provided by a prospective employer? Give reasons for your answer.**

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### Exercise 3

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**3.1** Consider your answers to Exercises 1 and 2. What values, attitudes and/or beliefs inform the differences between the kinds of questions Australians and Indonesian people feel comfortable answering in *informal* situations?

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**3.2** Consider your answers to Exercises 1 and 2. What values, attitudes and/or beliefs inform the differences between the kinds of questions Australians and Indonesian people feel comfortable answering in *formal* situations?

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## Exercise 4

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**4.1** You have been asked to prepare some questions for an interview with an Indonesian musician.

**Write a list of five questions, in Indonesian, that you feel it would be appropriate to ask them.**

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**4.2** You have been asked to prepare some questions for an interview with an Australian musician.

**Write a list of five questions, in Indonesian, that you feel it would be appropriate to ask them.**

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## Exercise 5

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- 5.1** If you were in Indonesia and were asked to provide personal information you did not feel comfortable giving, how would you handle the situation?

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**5.2** What strategies could you use to handle the situation without causing offence to the person asking?

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