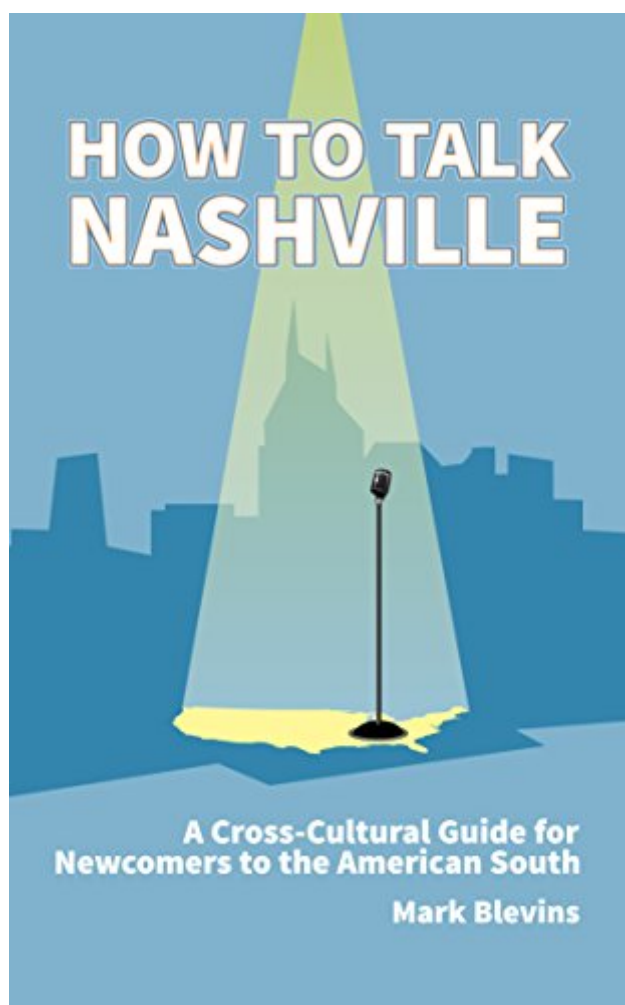


The book was found

How To Talk Nashville: A Cross-Cultural Guide For Newcomers To The American South



Synopsis

There's something different about the American South. It's not the ain'ts and y'all's or a special affinity for fried chicken, moonshine, and Moon Pies. What's so different down South has to do with the way Southerners perceive, interpret, and interact with the world. *How to Talk Nashville* examines this region through the eyes of a cross-culturalist and discovers a people fundamentally distinct from the American archetype. Interweaving scenarios and stories with behavioral science, history and cross-cultural research, *How to Talk Nashville* offers an interpretation of Southern culture for both newcomer and native. If you seek a deeper awareness of life in the American South, this is your book.

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Customer Reviews

I'll start with my conclusion: this book by Mark Blevins is a revelation. It's meticulously researched, highly entertaining, endlessly insightful, and presented in concise, lively, well-crafted prose. I'd recommend it to anyone interested in southern culture and

communication habits. The book bills itself as a guide, a "how-to," for negotiating the cross-cultural communication rift between those from the American South and the rest of the country. Most specifically, it's intended to guide newcomers to the South as they make their way in what is, Blevins argues, a culture clearly distinct from that of the country as a whole. One might imagine the book would provide a list of southern terms and phrases, but this is no typical step-by-step sort of manual. It's not filled with exercises, glossaries, or trite lists of uninspired advice. That's not a failure to deliver, but evidence of a thoughtful strategy for addressing the complexity of the topic. The implication is if one truly wants to understand southern communication strategies, one must begin by understanding the culture, its history, and how those factors have shaped southern identity and customs. It's not about the "aunts" and the "y'all's," he explains; it's about understanding the foundations that gave rise to a uniquely southern point of view and corresponding means of interaction. In many ways, it's more descriptive than prescriptive. There is, however, a very explicit list of advice for intercultural communication between northerners and southerners in Ch. 6, but the book's strongest insights can't be framed in bullet-points. Blevins digs into history, literature, behavioral science, and sociology to offer some general insight before diving into specifics. The depth of research he provides exceeds expectations. Blevins is a professional journalist, but it's clear that his investment into this topic is deeply personal, leaving no stone unturned. Ultimately, a long list of sources are cited in these pages, ranging from Emerson and Hemingway to scientific luminaries like Ting-Toomey and Gudykunst and renowned historians such as C. Vann Woodward and David Hackett Fischer. I would have been interested in a linguistic line of inquiry in addition to the others, but perhaps that's best saved for another book. Despite the rigorous study that went into this book's creation, the result is highly accessible and always entertaining. Blevins manages to select and condense his scholastic findings such that they never bog down the reading experience. He's done all the painstaking, tedious labor for us, leaving us with a well-polished, concise book that can be read and understood in a few hours. And this is really what impresses me most: the balance of scholarship, original insight, deft prose, humorous anecdotes and imaginings, and ultimately the great service he offers readers—that is, a model for understanding "How to Talk Nashville" all in a very tidy, well-organized package that's a pleasure to read. It's easy to imagine many ways in which this book could have taken a wrong turn, but Blevins somehow avoids every pitfall—or if he can't, he at least makes explicit the book's limitations. He offers a sense of objectivity without woodenness. I never sense in

these pages a political or cultural bias (other than a genuine fascination with all the cultures that comprise this nation). It's not a book that bashes one culture in favor of another (so look elsewhere if that's what you're hoping for). It's culturally sensitive and even-handed without any awkward straining. There is, however, a nagging sense that the conclusions here risk over-simplification or generalization, but Blevins recognizes, addresses, and accounts for those concerns, which are ultimately unavoidable in this particular project, though they must be kept in mind at all times. Blevins considers and allows for complexities and shades of gray while presenting a practical model based on thoughtful research, as well as ideas for applying that model in our workaday lives. I thought at first this was the sort of book I'd want to read only once, soaking up the information and then moving on, but having read through it a few times now, it turns out that each successive reading not only continues to deliver a great experience, but never fails to offer new insights and food for thought I didn't fully register on first read. It may well be possible to skim this and pick up the info you're looking for, but I'd urge you to read it cover to cover and enjoy it. I'd certainly recommend it for its intended audience, but I can't imagine that a wide range of people interested in American culture—southerners and northerners alike—wouldn't both enjoy and learn from this book. Full disclosure: as may be obvious by now, I'm not just a casual reader of this work. The author hired me to help edit it and we worked together extensively for months (representing only a small fraction of the time the author put into it). To be clear, I have no financial interest in its sales or marketing, nor am I being compensated in any way for writing this review. Nor am I, for that matter, advertising my own services or even mentioning the name of my business. I volunteered to write this review because it's a fantastic book and I hope it finds many appreciative readers. As a southerner myself, currently living in the Pacific Northwest, this work has provided me with a fresh and meaningful perspective on my own communication habits and helped me to better understand the people and culture that shaped me.

I was pleasantly surprised that *How to Talk Nashville: A Cross-Cultural Guide for Newcomers to the American South* was much more than a guide. The book included substantial, interesting, and insightful discussions on the history and sociology explaining the differences between communication and social interactions for Southerners vs Northerners. Explanations offered included the settlement of the South by Cavaliers vs Puritans, which led to a collectivist rather than individualistic perspective and approach, and to a high contextual style of communication that differs significantly from rest of the US. The book is well written, entertaining and educational. While the title

and even some of the chapter names hint that this could be a mostly humorous look at the topic, the reality is that this is a serious study of the social and communication differences in the South, punctuated with some humor.

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