

# Body language tips for your next job interview

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## FULL TEXT

Body language provides a key to succeeding in job interviews. Nonverbal cues make up 60% to 80% of face-to-face communication. More than your words, your physical presence shows your strengths (or shortcomings) as a candidate.

Even in the digital world, body language helps indicate whether an applicant is right for a job.

Rehearse and record yourself before every interview, and work toward a standout performance by using the following checklist:

1. Eye contact: One of the most important body language cues you can give your audience in an interview is eye contact. Eye contact requires (and reflects) confidence.

Always look at people, not at the room or the ceiling or the floor. And when you do look at the interviewer, do so as you begin speaking, whether answering a question or making a point. That way, the eye contact reinforces what you are about to say. In a group interview, make sure to give an equal amount of eye contact to each person, regardless of their rank. In video interviews, look directly into the webcam. Sit close enough to your laptop that you create a conversational rapport with your audience; sitting farther back distances you and can create visual distractions for the interviewer. And avoid glancing down or away from the screen because when you do so, you will appear to be ignoring the interviewer.

2. A warm smile: Smile when you meet your interviewer, during the interview and as you close the exchange. But make sure your smile is not constant or it may appear false. It could suggest that you are too anxious to please. Think of it as an "inner smile" that reflects genuine enjoyment and empathy. It is the kind of smile that lights up your face and lights up the relationship.

3. Open gestures: Companies look for people with soft skills -- individuals who are empathetic and comfortable with others. Open gestures convey those qualities. To achieve this openness: Gesture with your full arm in the direction of your interviewer. Never cross or fold your arms. Avoid awkward "flipper" gestures created by elbows tucked into your body. Avoid busy wrist gestures and fleeting movements that suggest nervousness. Keep your hands open; don't hold them, fold them or flatten them on the table.

4. Face your audience: Another important aspect of body language in interviews is facing the person you're talking to; doing so shows respect and suggests you're both aligned. When you are talking to an interviewer -- either in person or virtually -- make sure your body is positioned so that you are fully facing the interviewer. This will make her feel that you are fully committed to what you two are discussing.

5. Cultivate stillness: "Stillness is power" is a phrase I often heard when I headed The Humphrey Group. We have always hired actors to coach clients, and this is a point they often made. That doesn't mean being stiff or avoiding gestures. It means not having random movements like touching your face, fixing your hair, fidgeting or restlessly moving in your chair. These unnecessary movements are like nervous ticks. They can convey the impression that you are not at ease with the interview. And they will be exaggerated in a digital interview.

So aspire to stillness, which suggests you are "in the moment," completely centered on the discussion and the opportunity it presents.

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