

Movement and Gesture

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn more about how you communicate with your audience via body language. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Kinesics
 - a. Body Movement Can Support the Message
 - b. Body Movements Can Distract from the Message
 - c. Tips for the Speaker
2. Gestures
 - a. Gestures Can Support the Message
 - b. Unnatural Gestures Can Distract from the Message
 - c. Tips for the Speaker

1. Kinesics

Kinesics is the study of body movement and expression such as waving, pointing, touching, and slouching.

The movement of the body conveys many specific meanings to an audience but can be misinterpreted in an intercultural setting.



TERM TO KNOW

Kinesics

Kinesics is the interpretation of body language such as facial expressions and gestures — or, more formally, non-verbal behavior related to movement, either of any part of the body or the body as a whole.

1a. Body Movement Can Support the Message

You can use your body to communicate positively with the audience. Hamlet's advice to the players in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in 1601 has merit today: *Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature.*

Consider some examples of how you might naturally support your delivery.

Upper body toward the audience: You might want to lean into the audience to bridge the space of separation.

Feet and legs: You may move purposefully from one side to the other to show a transition from one point to another.

Arms and chest: If you cross your arms in front of you, what does this mean to the audience? It could be construed as confrontational or that are you in deep thought about a question from an audience member.

Stand still without movement: If you are listening to a question, you can stand still without movement to show your interest.

1b. Body Movements Can Distract from the Message

Just as natural body movements can strengthen the message, unnecessary movements can distract from delivery.

Here are some examples of movements which distract:

Swaying back and forth: If you sway back and forth at the lectern or podium in a pattern without purpose, the audience may follow the movement rather than the message.

Pacing from one side to other: If you pace from one side of the front of the room to the other meaninglessly, the audience will follow the movement.

Moving a hand repetitively: If you use your hand to move your hair out of your eyes constantly while speaking, the audience will focus on the movement rather than what you are saying.



TERM TO KNOW

Lectern

A lectern is a desk with a slanted top, usually placed on a stand or affixed to some other form of support, on which documents or books are placed as support for reading or speaking aloud. Lecterns are generally used while standing.

1c. Tips for the Speaker

1. Have a friend observe or record you while you speak. Review the recording for distracting, repetitive movements.
2. Remember to strive for natural movements of the body. Body movements that are planned and mechanical will call undue attention to you and distract.
3. If you are having difficulty focusing while speaking you might consider mind-body exercises which combine body movement with mental focus and controlled breathing.

2. Gestures

A **gesture** is a form of non-verbal communication in which visible bodily actions communicate particular messages such as the open gesture of Desmond Tutu.



Gestures may be made with almost any movable part of the body. Our focus will be speech related gestures, primarily of the hand and arm. Gestures can be categorized as either speech independent or speech related.

Speech-independent gestures depend upon culturally accepted interpretation and have a direct verbal translation. A wave or a V for a peace sign are examples of speech-independent gestures.

Speech-related gestures are used in parallel with verbal speech. This form of nonverbal communication is used to emphasize the message. Speech-related gestures are intended to provide supplemental information to a verbal message such as pointing to an object of discussion.



TERM TO KNOW

Gesture

A gesture is a form of non-verbal communication in which visible bodily actions communicate particular messages, either in place of speech or together and in parallel with words.

2a. Gestures Can Support the Message

A speech-related gesture is an outward expression of an inward condition. It is merely the effect of a mental or an emotional impulse expressed physically. You may rarely know in advance what gestures you will use to make a point. You may use one gesture to support your message one day and another on a different day.

The gesture is subordinate to the message. You might count off the points on your finger, you may point with your full arm extended to some object or direction, you may outline sizes and shapes, or you might use a gesture to show emphasis.

2b. Unnatural Gestures Can Distract from the Message

You may develop a repertoire of gestures for different purposes, but remember the most natural gesture is one that is motivated by the content of your message. It does not call attention to itself, but flows naturally with the message.

If you are troubled by your gestures, or a lack of gestures, attend to the cause, not the effect. It will not help matters to tack a few mechanical movements onto your delivery.

2c. Tips for the Speaker

1. Make sure that the audience can see your hands above the lectern. Hold you hands at least waist-high and make sure to put your notes or other objects on the lectern so your hands are free to move.
2. Hold your hands at least waist-high throughout your entire presentation; this will increase the likelihood that you'll gesture spontaneously at least once in a while.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **kinesics** is the study of body movement and expression, and that **body movements can help support your message**. However, repetitive, **unnecessary movements can distract the audience from your message**.

You also learned that the **gesture** is subordinate to the message. The gesture is the physical, outward effect which is connected to a thought or emotional impulse. Like body movements, **gestures can either support or distract from your message**. Important **tips for speakers** are to fold you hands at least waist-high so your audience can see them, and make sure to put your notes or other objects on the lectern or podium so your hands are free to move.

Source: Boundless. "Movement and Gesture." Boundless Communications Boundless, 14 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 31 May. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/delivering-the-speech-12/effective-visual-delivery-65/movement-and-gesture-261-10649/>



TERMS TO KNOW

Gesture

A gesture is a form of non-verbal communication in which visible bodily actions communicate particular messages, either in place of speech or together and in parallel with words.

Kinesics

Kinesics is the interpretation of body language such as facial expressions and gestures — or, more formally, non-verbal behavior related to movement, either of any part of the body or the body as a whole.

Lectern

A lectern is a desk with a slanted top, usually placed on a stand or affixed to some other form of support, on which documents or books are placed as support for reading or speaking aloud. Lecterns are generally used while standing.