



Body Language in a Job Interview: Communicate Comfortably and Clearly

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Facial expressions, posture, and gestures can influence an interviewer's impressions. But they do not reliably reveal a candidate's competence, honesty, or interest in a job.

Having served on interview panels, I have seen how easily an unusual gesture or nervous mannerism can attract attention. The important distinction is between noticing a behavior and knowing what it means.

For applicants, the aim is to communicate clearly and comfortably. For interviewers, it is to evaluate qualifications without treating body language as a hidden code.

Understand the Limits of First Impressions

A smile may help establish rapport, but a serious expression does not prove unfriendliness. Folded arms do not automatically mean defensiveness, and looking away does not establish dishonesty.

Research has found that many commonly assumed nonverbal signs of deception are unreliable. A [meta-analysis of nonverbal indicators](#) challenges the idea that observers can confidently interpret a collection of gestures as evidence of lying.

Communication styles also vary with culture, disability, neurodivergence, and individual comfort. The National Autistic Society's [interview guidance](#) specifically cautions employers against using differences in eye contact or body language to judge an autistic candidate's feelings about a job.

Let Facial Expressions Be Natural

A courteous greeting and a natural smile can help begin the conversation. You do not need to smile continuously or manufacture expressions to demonstrate interest.

Use eye contact in a way that feels comfortable. Looking away to think is normal. In a panel interview, you can acknowledge different participants as you answer without monitoring exactly where you look.

Your words can also make your interest clear: “That project sounds closely related to the work I enjoyed in my previous role.”

Choose a Comfortable Sitting Position

Sit in a way that supports your body and allows you to listen and speak comfortably. Rest your hands where they feel natural, and adjust your position when needed.

There is no single correct pose. You do not need to lean forward at every question, keep your hands perfectly still, or avoid crossing your legs.

If a habit creates a practical distraction—such as repeatedly clicking a pen—you can put the object aside. Focus on making the conversation easier rather than policing every movement.

Show Attention Through Your Responses

Listening becomes evident in how you answer. Let the interviewer finish, respond to the question asked, and request clarification when necessary.

You might say:

“Would you like an example of how I handled the customer issue, or how I coordinated the team’s response?”

A nod or a hand gesture can accompany your words if it comes naturally. Neither is required, and gestures do not prove that an answer is honest.

Pausing before you respond is also acceptable. A thoughtful answer matters more than an immediate one.

Prepare Without Rehearsing a Performance

Review your application and practice examples that explain your skills, decisions, and accomplishments. Familiarity with your material can help you focus on the interviewer's questions.

A practice interview can reveal whether you speak too quickly, answer at excessive length, or need to explain an example more clearly. Use that feedback to improve communication rather than to imitate an "ideal" personality.

If nervousness interrupts your answer, pause, take a breath, and begin again. One awkward moment does not define the interview.

Make Video Interviews Easier

Position your camera near eye level and arrange the screen so you can comfortably see the interviewer. Check lighting, sound, and seating beforehand.

Looking at the interviewer's image will not always look like direct eye contact on camera. You do not need to stare into the lens throughout the meeting.

If you glance away to consult notes, a brief explanation can provide context: "I'm checking the project dates so I can answer accurately."

A Reminder for Interviewers

An unusual posture or expression is an observation, not an explanation. When a candidate's behavior is unfamiliar, avoid guessing whether it signals anxiety, disinterest, or lack of ability.

Use consistent, job-related questions and assess the evidence in the answers. Work samples and relevant examples provide a stronger basis for discussion than assumptions about a candidate's demeanor.

Body language contributes to an interaction, but it does not "give someone away every time." The most useful interview is one in which both people can communicate clearly and the candidate's qualifications receive a fair hearing.