

1st STATION

YOUR TASK: Read the first part of an article about the Canadian niceness. Then everybody has to write a short summary of it in 4-5 complex sentences. The highlighted words and expressions should be built in the short summary. DO NOT COPY complete parts of the authentic sentences. Your group should create **one final summary** then give this written solution to your teacher for correcting that. You have 15 minutes.

Max.points: 10 points

Can Canada teach the rest of us to be nicer?

By Eric Weiner 19th March 2015

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20150311-can-canada-teach-the-rest-of-us-to-be-nicer>



Life is hard enough, with plenty of jagged edges and pointy bits. Why not coat it with a glaze of **politeness** and **humility**?

Every August my family embarks on that great American ritual: the road trip. And we always head north. Canada may not be the most exotic of destinations, but sometimes, exotic is overrated. Canada tempts us with familiarity, blissfully cool weather and, most of all, a deep reservoir of niceness.

We experience Canadian nice as soon as we reach customs. The US border guards are gruff and all business. The Canadians, by contrast, are **unfailingly polite**, even as they grill us about the number of wine bottles we're bringing into the country. One year, we had failed to notice that our 9-year-old daughter's passport had **expired**. They, nicely, let us enter anyway. The niceness continues for our entire trip, as we encounter nice waiters, nice hotel clerks, nice strangers.

Canadian niceness is pure, and untainted by the passive-aggressive undertones found in American niceness (*have a good day, or else!*). It's also abundant. Canada is to niceness as Saudi Arabia is to oil. It's awash in the stuff, and it's about time, I say, the rest of the world imported some. (France, Russia and the UK topped **one recent list of rude countries** as perceived by travellers.) Researchers have yet to analyse Canadian niceness empirically, but studies have found that Canadians, perhaps in an effort not to offend, use an **overabundance**

of “hedge words”, such as “could be” and “not bad”. Then there is the most coveted of Canadian words: “sorry”. Canadians will **apologize for** anything **and to** anything.

“I’ve apologized to a tree that I walked into,” confessed Michael Valpy, a journalist and author, noting that many of his fellow citizens have done the same.

Traffic in Toronto and Montreal may be awful, but “you almost never hear a horn, even in the most frustrating traffic jams”, said Jeffrey Dvorkin, a Canadian journalism professor at the University of Toronto. **Horn-honking** is regarded as **unnecessarily** aggressive. And murder rates in Canada are low, he said, partly because “it’s quite rude to murder someone”.

The Canadian press is rife with examples of niceness in action. For instance, the **National Post** reported that in Edmonton, a law student, Derek Murray, left his headlights on all day. When he returned to his car, he found the **battery** drained and a note on his windshield. “I noticed you left your lights on,” it read. “The battery will probably not have enough charge to start your vehicle. I left a blue **extension cord** on the fence and ... a battery charger beside the fence in the cardboard box.” The note went on to explain exactly how to jump-start the vehicle. “Good luck,” it added. In Ontario, a thief **returned the goods he or she stole** with \$50 attached to a letter of apology. “I can’t put it into words how sorry I am,” the thief explained. “Please find it in your hearts to forgive the stranger who harmed you.”

2nd STATION

Reading an authentic article (2nd half)

YOUR TASK: One of you should read the second half of the article maximum twice for the others. Everybody should listen to it and take notes of its content then create **one final content** with the other members of the team. You need to build your work upon your good memory. Check your work with the help of the given key in the envelope. If you have the same words or expressions, you can get one point. This task is self-corrected. The reader student might check the final content. You have 15 minutes.

Max.points: 10 points

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20150311-can-canada-teach-the-rest-of-us-to-be-nicer>

Canadians aren't only polite; they're incredibly humble too, and reluctant to take credit for even plainly heroic acts. When a gunman attacked the Canadian parliament building in October 2014, Kevin Vickers, Canada's sergeant-at-arms, responded quickly and calmly by shooting the assailant with the handgun he keeps in his office. And while Vickers was glorified in the Canadian media, it was his humility, not his marksmanship or bravado, that was celebrated. (Canadians take great pride in their humility, an oxymoron that bothers no one.)

What explains this blizzard of humility and politeness? Taras Grescoe, a Montreal-based writer, believes Canadian niceness is born of necessity. "We're a small group of people, spread across the second-largest national territory in the world," he said. "We've always known that, in order to survive – or just stay sane – we had to watch out for one another. The old lady down the street, the teenager at the bus stop who forgot to bring a scarf when it's 5 below. Hence our general willingness to proffer assistance rather than aggression."

Another explanation for Canadian niceness stems from the "fragment theory". First posited by the US scholar Louis Hartz, the theory states that colonial societies such as the United States and Canada began as "fragments" of the European nations they were escaping from. These new nations remain, in effect, frozen in time. Thus, Canada retains a conservative, Tory streak – that is, with a more deferential, "nicer" nature than the one embraced by the feisty US founding fathers.

