

PRESENTER'S GUIDE

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Negative Body Language: 7 Deadly Sins of Nonverbal Communication

Does your body language display one of the 7 deadly sins of nonverbal communication? Below are some ways speakers use “negative body language” to undermine their own credibility and influence. If you see your own behavior reflected here, it’s time to take stock and start using body language that helps rather than hurts your message!

1. Poor stance or posture.



How you hold yourself broadcasts to audiences your sense of self-worth. Slumped shoulders and a caved chest, for instance, indicate surrender rather than a willingness to take on the world. How you stand affects your standing with the audience. Here’s an easy yet effective exercise: Imagine a string leading from the top of your head into infinity. Someone is tugging gently on that string. Allow yourself to respond . . . and notice in a mirror how much more capable and confident you look!

Learn more on this topic and gaining power as a speaker: [THE 5 KEY BODY LANGUAGE TECHNIQUES OF PUBLIC SPEAKING](#)

2. Avoiding eye contact.



You know the variations of this one: The nervous speaker who talks to the floor. The PowerPoint user who converses with the screen rather than the audience. The keynoter who has an excellent relationship with his notes and none with the people in the seats. Trust is your most valuable commodity as a speaker. And it depends upon eye contact!

Speaking to an audience that cares about the topic at hand should be a delightful activity. That includes watching their responses, and responding to that in turn. People not only expect you to look at them when you talk. They’ll trust you more if you do; and perhaps won’t trust you at all if you don’t.

Are you connecting enough with your listeners? [TO DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE EYE CONTACT, USE THIS TECHNIQUE](#)

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3. Creating a barrier that shuts out listeners.

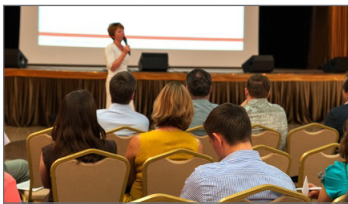


This sin has many variations. Standing with arms crossed; the fig leaf position of hands in front of the crotch; creating a church steeple with one's fingers; "washing" the hands while speaking. — Every one of these behaviors involves a speaker creating a physical barrier between him or her and listeners. Let those

arms remain at your sides, and bring them up to make a gesture that amplifies or supports your meaning. It may feel awkward at first, but you'll soon get used to it.

Never underestimate the significance of how you move and sound. Download [THE BODY LANGUAGE RULES: 12 WAYS TO BE A MORE POWERFUL SPEAKER](#).

4. Unproductive use of space.

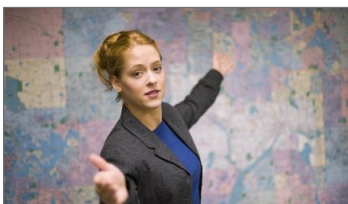


It's odd how we over-emphasize gestures in public speaking while ignoring space. An audience expects you to use space, not impersonate a statue. In fact, it's your job to command space. Using different parts of the stage tells an audience you're comfortable up there. And few performance techniques aid engagement like letting listeners know you're about

to start a new point. If you stand in a different spot for each of those points, listeners will retain each one more reliably. Use your audience in terms of space as well, approaching them to answer questions or to "check in" frequently.

Get this cheat sheet for more tips on positive body language that boosts your credibility: [5 KEY SECRETS OF POWERFUL BODY LANGUAGE](#)

5. Employing weak or repetitive gestures.



"What should I do with my hands?" is a frequent question of anxious speakers. The answer is simple: a gesture should be an integral part of what you're saying—as Hamlet put it, "Suiting the action to the word, the word to the action." With that mantra in mind, it should actually become difficult to use too many gestures, since that particular gesture couldn't

possibly fit that many expressions! The other half of this equation is the power and spareness of the gesture: each one you make should be strong, support the phrase, and end cleanly.

Read more about gestures: [HOW TO LOOK GOOD AND FEEL STRONG AS A SPEAKER](#)

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6. Relating negatively to listeners.



You've seen speakers accomplish this remarkable feat: Rather than cultivating influence with an audience, they antagonize them. Negative facial expressions, nodding impatiently at a questioner so they'll shut up so you can answer, or pointing a stiff finger at the next unlucky questioner in line instead of using a "welcoming" gesture — these are clear

indications that the speaker would rather be somewhere else. Pretty soon, of course, the audience will agree that you should be.

Stay calm and in control. Get this cheat sheet: [7 TIPS FOR OVERCOMING AUDIENCE RESISTANCE](#)

7. Clumsy use of objects.



You've seen the laser pointers that dance playfully close to an audience member's eyes; the writing instruments held but never once used in a presentation; the gravity-defying pieces of chalk; and the held microphones that gesture wildly. Speakers, like actors with props, need to use objects rather than

being used by them. At the very least, experiment with coming out from behind a lectern if possible, for a podium is the worst object of all, a physical barrier between you and listeners. That's why I call it the "Devil's Tool."

Always remember the basics: [THE SIX RULES OF EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING](#)



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