

Interview body language

Using effective non-verbal communication techniques, including appropriate **interview body language** in your job interview is essential to your success. Non-verbal communication accounts for over 90% of the message you are sending in your job interview!

Your verbal content only provides 7% of the message the interviewer is receiving from you. As you can see your non-verbal signals, both your body language (55% of the message) and the way you speak such as voice tone (38%) are as important as the actual words you use in your job interview answers!

Posture

When the interviewer offers you a seat at the start of the job interview, **sit upright** but not too stiffly in your chair. This indicates that you are comfortable and feeling confident. Hunching down in your chair gives the impression of nervousness and low self-esteem. A sloppy posture indicates a careless attitude and a lack of energy. Sitting on the edge of your chair can come across as being nervous and tense.

Relax and lean slightly forward, about 10 degrees, towards your interviewer. This gives the message that you are both interested and involved. Leaning back makes you appear too relaxed and casual. Leaning to the side can be perceived as not feeling comfortable with the interviewer.

How you **position your head** also sends a message. Tilting your head very slightly to one side comes across as friendly and open. Keeping it straight comes across as self-assured and authoritative.

It is also important to pay attention to the posture of your interviewer. Sometimes you can establish rapport by adopting the same posture as the other person. This is called **mirroring**. If they have adopted a more formal posture do the same until you see that the interviewer has relaxed and become less formal.

What to do with your Hands

If you are unsure of what to do with your hands, rest them, **loosely clasped** in your lap or on the table. Control your hands by being aware of what you are doing with them.

Having your hands above the neck, fiddling with your face or your hair, is unprofessional and conveys nervousness and anxiety. **Keep your hands away from your face**. Interview body language experts will tell you that touching the nose or lips can indicate that the candidate is lying. Holding a hand behind your head is often a sign that you are annoyed or uncertain.

Folding your arms across your chest suggests a closed and defensive attitude. Waving your hands and arms around can be perceived as uncertainty and a lack of professionalism. Common wisdom is that the less you move your arms and hands about the more confident and in control you are. Practice a comfortable way to loosely place your arms and hands while you are sitting, both at a table and in a chair on its own.

Be aware of the interview body language message your legs are giving. **Lots of leg movement** is both distracting and indicates nervousness. Resting one leg or ankle on top of your other knee makes you look too casual and comes across as arrogant. Crossing your legs high up conveys a defensive attitude in the one-on-one context of a job interview. Crossing them at the ankles or placing both feet flat on the floor conveys a confident and professional look during the job interview.

Eye Contact

If the interviewer is talking and you want to show that you are actively listening, you need to instigate **direct eye contact** and maintain it. Avoid appearing as if you are staring aggressively by blinking at regular intervals and moving your head every now and then, such as giving a small nod.

Interview body language experts suggest that when you are doing the talking you need to **hold eye contact for periods of about 10 seconds** before looking away briefly and then re-establishing eye contact. Overusing direct eye contact when you are speaking can come across as lecturing or challenging the interviewer. Typically the listener maintains direct eye contact for longer than the speaker who breaks it off at intervals.

Looking constantly downwards makes you appear insincere or submissive. It is acceptable to look down if you are making notes or referring to information in front of you. However if you are speaking, or the interviewer is asking you something, **raise your head and make regular eye contact** to show that you are actively involved.

With panel interviews it is best to look at and direct your answer to the person asking the question, with a glance periodically at the other interviewers.

Eye contact is essential interview body language to establish rapport with your interviewer. Not making eye contact makes the interviewer feel disconnected from you. Eye contact should be a positive aspect of interview body language, if it is not used properly however it can quickly become negative.

Voice Delivery

Speaking in a clear and controlled voice conveys confidence.

Avoid speaking in a monotone by **varying your tone and pitch**, however don't overdo it and come across as overly excited or emotional.

Breathe and pause before answering a question, this gives you time to react in a considered way and it ensures that the interviewer has finished the question.

You should interact with the interviewer as an equal, not a subordinate. Ensure that your voice tone is not apologetic or defensive.

Generally it is advisable not to show **too much or too strong emotion** during your job interview. Smile and nod at appropriate times but don't overdo it. Avoid erupting into laughter on your own, laughing along with the interviewer is far more acceptable.