

Boost Your Interviewing Success without Saying a Word

During an interview, you have no more than four minutes to prove you are a friendly, intelligent, and capable person. In fact, a study done by Professor Frank Bernieri, of Oregon State University, and Tricia Prickett, one of Bernieri's students, found that the most critical impressions are made within the first 15 to 30 seconds. So, before you can answer a single question, your entrance, handshake, and initial body language may have already decided the outcome.

Kinesics, the study and interpretation of body language, facial expressions, and gestures was first developed in 1952 by Dr. Ray Birdwhistell. More recently, Allan and Barbara Pease, the authors of "The Definitive Guide to Body Language" wrote that "...body language accounts for 60-80% of the impact made around a negotiating table."

Using the following 10 tips can ensure your non-verbal communication will create a great first impression and get you the job you want.

1. Use persuasive and uplifting language in your resume - Besides getting you the interview, adjectives such as proven, adventurous, self-confident, independent, and persistent, create a favorable mindset in the reader. This is called the Primacy Effect. Your interviewer, after reviewing your resume, will unconsciously associate these positive traits with you, during that first meeting.
2. Present a calm, organized appearance - Wear appropriate business attire under an unbuttoned coat and carry a slim briefcase or folder. An unbuttoned coat suggests that you have an efficient and open personality. And a slim briefcase shows that you focus on the important top-level details and get things done on schedule.
3. Enter the office without hesitation - Whether the office door is open or closed, enter the office in one smooth continuous motion, without slowing your stride or shuffling your steps at the door. A steady stride indicates that you are accustomed to walking confidently into meetings and business offices. It also shows that you are interested in what you are doing and don't waste time.
4. Shake hands calmly and directly - Deliberately put down your folder, briefcase, or coat and immediately shake hands with your interviewer. Avoid shaking hands over a desk, which reduces your perceived status, by stepping to the left side of the desk. Exert the same hand grip pressure that you receive. And try to keep your palm in a vertical position, so that neither hand is on top. A palm-up position can make you seem submissive whereas a palm-down position can make you seem overly aggressive. During an initial meeting, a vertical palm communicates equality and creates instant rapport.
5. When you sit, angle your body or chair to 45 degrees relative to the interviewer - Sitting directly across a table or desk is generally seen as competitive or defensive. By slightly turning your body to the side, you signal a cooperative attitude throughout the discussion.
6. Don't cross your arms or legs - "When you fold your arms, your credibility dramatically reduces" writes Allan Pease. Crossing the arms or legs is a closed body position which can be misinterpreted as a negative, defensive, or nervous attitude. Instead, keep your elbows out to the side or resting on the arms of the chair, and your fingers slightly touching forming a "steeple." Don't clench the hands together. A "steepled" hand gesture and open body position show that you are self-confident and immersed in the discussion.
7. Use mirroring gestures - Using similar gestures, expressions, and the same tone of voice as your interviewer can create a feeling of relaxation and shared respect. Speaking faster than your interviewer will create "pressure" in the conversation, whereas speaking with the same tone and at the same rate will establish empathy. Smiling is a universal gesture which is also usually reciprocated. It creates positive feelings for both the giver and receiver and improves the relationship overall.
8. Avoid touching your face with your hands - Many hand to face gestures hint at nervousness, anxiety, or deceit. This type of movement is caused by your unconscious mind trying to avoid seeing, speaking, or hearing any lies or falsehoods. Although it may simply be that you are unsure of your answer, it still indicates a lack of self-confidence in the message you are trying to convey.
9. Maintain a social and connected gaze for approximately 90% of the discussion - After taking your seat, keep your eyes focused on the interviewer for the majority of time. A constantly wandering gaze may be seen as a lack of interest in the discussion. Hold your gaze in the triangular area of their face created by the eyes and the mouth. Focusing on this area shows that you are non-threatening and attentive. Gazing at the forehead can imply you are an

aggressive authority figure and possibly unfriendly. Gazing below the face, especially at the opposite sex, can denote an intimate connection that should be avoided during any business meeting.

10. Exit calmly and deliberately - When the interview has concluded, gather your belongings one item at a time and turn to face your interviewer. Shake hands and smile, and then walk decisively out the door. Leaving without hesitation conveys your capability and authority. And smiling ensures that the interview ends on a friendly, positive note.

To practice using each of these tips, set up mock interviews or try introducing yourself to strangers. With careful attention and consistent use, they will become second nature and allow you to make a positive first impression in almost any situation.

[sidebar 1]

Dr. Birdwhistell estimated that humans can make and recognize around 250,000 facial expressions.

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Check out the Fox television show *Lie To Me*, a program inspired by Dr. Paul Ekman and his real life study of body language and micro-expressions, to see some of these tips in action.