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## Nonverbal Communication Speaks Much Louder Than Words: How to Impress at the Job Interview

By Rosa Chillis

**Wanted:** “Management Trainees. You will have immediate responsibility and opportunity to develop your leadership skills. A 4-year business degree with a 3.0 GPA is required. Beginning salary: \$47,250.”

Twenty-three-year-old Mary arrived on time for the interview. She wandered into the conference room in a stooped position and with shoulders curved toward her chest, looking lost, bewildered and uncertain. She wore a white suit, red shirt, and 4-inch heels, which caused her to have an unsteady gait. Her eyes gazed mostly downward. She spoke in a low monotone; interviewers had to strain to hear her. Following the interview, she extended a limp, weak handshake.

Mary did not get the job.

Tyler, age 25, arrived on time dressed impeccably for the interview. He wore a navy blue suit, off-white shirt with sky-blue silk tie, and dark brown leather dress loafers. And talk about confidence – he walked with head erect and shoulders back that said, “I’m very sure of myself!” During the interview, Tyler maintained eye contact and smiled a lot. And he shook hands firmly, but not too powerfully.

The company hired Tyler on the spot.

Mary and Tyler had similar educational backgrounds and job experience. What made the difference?

Verbal communication means the words we use; nonverbal communication means everything else, including non-word vocalizations (sighs, grunts, moans, groans, etc.), and silence. Scholars estimate that nonverbal behaviors account for 65% to 93% of our total meaning when we communicate.

Since nonverbal behaviors are continuous (it’s impossible to not communicate nonverbally), what can you do to improve your nonverbal skills?

This article reveals several nonverbal dos and don’ts to help you project the image you desire and therefore ensure your success at the job interview:

### Do

- 1) Plan the image you want to project. Dress according to the position and corporate culture (based upon your research). Most experts suggest dressing one step up from the office staff. Clothes communicate!
- 2) Stand erect. Walk with confidence. Sit with a relaxed posture. These body positions announce self-assurance.
- 3) Look at the eyes of others. People often focus on the eyes to judge others’ honesty, intelligence and attitude.
- 4) Gesture appropriately. Use your hands expressively, but don’t overdue it as this can be distracting and signals nervousness.

- 5) Watch non-word sounds and non-word characteristics such as pitch, volume, rate, and quality of your voice; watch your enunciation, pronunciation and articulation. These cues are important; they could indicate your emotional state, personality characteristics, or even intelligence.
- 6) Listen carefully; listen actively. Focus your mind on the ideas and signal your interest and understanding. Ask questions.
- 7) Use a strong handshake that communicates confidence.

**Don't**

- 1) Show up late. How you handle time can indicate if you take time seriously and could be an important nonverbal cue as to how committed you would be to the job.
- 2) Overlook the power of a good first impression (artifacts such as jewelry, hairstyle, cosmetics, shoes, glasses, and so forth tell others the sort of person you believe you are).
- 3) Slouch or shuffle your feet; bounce or kick your leg. These give a poor impression.
- 4) Sit with crossed arms, shrug your shoulders, lower your eyes, frown, look away, yawn, look at your watch, or show irritation. These indicate a mood of indifference.
- 5) Scowl or stare as these show disapproval and resistance (poets call the eyes "the mirrors of the soul").

Communication often occurs without words; thus, nonverbal messages often say much more about you than you realize. At that first meeting, people will evaluate your professional credibility and potential job performance within a mere 3-30 seconds based upon your nonverbal codes.

In this article I have suggested several ways you can improve your nonverbal competence. Use these ideas to ensure your success at the job interview and beyond!

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**About the author:**

Rosa Chillis is president of Adasane & Associates, Inc., and a communication instructor specializing in oral communication, interpersonal communication and voice & articulation skills. She is author of the e-book titled *Your Voice Is Your Image: Four Ways to Improve Your Speaking Voice*. Find out more at <http://www.communicationmarketplace.com>