

Teaching about other cultures – dos and don'ts

How would you reflect life in Britain with just one image? It would be impossible. Anyone not familiar with Britain would get a very unbalanced view. The same difficulties arise when teaching about other cultures. Here is a handy list of dos and don'ts for teachers to refer to.

Curriculum	
Dos	Don'ts
Present a balanced view of other people and places. Including opposites is one way of ensuring a more complete picture, e. g., urban as well as rural, modern as well as traditional.	Don't refer to Asian and African countries with language that reinforces stereotypes, such as 'tribes', 'remote villages'. Steer well clear of derogatory terms, such as 'primitive', 'underdeveloped', 'uncivilised'.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you want to focus on Africa during a multicultural week, select a particular region or a country in Africa rather than the whole continent. • Move beyond stereotypical images of masks and drumming to explore the work of contemporary African artists, musicians, inventors and environmentalists. 	Don't generalise about people, country and continents. Do not use a single example, such as an African house, to represent an entire continent; acknowledge that Africa is a continent of 55 diverse countries and many cultures.
Highlight the practical, sustainable and environmentally friendly aspects of a traditional or community technology.	Don't draw unfair comparisons – a claypot, designed to keep water cool, cannot be compared with western household china. Often differences in housing, food and transport are the result of what is appropriate for a particular situation and what is available locally.
Go beyond festivals and celebrate a wide range of key events. Do you make the most of Black History Month, Refugee Week, Fairtrade Fortnight?	

Displays	
Dos	Don'ts
Display a poster with 'welcome' or 'hello' written in many different languages. Use multilingual signs around school to demonstrate that the languages spoken by the children are valued.	
Show examples of high achievement in other cultures, societies and traditions, not in 'the west' only. These are to be found in all areas of human endeavour and we have as much to learn from others as they do from us.	Don't display images only of white, middle class, able-bodied western people.
Draw similarities in the lives led by people across the world. For example, show children engaging in sport and leisure pursuits with their families just as children do here.	Don't just use exotic images which stress the differences
Display where relatives/friends live and places pupils have visited on a world map.	Avoid world maps which distort the areas of countries in favour of the Northern hemisphere. Instead, use maps with equal area projections, such as the Eckert, to reflect the real world.