Twelve Tips for Living in the South [1]

September 18, 2017 Advice [2]
Truth-telling [3]
Communication [4]

Feature by Allison Futterman

A Primer for Northern Transplants



I'm a native New Yorker, born and bred. I always will be, regardless of where I live. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, I spent several years in Los Angeles, where there are tons of New Yorkers, but I couldn't have felt less at home. I hated the superficiality. Then a confluence of circumstances led me to Charlotte, North Carolina—about as far from subway fumes and neighborhood delis as you can get.

I admit, it was an adjustment for me. But after living in the South for more than a decade, I've become accustomed to Southern sensibilities. I've stopped lamenting what's missing here and now appreciate what *can* be found. It took some work to assimilate, but I've learned to live harmoniously among the blooming trees, Sunday church traffic, and love of bacon. You can, too, by keeping the following tips in mind.

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

1. Religion Matters



Try not to look shocked when you see people praying before they eat, offering to pray for you, and praising Jesus at every opportunity. *God, family, work*. This is the proper order. The longer I'm here, the more sense it makes to me. You may even find the abundance of true faith to be inspiring and uplifting—regardless of what religion you are or aren't.

---

2. Don't Be Fooled by the Accent



I find a Southern drawl to be charming, but transplants tend to incorrectly correlate an accent with limited intelligence. There's an abundance of common sense here regardless of educational level. Many self-educated people have life experiences that go way beyond what you might initially think. The South is home to some elite educational institutions, so you may be speaking with someone who has a Ph.d. Don't judge. Get to know people on an individual basis.



3. There Is Culture—Really

There's nothing like the buzz and energy of NYC with its endless cultural options. But I've availed myself of more culture in Charlotte than I ever did in Los Angeles. I've found a passion for music, art, food, and theater in the South that beats the superficial car obsessiveness of LA. The venues are always packed, whether the event is a traveling Broadway show like *The Book of Mormon* or *Jersey Boys*; Beethoven performed by one of several North Carolina-based orchestras; an exhibit at the Levine Museum of the New South; a Southern food festival in Charlotte, Charleston,

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

or Asheville; or a literary festival such as Central Piedmont Community College's annual Sensoria.



4. Monogramming Matters

Learn it. Live it. Love it. If you don't, at least realize that anything monogramed is the perfect hostess or birthday gift.

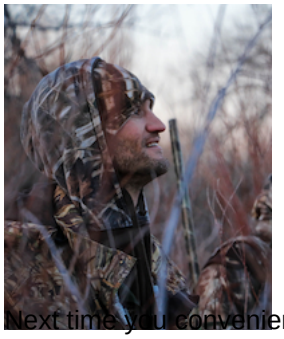
---

5. Accept Male Chivalry

Southern male stereotypes are partly true—in a good way. A lot of men here love their trucks. They hunt. They know how to fix and build things, and they're self-reliant. They don't feel the need to apologize for their masculinity. *Nor should they.* There are jerks in the South like everywhere else, but many Southern men are still chivalrous. If you're offended by a man holding a door for you, you're in the wrong place.

---

6. Don't Look Down on Hunting

Next time you conveniently buy meat at the supermarket, think twice about judging people who hunt for their food. People in the South know about the land, animals, and plants. They understand the ecosystem. They grow their own tomatoes and peppers and okra. They've made the clay work for them. Just look at the beautiful gardens and stunning brick houses.

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

7. Get Used to Big Families



Families with one or two kids may seem like the norm to you, but in the South, many people love having big families. Family is a priority. Siblings look out for each other. They hold hands when they walk in a parking lot. They call their parents “momma” and “daddy” even when they’re adults.



8. Be Polite

Good manners are expected. Southerners are taught “please” and “thank you” from the moment they start talking. You will be amazed by how lovely this is to be around.



9. Slow Down Your Talking

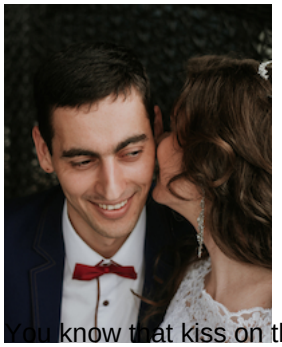
And back up a little. Northerners are close talkers—not so much in the South.

And cut back on the F-bombs.

