

What Your Body Language Says That Your Words Don't

What do you think the following statement means? *"Your body language speaks so loudly I can't hear what you say"*

Think about the following body language messages:

- A smile.** *"Your smile makes me feel comfortable."*
- A frown.** *"What did I do wrong?"*
- A yawn.** *"You're bored by me."*
- A shrug.** *"You disagree."*
- Quizzical look.** *"You're confused."*
- Booming voice.** *"You have a big ego."*
- Downcast eyes.** *"You lack confidence."*
- Hair twirling or face touching.** *"You're nervous."*

In the last *Career Headlines*, you learned five Tips to improve your body language. Here are five others to practice:



- 6. Show you're alert.** Maybe you stayed up too late last night, and it's telling on you today. If your eyes glaze over or you can't stifle a yawn during a conversation, you may be seen as "unavailable." Drink ice water or a soda, stretch for two minutes, or take a walk in cold air to revitalize yourself before meeting with others.
- 7. Talk with your hands.** Brain imaging has shown that your brain is active not only when you talk, but also when you gesture. Experiment with gesturing, and you'll find that your hand movements help you form clearer thoughts before you speak.
- 8. Use open gestures.** Keep your movements relaxed, use open arm gestures, or show your palms, and you will be perceived positively. If you cross your arms, hide your hands, or sit stiffly, you will be viewed more negatively.
- 9. Reduce nervous gestures.** People who are nervous or stressed may rub their hands together, bounce their legs, drum their fingers on a surface, play with jewelry, or fidget. All of these reduce credibility. To overcome nervousness, take a deep breath, place your feet firmly on the floor and place your hands palm down in your lap. Stillness sends a message that you're calm and confident.
- 10. Perfect your handshake.** The right handshake gives you fast credibility, and the wrong one can make you look like a wimp or a bully. Make no "dead fish" or "bone-crusher" grips. A firm handshake is especially important for women, whose confidence may be judged by the quality of their handshake.

Action: Practice shaking hands with five different people in your group and ask them to classify on a scale from 1 to 5 whether the handshake is firm and professional.

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Note to instructor: Do your students spend time thinking about their nonverbal communication? Chances are they don't. Review the *Job Ready Career Skills* communication titles shown below for a thorough understanding of the breadth and depth of communication content in *Job Ready Career Skills*.

Job Ready Career Skills Communication Lessons

Communicating at Work

Improving Communication Skills
Effective Oral Communication
Effective Written Communication
Effective Nonverbal Skills
Effective Word Use
Giving and Receiving Feedback
Handling Anger

Listening

Reasons for Listening
Benefits for Listening
Barriers to Listening
Listening Strategies
Ways We Filter What We Hear
Developing a Listening Attitude
Show You Are Listening

Nonverbal Communication

Communicating Nonverbally
Positive Nonverbal Messages
Harmful Nonverbal Behaviors
Reading Body Language
Reading Mixed Messages
Matching Verbals and Nonverbals
Improving Nonverbal Listening