Language
The Malaysian language (Bahasa Melayu, or Standard Malay) is an Austronesian language spoken by about 18 million people in Malaysia, Singapore, southern Thailand, Indonesia and Brunei. The name Standard Malay refers specifically to the language of Malaysia, although there are also about 170 million people who speak Bahasa Indonesia, which is a form of Malay.

Officially, the language of business is Bahasa Malayu, but English is widely spoken and commonly used. However, even if your contacts can speak some English, do not assume they will understand all you say. If in English, your presentations should be concise, clear and use easy-to-understand language. If in Malay, do not use an internet translation site. You should hire the services of a good interpreter. For translation, please contact AST Language Services. Visit the website at: www.astlanguage.com

Malaysian culture
Malaysia is a multi-cultural society. Its main ethnic groups are Malays, Chinese and Indians. However, despite being a very diverse, welcoming society, Malaysia remains a fairly conservative and conformist country, valuing respect and deference to authority. Behaviour that departs from established norms is avoided. Society is hierarchical, the family is the centre of the social structure and children are brought up to respect parents and elders at the top. When Malaysians meet someone for the first time, they may ask several personal questions to establish where they fit within the hierarchy. This may seem intrusive to a westerner, but is not intended to be rude. However, despite being hierarchical, in business teamwork and collaboration are encouraged, and all members of the organisation are valued.

General etiquette
Cultural norms for Chinese, Indians and Malays living in Malaysia do vary, and you should be aware of the different nuances in behaviour when working with those of a different background. However, all Malaysians place great importance on courtesy and being non-confrontational. It's difficult for most Malaysians to criticise or give a direct 'yes/no' response to difficult questions, so you should try to avoid putting them in an awkward situation. Avoid raising your voice, angering or insulting others as these can cause loss of face, and can result in them thinking disrespectfully of you. It is therefore best to avoid all public displays of emotion. However, Malaysians are very relaxed and have an easy going, welcoming attitude.
Meeting and greeting
Handshakes are the normal form of greeting, although some Malay women may not shake hands with men. If in doubt, wait to see if the woman extends her hand first. If not, then a slight bow of the head with your hand on your heart is normal. In a team, the most senior are always introduced first.

Business etiquette
Meetings should be arranged well in advance and confirmed the day beforehand, but best to avoid Fridays as this is a day of prayer for Muslims. A letter of introduction is often a good way to guarantee a meeting. The Chinese are likely to be punctual, but Malays and Indians may arrive a little late. Do not get frustrated if this is the case, as it is perfectly normal, and Malaysians expect signs of good etiquette. You should arrive on time as this shows respect for your hosts.

Business relationships develop slowly in Malaysia, as Malaysians will want to get to know you well, so it can take many meetings over months or even years to forge a successful partnership – a one-off visit, or merely video conferencing – will not be sufficient.

Being a hierarchical society, issues may need extensive discussion at all levels – often over drinks, lunch or dinner – before final decisions are made by senior management. Indeed the purpose of the discussions will not be so much about business as about deepening the relationship.

Business cards
Your business cards should be printed in Malay on one side. Hand them face-up and with both hands, and offer to the person with the highest social status first. Receive cards with both hands and study before keeping, ideally making a polite comment. Do not write on them or put in a back pocket!

Presentations
Presentations should be factual and easy to understand, including facts and figures to back up your conclusions. Avoid making exaggerated claims – Malaysians prefer to conduct business with people who are honest and do not brag about their accomplishments or financial achievements. Always avoid confrontational behaviour and high-pressure sales tactics. Make use of an official interpreter if appropriate, and do not assume all attendees will necessarily have a good command of English.

Interpreters
Communication styles are sensitive and courteous, with care being taken not to offend. Straightforwardness is valued in Malaysia and English widely understood. However, there may be times when you require an interpreter. For translation, please contact AST Language Services. Visit the website at: www.astlanguage.com

Malaysia public holidays 2017

Date:  
Day:  
Holiday:  
Area notes:

10th February
Friday
Thaipusam
Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Penang & Selangor

4th March
Saturday
Anniversary of Installation of Sultan of Terengganu
Terengganu

23rd March
Thursday
Sultan of Johor's birthday
Johor

14th April
Friday
Easter - Good Friday
Sabah & Sarawak
15th April
Saturday
Declaration of Malacca as a historical city
Malacca
24th April
Monday
Isra & Mi'raj
Kedah, Negeri Sembilan & Perlis
26th April
Wednesday
Sultan of Terengganu's birthday
Terengganu
1st May
Monday
Labour Day
National
7th May
Sunday
Hari Hol Pahang
Pahang
10th May
Wednesday
Wesak Day

National

17th May

Wednesday

Raja Perlis' birthday

Perlis

27th May

Saturday

Awal Ramadan

Johor, Kedah & Malacca

30th May

Tuesday

Harvest Festival

Sabah & Labuan

31st May

Wednesday

Harvest Festival

Sabah & Labuan

1st June

Thursday

Hari Gawai

Sarawak

2nd June
Friday
Hari Gawai
Sarawak
3rd June
Saturday
Agong’s birthday
National
12th June
Monday
Nuzul Al-Quran
Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur, Labuan, Pahang, Perak, Perlis, Penang, Putrajaya, Selangor & Terengganu
26th June
Monday
Hari Raya Aidilfitri
National
27th June
Tuesday
Hari Raya Aidifitri
National
7th July
Friday
Georgetown World Heritage City Day
Penang
8th July
Saturday
Penang Governor's birthday
Penang
22nd July
Saturday
Sarawak's Independence
Sarawak
31st August
Thursday
National Day / Merdeka Day
National
1st September
Friday
Hari Raya Haji
National
2nd September
Saturday
Hari Raya Haji
Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis & Terengganu
9th September
Saturday
Sarawak Governor's birthday
Sarawak
16th September
Saturday
Malaysia Day
National
22nd September
Friday
Awal Muharram
National
7th October
Saturday
Sabah Governor's birthday
Sabah
13th October
Friday
Malacca Governor's birthday
Malacca
19th October
Thursday
Deepavali
National (except Sarawak)
24th October
Tuesday
Sultan of Pahang's birthday
Pahang
26th October
Thursday
Hari Hol Almarhum Sultan Iskandar
Johor
3rd November
Friday
Sultan of Perak's birthday
Perak
11th November
Saturday
Sultan of Kelantan's birthday
Kelantan
12th November
Sunday
Sultan of Kelantan's birthday
Kelantan
1st December
Friday
Prophet Muhammad's birthday
National
11th December
Monday

Sultan of Selangor’s birthday

Selangor

25th December

Monday

Christmas

National

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