

8 Body language

A Reading the signs



BODY LANGUAGE can tell you a lot, but if you **jump to conclusions** when you are trying to **interpret** a particular **gesture**, you may **misinterpret** what it means. For example, people who look away to avoid **eye contact** may **not necessarily** be lying: they could just be very shy. To understand body

language, therefore, we need to **observe** a **combination** of behaviour. With lying, for example, **look out for** any of these:

- avoiding eye contact
- sweating a lot
- going red
- biting fingernails¹
- constantly moving about

GLOSSARY

jump to conclusions	make a decision about sth too quickly, before you have thought about all the facts	observe formal	see or notice sth. An observant person is good at noticing things. observation <i>n</i>
interpret	decide that sth has a particular meaning interpretation <i>n</i> If you misinterpret sth, you give it an incorrect meaning.	combination	two or more things that exist or are put together
gesture	a body movement you make to show a particular meaning	look out for sth/sb	look and try to see or find sth/sb
eye contact	looking into another person's eyes	sweat	If you sweat , water appears on the surface of your skin because you are hot or nervous. sweat <i>n</i>
not necessarily	used to say that sth is possibly true but is not always true	go red	become red in the face, often when you're embarrassed syn blush
		constantly	all the time or very frequently

1 Good or bad? Write G or B.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 He sweats a great deal. | 5 He jumps to conclusions. |
| 2 She goes red all the time. | 6 She's very observant. |
| 3 She has strong powers of observation. | 7 He always makes eye contact. |
| 4 She never bites her fingernails. | 8 He misinterprets what people say. |

2 Complete the sentences with a suitable word.

- You should stop and think before to conclusions.
- The teacher said she'd out for more articles on body language.
- In groups, I like to sit and listen, so I can how people react to each other.
- I used to bite my a lot, but not any more.
- Is it difficult to someone's body language if you don't know them well?
- If you **go red**, does it mean you're angry? ~ No, not
- I use hand a lot. Sometimes it annoys people.
- The increase in the number of students is the result of a of different factors.
- It was so hot in the room, I was starting to
- I move my feet when I'm nervous - I can't stop it.

3 ABOUT YOU Write answers to the questions, or talk to another student.

- Do you use lots of gestures? If so, what type?
- Do you think you are good at making eye contact with people?
- Do you think you are observant? For example, do you notice what people are wearing?
- Do you ever bite your fingernails? If so, why?
- Do you blush easily? If so, does it worry you?
- Do you like sitting and observing people when you are in public places? If so, why?



TEST YOURSELF

B Interpreting gestures

Here are some common interpretations of gestures, but remember the danger of **making generalizations** about body language.



1 A clenched fist¹ often shows anger.



2 People who fold their arms² and cross their legs³ may be defensive, and may be signalling the fact that they disagree with you.



3 People who lean towards⁴ each other are displaying an interest in one another.



4 Women who fancy someone often touch their hair. Women also lift their heads to show more of their neck when they're flirting.

GLOSSARY

make generalizations (about sth)

make general statements about sth that may only be based on a few examples

anger

the state of being *angry*

defensive

showing that you feel sb is criticizing you

signal

If you **signal** sth, you do sth that sends a particular message. **signal** *n*

display

show signs of sth **display** *n*

fancy *inf*

be sexually attracted to sb

flirt (with sb)

behave towards sb as if you find them sexually attractive, but not in a serious way

irlanguage

4 Cross out the wrong word.

1 flirt *with / by* someone

2 *make / do* generalizations

3 a clenched *hand / fist*

4 cross your *body / legs*

5 lean *by / towards* somebody

6 fold your *arms / legs*

7 send a *signal / display*

8 fancy *someone / with someone*

5 Complete the sentences.

1 Both girls like Conrad, and they're always _____ with him.

2 She _____ towards him and whispered something in his ear. I think she _____ him.

3 If you say negative things about his work, he becomes a bit _____.

4 I think I often _____ my arms and _____ my legs when I'm sitting.

5 A clenched _____ sometimes indicates _____, but footballers also do it when they are happy because they've just scored a goal.

6 Certain gestures between couples clearly _____ that they fancy each other.

7 Hand and body gestures can mean different things in different countries, so it can be dangerous to make _____ about their meaning.

8 Even when he's angry, he doesn't really _____ any signs of emotion.

6 ABOUT YOU Write your answers, or talk to another student.

1 Do you often fold your arms or cross your legs? If so, why? _____

2 Do you think you lean towards people to show you are interested? _____

3 Do you think you flirt much? _____

4 If you fancy someone, what gestures do you make? _____



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