

**#1 BODY LANGUAGE DURING PUBLIC  
SPEAKING: NONVERBAL SIGNALS OF SUCCESS**

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# #1 BODY LANGUAGE DURING PUBLIC SPEAKING: NONVERBAL SIGNALS OF SUCCESS

Author Mykola Ovcharov

## **ANNOTATION**

*Effective communication is not only about what we say, but also about how we say it. In the modern world, we use three main languages of communication: verbal (voice), nonverbal (gestures), and emotional (emotions). Although verbal speech is the most obvious and conscious means of transmitting information, it is often nonverbal signals that play a decisive role in the success of communication, especially during public speaking.*

## **KEYWORDS**

*rhetoric, public speaking, argumentation, persuasion, public speech, communication, rhetorical strategies, rhetorical analysis, rhetorical figures, ethos, pathos, logos.*

Effective communication is not only about what we say, but also about how we do it. In the modern world, we use three main languages of communication: verbal (voice), nonverbal (gestures), and emotional (emotions). Although verbal speech is the most obvious and conscious means of transmitting information, it is often nonverbal signals that play a decisive role in the success of communication, especially during public speaking.

## **Three Languages of Communication**

**1. Voice** – this is verbal speech, which is realized through shared knowledge and understanding of language. It is the most controlled and conscious channel of information transmission.

**2. Gestures** – this is body language, expressed through movements of the hands, legs, head, and walking. Gestures are one of the primary languages of humanity and of every

individual, which is why they are often used unconsciously. However, gestures can also be used consciously as a cultural means of communication, for example, a handshake during greeting, joining palms together during prayer, or a bow as a sign of respect. In stressful and emotional situations, control over body language may weaken, which is why it is important to study and develop nonverbal communication skills for use during important moments.

**3. Emotions** – this is another primary language of communication, which manifests itself in the voice (strength, weakness, sensitivity, tone), facial expressions (emotional tension), and internal emotional state. Control over emotions is achieved through the study of emotional intelligence and personal psychology (complexes, needs, fears, desired rewards).

## **Gestures That Do Not Contribute to Effective Communication**

### **1. Closed Gestures**

Closed gestures create a physical barrier for the speaker, signaling possible tension, fear, weakness, or stress. Such gestures include:

- Arms crossed over the chest
- Lowered crossed arms and crossed arms behind the back
- Hands clasped in a closed or open lock
- Hands clenched into fists
- Use of the index finger or fist
- Lowered head
- Crossed legs
- Hands in pockets
- Leaning on the back leg when speaking while standing (the front leg creates a protective barrier)
- Constantly holding objects in the hands

Although in personal conversations the use of closed gestures is normal and may even support comfortable thinking, during public speaking and business negotiations one should demonstrate awareness, competence, and the results of one's reflections rather than the thinking process itself. Defensive, closed postures do not contribute to building trust.

## **2. Gestures That Convey Nervousness**

This group includes fine motor movements (fidgeting), which may appear as:

- In the hands (finger tapping, twisting objects, touching hair or face)
- In the legs (rocking while standing during a speech, shuffling feet when sitting, trembling, swinging legs, unnecessary walking)
- In the eyes (a wandering gaze, avoidance of eye contact)

## **3. Uncertain Gestures**

This category of gestures reveals the speaker's doubts about what they are saying and contradicts their perceived competence. Such gestures include:

- Leaning on one leg while standing (right or left)
- Absent or weak hand gestures
- Lack of eye contact

## **The Role of Eye Contact in Communication**

Eye contact plays an important role both in personal conversations and in public speaking.

1. During personal meetings, you should look into the interlocutor's eyes only when you are directly addressing them (greeting, request, compliment, wish, question). When you are listening, visual contact is not necessary. It is also not advisable to maintain constant eye contact during long professional discussions where a particular issue is being studied or a solution is being sought, since demonstrating confidence and leadership through excessive eye contact may be counterproductive.
2. During public speaking before a small audience (up to 20 people), eye contact should be maintained continuously, covering all present as parts of a unified audience receiving your information. Special attention should be given to people sitting in the corners of the room, as they may fall outside the active visual field of the speaker (approximately 90°).

When speaking to a large audience, the hall should be divided into conditional sectors with defined centers and covered with your gaze as a whole. Just like people sitting in

the corners of the room, it is also important to pay attention to listeners in the front row.

### **RED FLAGS**

- Closed Gestures
- Gestures That Convey Nervousness
- Uncertain Gestures

### **BLUE FLAGS**

- Open, Meaningful, and Justified Gestures