

## 8 BODY LANGUAGE MISTAKES TO AVOID AT WORK



**Summary:** The body language we use tells a story, whether we mean to or not. Make sure you are telling people the right things.

The art of not talking is sometimes more powerful than the art of [writing a powerful resume](#) and [cover letter](#). Body language can be more communicative than words. [Using the wrong body language](#) can be damaging to your viewed personality and authority.

1. Smiling excessively – A smile can be a great tool when used in the right times. During an interview a smile is appropriate, but during a meeting with a potential client when the topic becomes serious, your smile should fade away to match the serious atmosphere.
2. Having a delicate handshake – Be assertive in your handshake, don't just let it flop limply when shaking hands with anyone. A strong handshake shows confidence and authority. Women especially are judged on the quality of their handshakes. To make the most out of your handshake you must face the person fully, have palm to palm contact with the web of your hand touching theirs, look them in the eye, smile, and greet them if applicable.
3. Any flirtatious behavior – Flirting in the workplace is unacceptable and dangerous. This behavior opens the door to legal issues as well as just plain ridicule. No one wants to be known as the guy or gal that flirts with everyone, even the janitor. Flirting can be seen as less authentic and immature when you want to be seen as professional and competent.
4. Too many head tilts – A head tilt signifies sympathy and active listening, but when used to often, it can be seen as a submissive behavior. Dogs will tilt their head to expose their neck to the dominant animal as a way of showing that they submit. Only use the head tilt when you want to display concern and interest in a colleague or when you want to encourage someone to expand on what they are saying. Keep your head straight if you need to project power and authority.
5. Nodding too much – This is similar to head tilts. When a man nods, he is expressing that he firmly agrees, whereas when a woman nods, it shows that she is listening and understanding, which is a sign to continue talking. Nodding too much in either circumstance is excessive and loses any genuine meaning quickly. Instead, when you are stating your opinion and need to possess authority, keep your head still. Looking like a bobblehead will never make you look powerful or respectable.
6. Using girlish gestures – These gestures include twirling your hair, playing with jewelry, or just excessive hand touching. While these may be more common for women, men can be guilty of certain hand gestures that are overly dramatic. Keep your hands in your lap or on the table firmly. When you do need to use gestures to strengthen your statements, keep them appropriate.
7. Physically condensing – This gesture is common with women. They tend to condense their body by keeping their arms at their sides, crossing their legs tightly, and trying to take up as little space as possible. High-status males will do the opposite behavior. Status and authority are projected non-verbally through height and space. Keeping good posture will help you project the appropriate attitude to others.
8. Acting emotionally over-expressive – Some movement and animation can add passion to a statement, overly doing so comes off as being wishy-washy. When trying to engage and inspire people, these actions can be effective, but when you need to project authority, your movements need to be minimal with any gestures at waist height. Appearing calm and contained is more powerful.