---

10. Don’t Kiss People in Public

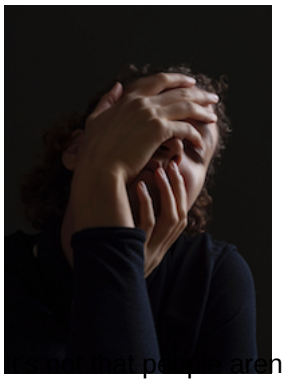
(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');



You know that kiss on the cheek you give everyone from your friends to your hairdresser to your regular waitress at your favorite restaurant in Brooklyn? Just don't. Southerners will do hugs, but I've had to learn how to restrain myself from giving enthusiastic tight clinches. Loosen it up a little. Try a motion that approximates tapping someone's back.

---

11. Keep Your Emotions in Check



It's not that people aren't affectionate here; they're just more private about it. The same goes for expressing emotions. People feel them, they just don't always show them, especially to anyone outside their inner circle. In the South, there is a lot of stoicism and quiet strength. Talking about money is usually a no-no. (But because people are people, I've observed that talking about sex is no problem.)



12. Learn the Art of Subtlety

"We have to get together" does not necessarily mean "We will be getting together." It's just a pleasantry that's passed among people in the South. It could mean someone wants to make plans, or it could mean nothing. You'll eventually get a sense of who is sincere and who isn't. You'll need to use more subtlety here. You need to have patience. Not everything has to be so loud, blunt, or to the point. Sometimes, it's more effective to work around the

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

edges of a topic, using nuance.

Take the time to feel out a situation before you speak. Actually, that's not a bad idea wherever you live.

Art Information

- "Dandgure's Cafeteria Mural [5]" © Brent Moore; Creative Commons license.
- Thumbnails:

1. Stock image by Matthieu Comoy. [6]
2. " [7]Hey Y'all Sign" [8] © Gregory Morris; Creative Commons license.
3. Stock image by Clem Onojeghuo. [9]
4. Cover of 1896 edition of *The American Claimant* by Mark Twain [10]; public domain.
5. Stock image by aliceabc0 [11].
6. Stock image by Rhett Noonan. [12]
7. "Luncheon of the Boating Party [13]" by Pierre-Auguste Renoir; public domain.
8. Calvin Coolidge giving a "Tip o' the Hat" [14]; public domain.
9. Oil painting of men having a conversation [15] by Arnold Lakhovsky; public domain.
10. Stock image by Zoriana Stakhniv. [16]
11. Stock image by Kat Love. [17]
12. "I Love New York Tattoo" [18] © Lawrence Sinclair; Creative Commons license.



Allison Futterman is a freelance writer who has been published in print and online. She's written for *Charlotte*, *The Writer*, and *Winston-Salem Monthly* magazines, among others. She writes creative nonfiction, poetry, and flash fiction.

For more information, see Allison Futterman's website [19].

Source URL: https://mail.talkingwriting.com/twelve-tips-living-south

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

Links:
[1] https://mail.talkingwriting.com/twelve-tips-living-south
[2] https://mail.talkingwriting.com/tw-issue-themes/writing-advice
[3] https://mail.talkingwriting.com/tw-channels-and-categories/truth-telling
[4] https://mail.talkingwriting.com/tw-channels-and-categories/communication
[5] https://www.flickr.com/photos/brent_nashville/2209263556/
[6] https://unsplash.com/photos/w2fTKLN3CJU
[7] https://www.flickr.com/photos/powellburns/33693503050
[8] https://www.flickr.com/photos/24550737@N04/8173178136
[9] https://unsplash.com/photos/xJXxMR5PXoY
[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monogram#/media/File:Mark_Twain-The_American_Claimant-1896-Logo_on_Cover.jpg
[11] https://pixabay.com/en/nature-love-couple-in-love-grooms-1790142/
[12] https://unsplash.com/photos/799IZNkVopA
[13] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luncheon_of_the_Boating_Party#/media/File:Pierre-Auguste_Renoir_-_Luncheon_of_the_Boating_Party_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg
[14] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hat_tip#/media/File:Coolidge_after_signing_indian_treaty.jpg
[15] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arnold_Lakhovsky_Conversation.png#/media/File:Arnold_Lakhovsky_Conversation.png
[16] https://unsplash.com/photos/QD6ug4ie7y4
[17] https://unsplash.com/photos/zncUDOR-Ie8
[18] https://www.flickr.com/photos/lws/6141762198
[19] http://www.allisonfutterman.com/

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');