

Do's and Don'ts sheet for Malawi  
Partners Worldwide 2006

1. Do not think you are in your country. Pay attention to your surroundings and imitate as much as possible the way local folks interact with each other. Be observant and sensitive.
2. Take things with your right hand. Avoid (as much as possible) using your left hand while receiving something or eating. Eating fried chicken in the village sometimes involves using both hands!
3. When greeted, greet back with a smile and hand-shake (or in the same way you were greeted).
4. Wash you hands before eating.
5. EAT what's put before you! Don't just play with it. Food is a serious issue in Malawi where there is an annual hungry time. It is not for playing with, throwing, joking about... These folks are sharing openly from their little. You, in your much must receive it graciously and thereby allow them the joy of giving.
6. Men do not shake hands with women unless the woman extends her hand to you first.
7. Malawians generally dress more formally than North Americans. Women should avoid shorts, sleeveless shirts, and transparent dresses. Men and women alike should avoid shorts, sandals, and other casual attire except around the hotel. In the village, women should wear a *chitenje* (chee.TEHN.jay) – a 2-meter x 1 meter wrap around that is wrapped at the waist over your skirt/dress.
8. Men and women do not mix freely in the village. Men tend to be around men and women tend to be around women.
9. Take toilet paper to the village.
10. If you are offered fruit in the village, you may eat it. If a guide is around, it never hurts to ask if it is ok to eat the fruit. Never eat food that is prepared on the roadside unless you are confident that your stomach will be able to handle it.

If you ever have questions, never hesitate to ask a Malawian or a guide for help.

Malawians are very gracious people and will overlook most cultural gaffs as long as the guest has a humble, warm spirit and is making every effort to interact with the host culture and people as EQUALS.