

## How to Use Nonverbal Communication at an Interview

While on a job interview, you might think that if you have the best answers to the interview questions, you'll get the job. In fact, that isn't necessarily the case. A big part of the success of your answers is actually nonverbal communication.

This includes your body language and what is known as "paralanguage" – the elements of your speech besides the words, such as your intonation, speaking speed, pauses and sighs, and facial expressions.

Nonverbal communication also includes your attire and grooming.

Nonverbal communication is as important, or even more important than, verbal communication. The interviewer will be observing your nonverbal communication throughout the entire interview. If your nonverbal communication skills aren't up to par, it won't matter how well you answer the questions.  
Nonverbal Communication Matters

Nonverbal communication matters as soon as you walk in the office door. If you come to an interview reeking of cigarette smoke or chewing gum, you will already have one strike against you. Too much perfume or not enough deodorant won't help either. Not being dressed appropriately or having scuffed shoes will give you a second strike.

Talking on your cell phone or listening to music while waiting to be called for the interview may be your final strike.

What's important when interviewing is to appear professional, attentive, and confident throughout the interview process.

Before you leave for the interview, make sure you are dressed professionally, are neatly groomed, your shoes are polished, and you haven't overdone the perfume or aftershave (none is better than too much).

There are things that you should bring with you to the interview and things that you need to leave at home.

Following the advice in these lists will help improve your nonverbal communication:

### What to Bring to an Interview

- Portfolio or pad holder with a copy of your resume and a list of references on quality paper
- Work samples (if relevant)
- Notepad and pen
- Breath mint (before you enter the building)
- Women: extra pair of pantyhose (keep in your briefcase or car)

### What Not to Bring to an Interview

- Cell phone

- iPod
- Gum
- Cigarettes
- Candy
- Soda or coffee
- Scuffed shoes, messy and/or not-so-clean clothes

### While You Wait

The way you sit in the lobby, the way you greet the receptionist and the interviewer, and the way you wait, will all have an impact on whether you are going to be considered for the job. Be friendly and pleasant, but not overbearing. If you need to wait, sit quietly (no phone calls) and patiently.

Shake hands with the interviewer. Your handshake should be firm - not sticky or wimpy. To avoid sweaty palms, visit the rest room, wash your hands, then run them under cool water prior to the interview. Keep your palms open rather than clenched in a fist and keep a tissue you in your pocket to (discreetly) wipe them.

### Nonverbal Communication During the Interview

- Make eye contact with the interviewer for a few seconds at a time.
- Smile and nod (at appropriate times) when the interviewer is talking, but don't overdo it. Don't laugh unless the interviewer does first.
- Be polite and keep an even tone to your speech. Don't be too loud or too quiet.
- Don't slouch.
- Do relax and lean forward a little towards the interviewer so you appear interested and engaged.
- Don't lean back. You will look too casual and relaxed.
- Keep your feet on the floor and your back against the lower back of the chair.
- Pay close attention to the interviewer. Take notes if you are worried you will not remember something.
- Listen.
- Don't interrupt.
- Stay calm. Even if you had a bad experience at a previous position or were fired, keep your emotions to yourself and do not show anger or frown.
- Not sure what to do with your hands? Hold a pen and your notepad or rest an arm on the chair or on your lap, so you look comfortable. Don't let your arms fly around the room when you're making a point.

### Nonverbal Communication at the End of the Interview

Before leaving the interview, be sure to give the interviewer another firm handshake and smile. On your way out, say goodbye to the receptionist or anyone else you spoke to during the interview.

Of course, your verbal communication is important too. Remember your manners and thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you. Don't use slang. Speak clearly and definitely.

### How to Prepare

Remember that the image the interviewer has of you when she first meets you is the one that is going to last. If you're slouchy, sloppy or messy, it won't matter how well you answer the interview questions. You are not going to get the job.

When practicing for an interview, work on your nonverbal communications as well as your other interviewing skills. It could be what clinches the job offer for you. You can practice with a friend or interview coach who conducts a mock interview and gives you feedback. You can also film yourself and review your nonverbal communication

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