

Public Speaking: Stage Presence

More than half of all human communication takes place nonverbally. You are constantly sending nonverbal messages, even as you read these words. When you speak in public, your listeners judge you and your message based on what they see as well as on what they hear; public speaking is amplified conversation. Here's how to use your body language to effectively enhance your message.

5 Tips for Speaking Effectively

1. *Eliminate Distracting Mannerisms:* Mannerisms are the nervous expressions a speaker might not be aware of, such as putting their hands in their pockets, or using filler words like *um* and *ah* too often.
2. *Be Natural, Spontaneous, and Conversational:* Be yourself, natural, and genuine, like when you talk with friends or family.
3. *Let Your Body Mirror Your Feelings:* A speaker who is interested will usually be interesting. Involve yourself in your message!
4. *Build Self-Confidence through Preparation:* Practice and rehearse your material but don't try to memorize your speech verbatim. Instead, memorize the flow of ideas; the specific words will spring forth spontaneously.
5. *Find Support:* To improve, you must practice. Welcome feedback relating to your body language.

Your Speaking Posture: (ask someone to read this paragraph aloud as you follow the instructions)

Stand straight but not rigid, feet 6 to 12 inches apart. Balance your weight evenly on the balls of your feet. Lean forward just a little. Your knees should be straight but not locked. Relax your shoulders, but don't let them droop. Keep your chest up and your stomach in. Your head should be erect and your chin up, but not uncomfortably so. Let your arms hang naturally at your sides, with your fingers slightly curled. Now, take a few deep, full breaths. Do you feel comfortable? Your stance should be alert but not stiff, relaxed but not sloppy. If this position doesn't feel natural for you, try repositioning your feet slightly until your body feels in balance. When you move across the stage, be sure to balance your body once your movement is concluded.

Gestures/Body Movement/Facial Expressions:

- Gestures may be made with head/shoulders/legs/feet but most are made with hands and arms; they clarify and support your words, dramatize your ideas, lend emphasis and vitality to the spoken word, help dissipate nervous tension, function as visual aids, and stimulate audience participation.
- Move around the stage as topics change and move toward the audience when asking questions, making critical connections, or offering a revelation.
- Your face communicates your attitudes, feelings, and emotions more clearly than any other part of your body: your listeners will watch your face for clues about your sincerity, your attitude toward your message, and your earnestness in sharing your ideas with them.

Eye Contact:

Making eye contact establishes a bond and allows for visual feedback, especially when a speaker focuses in on individual listeners rather than just gazing over the audience as a whole.

Make a Good First Impression:

You can make a good first impression by taking care of your appearance (professionally dressed, groomed, being a healthy human being w/ exercise and good diet) and nailing the first minute of your presentation. Shoot for “The 3 C’s”: Confidant, Comfortable, Charismatic.