

Body Language Tips for Your Next Job Interview

Here's how to make an interviewer feel dubious about your candidacy: shake hands for the briefest of seconds, slump in your seat avoiding eye contact, and crack your knuckles before answering tough questions.

Appearance counts during interviews — not only how you dress, but also how you carry yourself. Even if your responses to questions are flawless, the wrong body language can send the wrong signal and sour how you're perceived.

Job Interview Body Language Tips

Follow these recommendations to project poise and confidence (not jitters and arrogance) during your next job interview.

Before the Interview

Put on your confidence even before the interview commences. In the waiting area, have good posture while standing and sitting. Keep your back straight and your chin parallel to the ground. While you may not have met your interviewer at this point, it's still possible that the receptionist or potential future co-workers are observing you.

When you sit down to wait, place your briefcase or purse to the left side of your chair — that will reduce awkwardness when you have to shake the interviewer's hand, and grab your personal items.

The Interview Kick-Off: The Handshake

Most likely, the handshake will be your only moment of physical contact with the interviewer. Studies say that handshakes play a significant role in first impressions, so make it count.

Your shake should be neither bone crushing, nor limp fish. Aim for a firm handshake, and as you shake, make eye contact and smile.

During the Interview

While first impressions do count for a lot, it's during your conversation that interviewers will have an extended time to take you in.

Your answers to questions are important, as is your stance while listening and responding. Keep these body language tips in mind:

Posture and Sitting Style: First and foremost: No slumping! Keep your back straight. Lean forward slightly to indicate interest. Do not recline back into the chair fully; this can make you seem bored or disengaged.

Avoid crossing your arms or placing items in your lap; these habits indicate defensiveness, nerves, and a need for self-protection, when what you'd ideally convey during an interview is confidence.

Tip: If you're offered a choice of seating, opt for the straight-backed chair —plush, cushioned chairs and couches may be comfy, but it's hard to sit gracefully within them.

Avoid Crossing Your Legs: Most experts recommend against crossed legs. With a long interview, you might need to re-cross them because your leg is falling asleep. This could come across as fidgeting.

Suppress Restless Habits: Speaking of fidgeting...if you're a nail-biter, knuckle cracker, hair twirler, or leg tapper, don't allow these habits to make an appearance during the interview. All will appear unprofessional and convey nerves. Plus: Most of these actions are generally considered impolite.

Use Your Hands: Do you naturally talk with your hands? Go ahead and let them move during the interview. Stopping the natural gestures may lead to an awkward appearance. Just make sure your motions don't become so enthusiastic that they distract from your words.

Eye Contact: It's important to make eye contact during your interview, but don't mistake that for a directive to make constant eye contact. That is disconcerting and aggressive. At the same time, avoiding eye contact entirely comes across as untrustworthy and distant — it could make it seem like your answers are dishonest. Balance it out: Aim to make eye contact as you listen and respond to questions, but allow it to break occasionally, and let your eyes wander. Think: How would I make eye contact if I were chatting with a friend?

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