



WHY WE SHAKE HANDS

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PDF 1: Reading Passage + Comprehension

Title: Why We Shake Hands – Reading & Comprehension

Level: Pre-Intermediate to Intermediate (A2–B1)

Time: 20–30 minutes



Vocabulary

Word	Meaning	Sounds like
gesture	a movement of the hand or body to express an idea	JES-chur
trust	belief that someone is honest and reliable	trust
weapon	something used to fight or attack	WEP-un
tradition	a custom or belief passed down over time	tra-DISH-un
impression	the way someone or something seems to others	im-PRESH-un

Discussion Questions

1. Do you like shaking hands? Why or why not?
2. What is the normal greeting in your culture?
3. Have you ever had an awkward handshake moment?

Reading Passage

Why We Shake Hands

When two people meet, they often shake hands. But have you ever wondered why we do this?

The tradition started more than 2,500 years ago in ancient Greece. When two men met, they would shake hands to show they were not carrying a weapon. By offering their right hand (the hand most people use to hold a sword), they were saying: "I come in peace. I trust you."

This simple gesture of trust slowly spread through Europe and eventually around the world. Over time, the handshake became a common way to greet someone, make a deal, or say hello and goodbye.

Today, handshakes are used in many situations — job interviews, business meetings, sports, and meeting new people. However, greetings are different in every culture. Some people bow, others kiss on the cheek, and some just wave or nod their head.

A good handshake is usually firm but not too strong. A weak "dead fish" handshake can give a bad first impression!

So next time you shake someone's hand, remember: you are continuing a very old tradition that began with ancient warriors showing they were friends, not enemies.

Comprehension Questions

A. True or False

True / False

1. The handshake started in ancient Rome.
2. Ancient Greeks shook hands to show they had no weapons.
3. A weak handshake can give a bad first impression.
4. Everyone in the world greets others the same way.

B. Multiple Choice

1. Why did ancient Greeks shake hands?
 - a) To show they were happy
 - b) To show they were not carrying a weapon
 - c) To say goodbye
2. What is a "dead fish" handshake?
 - a) A very strong handshake
 - b) A very weak and soft handshake
 - c) A handshake underwater

C. Short Answer

1. When and where did the handshake tradition begin?
2. Why is the right hand used for shaking hands?
3. Name two different ways people greet each other around the world.