

# Don't Blink!

## Body Language in the Business World



How do we understand someone in a conversation? People think we listen to language, but only 7% of communication comes from words. In fact, 55% of the information we receive is visual – it comes from the person's face and body. Some experts believe there are about 250,000 different facial expressions. Less information comes from the speaker's tone of voice – 38%. We also talk with our hands and feet, and even with our arms and legs.

Body language expert Patricia Hive says, 'In the business world, it's very simple. Success depends on body language. And it is especially important in business meetings and job interviews, because everyone is watching everyone else.'

So, what is the right thing to do? And what shouldn't you do? Here are Patricia's top suggestions.

### 1 The hands

Your hands are very important in meetings and interviews. If you show the palms of your hands, people think that you are interested in what they are saying – and you also appear open to their ideas. If you don't show your palms, they may think that you're not interested. It's also important not to point at people you are talking to. It can mean you want an argument or that you are competitive.

In their book, *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, Barbara and Alan Pease describe their university research. In one experiment, a lecturer gave exactly the same lecture to different groups of students. With the first group, the lecturer showed the palms of her hands a lot, and 84% of students said afterwards they thought the lecture was 'positive'. With the second group, she didn't show the palms of her hands, and only 54% of students said the lecture was 'positive'. When the same lecturer pointed a lot with a third group, only 28% said the lecture was 'positive'.

### 2 The face

Patricia says, 'The face says more than words. In a business meeting or job interview, people watch the face more than any other part of the body. It's important to remember that. Each small facial expression can mean something.' You should make eye contact because this means you're listening. But you shouldn't make too much eye contact. People might think you are angry or unhappy. Try not to blink too much either. People may think you're nervous or stressed. Some people also believe it means you're not being honest. There are other things to avoid. For example, if you flare your nostrils, people think you are angry or annoyed – so even your nose can send negative signals!

'The face is different for men and women,' Patricia says. 'Women show their emotions through their faces more. They can use six different facial expressions during ten seconds of conversation, while men can use just two. Women generally smile more than men too.'

### 3 Mirroring

When you're talking to someone in a meeting or interview, are they doing the same things as you? Do they smile when you do? Do they lean forward when you do? This is called 'mirroring', and it shows that the person likes you, or agrees with you. It's a good idea to try to mirror other people a little in meetings and interviews. But don't do it too much! First, watch the person's facial expressions and body language, and then start to do the same. This can help to get on together and create a good atmosphere in the room.

### 4 Body language and memory

Finally, your body language can help your memory. *The Definitive Book of Body Language* describes an experiment at a university. Two groups of students attended the same lecture. In the first group, the students crossed their arms and crossed their legs. In the second, they didn't. Both groups were tested on what they remembered from the lecture. The second group remembered 38% more than the first!

Patricia says, 'Remember every country is different. My suggestions work in the USA. But the rules are different in other countries.'

## 4 SPEAKING

a Work in pairs. Answer the questions with a partner.

- Which suggestions in the article do you think are useful? Why?
- Patricia's suggestions work in the USA, but the rules are different in other countries. Do her suggestions work in your country, or other countries you know? Why / Why not?
- Make a list of three or four other examples of body language you know. Do you and your partner agree about what they mean?
- What body language do you think you use a lot?

# Body Language in Business: Knowledge Check

## Key Concepts Overview

Body language is a powerful tool in the business world. According to experts, we often focus on words, but **55% of communication is actually visual**, coming from facial expressions and body movements.

Whether you are in a job interview or a big meeting, how you sit, look, and move can determine your success. This worksheet checks your understanding of the strategies discussed in the lesson, from eye contact to the "mirroring" technique.



## Vocabulary & Facts Check

Complete the sentences below using the words from the box. These sentences test your memory of the specific facts and statistics mentioned in the text.

**Word bank:** women, argument, 7%, nostrils, honest

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|---|
| 1. Only _____ of communication comes from the words we use.   |
| 2. Blinking too much not only suggests you're nervous, but also that you might not be completely _____.       |
| 3. You should avoid pointing at people in a meeting because it can imply you are seeking an _____.            |
| 4. Even a small action like flaring your _____ can send a negative signal that you are annoyed.               |
| 5. The article states that _____ generally show more emotions through their faces and smile more than men do. |

## Understanding the Details



**Top Tip for Eye Contact:** It's a balance! Too little eye contact means you aren't listening. Too much eye contact can make people think you are angry or unhappy.

Choose the best answer for each question based on the text provided.

1. <b>According to Patricia Hive, which part of the body do people watch most during a business meeting?</b>	a) The hands b) The face c) The posture d) The feet
2. <b>What negative signal might flaring your nostrils send to others?</b>	a) That you are bored b) That you are lying c) That you are angry or annoyed d) That you are hungry
3. <b>What difference between men and women does the text highlight regarding facial expressions?</b>	a) Men smile more than women do. b) Women use more facial expressions in a short time than men. c) Men are better at hiding their emotions. d) There is no difference between them.
4. <b>What did the lecturer do that resulted in only 28% of students feeling positive about the lecture?</b>	a) She crossed her arms. b) She frowned the whole time. c) She pointed at the audience a lot. d) She sat behind a desk.
5. <b>According to the text, what positive message can you send by showing the palms of your hands?</b>	a) That you are an expert. b) That you are interested and open to ideas. c) That you are competitive and want an argument. d) That you are feeling nervous or stressed.
6. <b>According to the text, what percentage of communication comes from the actual words we use?</b>	a) 55% b) 7% c) 28% d) 85%
7. <b>What does the technique of "mirroring" involve?</b>	a) Staring directly into the other person's eyes. b) Copying the other person's body language. c) Using a mirror to check your own posture. d) Speaking in the same tone of voice as the other person.

<p>8. <b>In the university experiment on memory, which group remembered more from the lecture?</b></p>	<p>a) The group that crossed their arms and legs.  b) The group that did not cross their arms and legs.  c) The group that took detailed notes.  d) Both groups remembered the same amount.</p>
<p>9. <b>What might blinking too much suggest to others?</b></p>	<p>a) That you are highly intelligent.  b) That you are relaxed and confident.  c) That you are nervous or not being honest.  d) That you are trying to flirt.</p>
<p>10. <b>What important point does Patricia Hise make about her body language suggestions?</b></p>	<p>a) That they only work for men in business.  b) That they are guaranteed to get you a job.  c) That the rules for body language can be different in other countries.  d) That these rules were invented by her.</p>