Not everyone believes this is a good thing. Valpy sees Canadian niceness as a defence mechanism, one that "stems from inferiority and an awkward awareness that our clothes don't fit properly and we always have bad haircuts and really don't do anything great."

Also, in the land of nice, problems sometimes fester because everyone is too nice to say anything. Manjushree Thapa, a writer who recently moved to Canada from Nepal, recalls sitting in a movie theatre when the screen grew dimmer and dimmer as the projection bulb slowly burned out. The screen was almost black but no one spoke up. Exasperated, she finally prodded her Canadian partner to alert the management, which he did, reluctantly. "Niceness can silence people here," she said.

Overall, though, she'll take nice any day. And so will I. Life is hard enough, with plenty of jagged edges and pointy bits. Why not coat it with a glaze of politeness and humility? Politeness, at its best, is a way of honouring others, especially strangers. Politeness is the lubricant that makes social interactions run smoothly and reduces the risk of conflagrations. The world, I think, would be a better place if we were all a bit more Canadian.

Fortunately, Canadian niceness is contagious. On my annual northern migration, I find myself slowing down, saying "thank you" and "please" more often than I usually do. Maybe I go too far and cross the line from polite to unctuous. If I do, I can only say, in true Canadian fashion, I'm sorry.

*Eric Weiner is a recovering malcontent and philosophical traveler. He is the author of, among other books, [The Geography of Bliss](#) and the forthcoming [The Geography of Genius](#). **Follow him on Twitter.***

2nd STATION Answer sheet

You can get one point if you have the same words or expressions included in the content.

- incredibly humble
- born of necessity
- was glorified
- at the bus stop
- European nations
- general willingness
- defence mechanism
- stems from
- honouring others
- niceness is contagious

Max.points: 10 points

3rd STATION

Vocabulary quiz

YOUR TASK: Find the right meaning of the given words as fast as you can. You can use any kind of online monolingual dictionary except Google Translator. Pay attention to the context of the word or expression. You can get a point if you have the appropriate definition. You have 20 minutes.

Max.points: 24 points

Can Canada teach the rest of us to be nicer?

ENGLISH	ENGLISH DEFINITION
1. glaze of politeness and humility	
2. to embark	
3. to be blissful	
4. unfailingly polite	
5. to expire	
6. expiry date	
7. to be gruff	
8. to be untainted	
9. to be abundant	
10. overabundance	
11. to covet	
12. the battery drained	
13. windshield	
14. extension cord	
15. apology	
16. to be reluctant	
17. sergeant-at-arms	
18. bravado	
19. blizzard of humility	
20. to be sane/insane	
21. to proffer	
22. hence	
23. to posit	
24. to be deferential	

3rd STATION Answer sheet

ENGLISH	ENGLISH meaning
1. glaze of politeness and humility	thin layer/coating of politeness and modesty
2. to embark	to go on board a ship
3. to be blissful	delightful/extremely happy
4. unfailingly polite	constantly polite
5. to expire	to become invalid
6. expiry date	the date on which something comes to an end
7. to be gruff	to be rough/unfriendly
8. to be untainted	not contaminated, or polluted
9. to be abundant	Something that is abundant is present in large quantities.
10. overabundance	a supply or amount that is greater than required
11. to covet	to desire
12. the battery drained	the battery exhausted
13. windshield	the glass window of the car at the front
14. extension cord	an extra length of cable that can be added to an electric lead
15. apology	something that you say in order to tell someone that you are sorry that you have hurt them or caused trouble for them
16. to be reluctant	to be unwilling
17. sergeant-at-arms	an officer of a legislative body who is responsible for maintaining internal order
18. bravado	appearance of courage, boasting
19. blizzard of humility	great amount of modesty
20. to be sane/insane	rational/foolish
21. to proffer	to propose
22. hence	therefore
23. to posit	to state
24. to be deferential	to be respectful

Max. points: 24 points

4th STATION

VIDEO

YOUR TASK: Watch the youtube video about Shawn Mendes in the carpool karaoke and take notes about any Canadian features and the signs or examples of the real Canadian niceness which are represented by Shawn. If you want to get extra points you should collect as many famous songs from the singer as you can. You have 25 minutes.

Max.points: 5 points + 5 extra points

Shawn Mendes Carpool Karaoke

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jodbdj52Vc0>

4th STATION Answer sheet

1. Horn-honking is not used in Canada.
2. Shawn is willing to pay for Justin Bieber's underpants.
3. Shawn Mendes never shouts at anybody.
4. Shawn is always kind and nice.
5. Canadians like playing ice-hockey.
6. SONGS (in the right order) during the video:
 - **There's nothing holding me back**
 - **In my blood**
 - **Mercy**
 - **Treat you better**
 - **Lost in Japan**

Max.points: 5 points + 5 extra points