

Body language

Making it work for you at job interviews

The use of body language is important in creating a favourable impression to interviewers. Through appropriate body language, candidates could demonstrate their confidence, personality and interest in the job. Here are a few tips on using non-verbal cues to enhance your performance at interviews.

Your appearance

Non-verbal communication includes your personal appearance – what you wear says a lot about you so be sure to pick an appropriate and professional attire for the interview. As a rule of thumb, it is always best to appear formal. This means a jacket for ladies, a shirt and tie for men, and no loud prints.

Pre-interview impression

Be wary of your body language while in the waiting room or reception area. Pacing the room nervously, sitting slumped in a chair or frowning at the receptionist can all work against you.

A smile, a handshake and good manners

A warm smile and a firm handshake is a great way to start the interview. Watch your manners – do not sit until the interviewer invites you to and have your mobile phone switched off before you enter the room. Remember to stand and sit upright as slouching will give the impression that you are not interested in the job or that you are a sloppy worker.

Facial expressions

Your facial expressions play a big part in projecting a good impression, so be sure to look interested by maintaining good eye contact, smiling and nodding appropriately while you listen to the interviewer. Avoid staring, squinting or glancing away as flitting eye movements can be distracting.

Your arms and hands

If you are sitting across the table from the interviewer, it is advisable to place your hands on your lap. Use appropriate hand gestures to support what you are saying; for example, an open palm gesture is commonly regarded as a sign of openness and sincerity. Do not cross your arms around your chest as this is a strong sign of defensiveness.

Unconscious gestures

Be wary of 'unconscious' actions like fidgeting in your seat, shaking your legs under the table, biting your nails, touching your hair, fiddling with your ring/earrings or constantly glancing at your watch. Not only are these gestures distracting, they give the impression that you are nervous, uninterested or in a hurry to get out of the interview.



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Private space

Always respect the personal space of your interviewers. Avoid standing or sitting too close to them as this might annoy them or make them feel awkward. Likewise, do not touch their personal belongings, e.g. paper weights or stationery.

Appropriate gestures and facial expressions are important factors towards a successful job interview and securing that dream job. However, body language alone cannot deliver the desired results; it must be supported with enough 'substance' to convince the interviewer to hire you.

You need to prepare for the interview by obtaining information about the company and the job. You also have to communicate your experience and skills clearly and convincingly to the interviewer. The right knowledge, confidence, clear communication and positive body language should all come together to create success in job interviews.