

# 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 fingernails<sup>1</sup>
- constantly moving about

### GLOSSARY

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

### 1 Good or bad? Write G or B.

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

### 2 Complete the sentences with a suitable word.

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

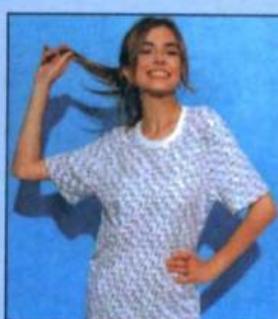
### 3 ABOUT YOU Write answers to the questions, or talk to another student.

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



## B Interpreting gestures

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



1 A **clenched fist**<sup>1</sup> often shows anger.

2 People who **fold their arms**<sup>2</sup> and **cross their legs**<sup>3</sup> may be **defensive**, and may be **signalling** the fact that they disagree with you.

3 People who **lean towards**<sup>4</sup> 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

### irlanguage

<b>make generalizations</b> (about sth)	make general statements about sth that may only be based on a few examples	<b>signal</b>	If you <b>signal</b> sth, you do sth that sends a particular message. <b>signal</b> <i>n</i>
<b>anger</b>	the state of being <i>angry</i>	<b>display</b>	show signs of sth <b>display</b> <i>n</i>
<b>defensive</b>	showing that you feel sb is criticizing you	<b>fancy inf</b>	be sexually attracted to sb
		<b>flirt (with sb)</b>	behave towards sb as if you find them sexually attractive, but not in a serious way

### 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? .....

### TEST YOURSELF