



Effects of Body Language

How you present yourself can convey a lot to your audience. Here is a breakdown of how to recognize **positive** and **negative** body language. Negative body language can distract your audience or make you seem unprepared and nervous. Remember that your actions while speaking are most meaningful when you combine several positive gestures at the same time and when they are in line with what you are saying at the time you make them. Purposeful body language transitions to confidence and better stage presence.

Positive Body Language	Negative Body Language
<p>Body Posture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxed, steady stance and breathing No visible signs of stiffness or abrupt movements <p>Shows no communication barriers</p>	<p>Body Posture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body tense, stiff, or too casual and relaxed Hands clasped tightly or moving in abrupt motions, fidgeting <p>Shows distracting signs of nervousness</p>
<p>Arms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arms uncrossed Hands open with palms up or visible to others <p>Conveys openness</p>	<p>Arms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arms crossed or hands on hips Arms stiff or with hands in pockets <p>Conveys dominance, nerves, or disinterest</p>
<p>Eyes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look to all parts of the audience Avoid looking at visual aid for extended periods of time <p>Shows interest in audience</p>	<p>Eyes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus only on one part of the audience Reading from notes with little to no eye contact Looking away from audience to recall speech <p>Indicates insecurity and lowers credibility</p>
<p>Demeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smiling at the audience Appropriate humor Expressive face <p>Signals warm relationship with audience</p>	<p>Demeanor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaking in monotone Lack of facial expressions <p>Can turn audience away from your message</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Proximity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate distance between yourself and audience • Clearly visible and engaging <p style="text-align: center;">Forms a relationship with audience, shows interest</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Proximity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying away from the audience or hiding behind a podium or in a corner <p style="text-align: center;">Creates a barrier between you and audience, indicates insecurity</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Gestures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural gestures with open palms • “Talk with your hands” <p style="text-align: center;">Shows sincerity and enthusiasm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Gestures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No gestures or stiff motions • Over exaggerated or inappropriate gestures <p style="text-align: center;">Can form communication barrier or become distracting</p>

If you want more information, check out the following
UMW Speaking Center handouts:

What Should I Do With My Hands?
Posture and Body Stance