

## 155 Excerpts from Donald E. Brown's List of Human Universals

Originally compiled in 1989 and published in 1991, the list consists primarily of universals of behavior, and overt language noted by ethnographers. It does not list deeper universals of mental structure that are revealed by theory experiments. It also omits near-universals (traits that most, but not all exhibit), and conditional universals ("If a culture has trait A, it always trait B"). For discussion and references, see Brown's *Human Universals* (1991) and his entry "Human Universals" in *The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences & Keil, 1999*.

1. Anticipation
2. Attachment
3. Beliefs about disease
4. Beliefs about fortune and misfortune
5. Binary cognitive distinctions
6. Biological mother and social mother
7. Classification
8. Classification of age
9. Classification of behavioral propensities
10. Classification of body parts
11. Classification of colors
12. Critical learning periods
13. Differential valuations
14. Dominance/submission
15. Fairness (equity), concept of
16. Fear of death
17. Future, attempts to predict
18. Generosity admired
19. Gestures
20. Gift giving
21. Good and bad distinguished
22. Gossip
23. Government
24. Grammar
25. Group living
26. Groups that are not based on family
27. Habituation
28. Hairstyles
29. Hand (word for)
30. Healing the sick (or attempting to)
31. Hope
32. Hospitality
33. Hygienic care
34. Identity, collective
35. Incest between mother and son unthinkable or tabooed

36. Incest, prevention or avoidance
37. In-group distinguished from out-group(s)
38. In-group, biases in favor of
39. Inheritance rules
40. Insulting
41. Intention
42. Interest in bioforms (living things)
  
43. Judging others
  
44. Language employed to manipulate others
45. Language employed to misinform or mislead
46. Language is translatable
47. Language not a simple reflection of reality language, prestige from proficient use of
48. Law (rights and obligations)
49. Law (rules of membership)
50. Leaders
51. Lever
52. Likes and dislikes making comparisons
53. Linguistic redundancy
54. Logical notions
55. Logical notion of "and"
56. Logical notion of "equivalent"
57. Logical notion of "general/particular".
58. Logical notion of "not" logical notion of "opposite"
59. Logical notion of "part/whole"
60. Logical notion of , 'same"
  
61. Magic
62. Magic to increase life
63. Magic to sustain life
64. Magic to win love
65. Male and female and adult and child seen as having different natures
66. Males, on average, travel greater distances over lifetime
67. Males engage/in more coalitional violence
68. Marriage
69. Materialism
70. Meal times
71. Meaning, most units of are non-universal
72. Measuring
73. Medicine
74. Melody
75. Memory
76. Mental maps
77. Metaphor
78. Metonym
79. Mood- or consciousness- altering techniques and/or substances
80. Morphemes
81. Mother normally has consort during child- rearing years
82. Mourning
83. Murder proscribed
84. Music
85. Music, children's

86. Music related in part to dance
87. Music related in part to religious activity
88. Music seen as art (a creation)
89. Music, vocal
90. Music, vocal, includes speech forms
91. Musical redundancy
92. Musical repetition
93. Musical variation
  
94. Onomatopoeia
95. Overestimating
96. Objectivity of thought
  
97. Pain
98. Past/present/future
99. Person, concept of personal names
100. Phonemes
101. Phonemes defined by sets of minimally contrasting features
102. Phonemes, merging of
103. Phonemes, range from 10 to 70 in number
104. Phonemic change, inevitability of
105. Phonemic change, rules of phonemic system
106. Planning
107. Planning for future
108. Play
109. Play to perfect skills
110. Poetry/rhetoric
111. Poetic line, uniform length range
112. Poetic lines characterized by repetition and variation
113. Poetic lines demarcated by pauses
114. Polysemy (one word has several related meanings)
115. Possessive, intimate
116. Precedence, concept of (that's how the leopard got its spots)
117. Pretend play
118. Pride
119. Proverbs, sayings
  
120. Resistance to abuse of power, to dominance
121. Risk taking
  
122. Self-control
123. Self-image, awareness of (concern for what others think)
124. Self-image, manipulation of
125. Self-image, wanted to be positive
126. Sex differences in spatial cognition and behavior
127. Shame
128. Statuses, ascribed and achieved
129. Statuses distinguished from individuals
130. Statuses on other than sex, age, or kinship bases
131. Stinginess, disapproval of
132. Stop/nonstop contrasts (in speech sounds)
133. Succession
134. Sucking wounds

135. *Sweets* preferred
136. Symbolism
137. Symbolic speech
138. Synonyms
  
139. Verbs
140. Violence, some forms of proscribed
141. Visiting
142. Vocalic/nonvocalic contrasts in phonemes
143. Vowel contrasts
  
144. Tabooed foods
145. Tabooed utterances
146. Taxonomy
147. Territoriality
148. Thumb sucking
149. Tickling
150. Time
151. Time, cyclicity of
152. Toys, playthings
  
153. Weaning
154. Weapons
155. Weather control (attempts to)