



# EFFECTIVE BODY LANGUAGE

LEVEL 2 PROJECT



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# INTRODUCTION



When presenting a speech, a vast amount of information is visually conveyed by your appearance, manner, and physical behavior. In public speaking, your body can be an effective tool for adding emphasis and clarity to your words. It is also your most powerful instrument for convincing an audience of your sincerity, earnestness, and enthusiasm.

In this project, you will learn to use your body to express emotion and attitude, recognize different forms of body language, and identify gestures that show confidence when speaking in public. You will also learn how to demonstrate awareness of unintentional movement and use gestures to enhance speech content.

# YOUR ASSIGNMENT

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to deliver a speech with awareness of your intentional and unintentional body language, as well as to learn, practice, and refine how you use nonverbal communication when delivering a speech.

**Overview:** Prepare a 5- to 7-minute speech on a topic that lends itself to expression through your movement and gestures. Video record your presentation and get feedback from your mentor or another reviewer before speaking to your club. If you do not have access to a recording device, perform your speech in front of a mirror and make adjustments before your scheduled speech. Present your speech at a club meeting.

**For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist on page 12.**

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Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



**Video:** Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



**Interactive Activity:** Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



**Resource:** Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.

# ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Evaluate your current skill level by rating each statement.



Select the appropriate number based on your skills today:

**5**  
EXEMPLARY

**4**  
EXCEL

**3**  
ACCOMPLISHED

**2**  
EMERGING

**1**  
DEVELOPING

Pre-Project					Statement	Post-Project				
5	4	3	2	1	I recognize the importance of understanding body language.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I understand how my body language communicates my level of confidence when I speak.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I am able to enhance my message with gestures.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I am able to align my body language with my message.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I recognize how this project applies to my life outside of Toastmasters.	5	4	3	2	1

# COMPETENCIES

**The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.**

- Understand how body language expresses emotion and attitude.
- Recognize the body language used when speaking publicly.
- Identify gestures that show confidence when speaking in public.
- Use gestures to enhance speech content.
- Demonstrate awareness of unintentional movement.

## BODY LANGUAGE

Body language is the nonverbal expression of emotions, feelings, and ideas. Your posture, movement, position, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions all contribute to the message you send when you speak. Your body language can enhance your communication or undermine your message.

# POSTURE, STANCE, POSITION, AND MOVEMENT



When you present a speech, effective body language is an essential tool in building credibility and connecting with your listeners. Appropriate gestures focus your audience on you and your message.

## Posture

How you carry yourself when you speak communicates a strong visual message to an audience. Your posture reflects your attitude and your level of confidence. Without making any changes to your speech content, you can communicate that you are alert and in command of yourself and the speaking situation. Proper posture helps you breathe well and effectively project your voice. Proper posture includes head held high with chin up slightly, back straight, shoulders squared, chest out, and stomach in.

## Stance

When standing, your stance is the way you position your body. The ideal stance to demonstrate confidence includes:

- Weight evenly distributed over your feet
- Knees straight but not locked, shoulders relaxed
- Feet pointing straight ahead, not quite shoulder-width apart
- Arms hanging naturally at your sides

## Position

Practice in front of a mirror, with a friend, or with a mentor. You should feel comfortable and relaxed. Adjust your position until you see the message you want to communicate reflected back to you in the mirror. Those with physical concerns can practice in front of a mentor or friend and ask what appears more confident. The best position will always be what feels natural and comfortable.

## Movement

If you are physically able, movement adds energy and variety to your presentation and helps you appear confident. Changing your position or location by stepping out from behind the lectern during a speech is the most visible kind of physical action you can perform.

While constant motion, such as swaying or pacing, is a distraction that can detract from your message and annoy your audience, there are types of intentional movement that can be meaningful and support your presentation:

- Taking a step forward helps emphasize a point.
- Moving a few steps back creates a distance that may help your audience process information.
- Making a lateral movement can help emphasize a transition in your speech.
- Standing in front or to the side of the lectern makes you appear more open to the audience.
- Combining stillness with a verbal pause can add drama or intrigue.



# GESTURES



A speaker's gestures can suggest very precise meaning to an audience. To be effective, a speaker's gestures must be purposeful—even when they are performed unconsciously. Unconscious movement is unintentional, often a habit or a natural expression of the speaker's personality. Whether the movement is intentional or unintentional, gestures must support a speaker's words, as well as the meaning behind the message.

There are four types of effective gestures.

## Descriptive Gestures

Descriptive gestures indicate position, location, or anything tactical. For instance, use your hands to specify a number of objects.

## Emphatic Gestures

Emphatic gestures underscore strong emotion such as earnestness and conviction. Placing your hand on your heart in many cultures communicates a powerful belief in your message.

## Suggestive Gestures

Suggestive gestures are symbols of thoughts and emotions. An open palm can suggest giving or receiving ideas or a tangible item.

## Prompting Gestures

Prompting gestures evoke responses from an audience. When asking for a show of hands to answer a question, raise your hand to encourage audience members to contribute feedback.

## INEFFECTIVE GESTURES

Some unintentional gestures send the wrong message to an audience. You may inadvertently communicate anxiety, frustration, or other discomfort when you present by exhibiting any of the following gestures:

- Gripping the lectern
- Clutching an object such as a pen or notes
- Fidgeting with clothing or accessories
- Tapping your fingers
- Biting or licking your lips

## EYE CONTACT

Making effective eye contact means focusing on individual listeners and creating a connection. Recognize that some audience members may be less comfortable with eye contact than others. Be sensitive by briefly making eye contact before moving on to another person. Brief eye contact acknowledges the individual without making him uncomfortable.

As you deliver your speech:

- Make eye contact with audience members before you begin.
- Begin your speech by selecting one person and addressing him or her personally.
- Hold eye contact for three to five seconds, roughly the time required to complete a sentence or share one thought.
- Keep your eyes up and shift your gaze to another person.
- Move your eyes from one person to the next without following any set pattern.

## A NOTE FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Members with visual impairments may not be able to make eye contact with audience members. That does not mean they cannot engage an audience. When you present with a significant visual impairment, move your head instead of keeping it fixed in one direction. Your voice will carry to different parts of the room as you shift your position and engage audience members regardless of their location.

Arrive for your presentation early and orient yourself to the room. Locate the area where you will present, either the front of the room or the lectern. When it is your turn to make your speech, take the time you need to make sure you are properly positioned and lined up to face your audience. Ask another member to assist you if needed.

## FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

When used effectively, facial expressions can enhance your message. One of the biggest challenges for many speakers is relaxing their expression enough to communicate well when they are nervous. When anxiety is an issue, concentrate on what you can control. Practice facial expressions in front of a mirror or on video just like you would other forms of body language.

Smile as you approach the lectern. Use your expression to communicate surprise, demonstrate appreciation, or show disagreement during your speech. As with most components of a public speaking, practice will help you use your facial expressions to your greatest benefit.



## TOO MUCH BODY LANGUAGE

A speaker who moves frantically around the stage is likely to catch audience member's attention but not necessarily in a positive way. Audience members may be trying to figure out what the speaker is doing, rather than listening to his message.

Intentional and purposeful movement and gestures support and enhance your presentation. Being conscious and aware of each movement will help you avoid agitated and unfocused gestures that can detract from your speech.

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Acceptable gestures can vary widely between cultures. An innocuous gesture in one culture can be inflammatory in another. Because of this, you must be aware of cultural differences when planning body language in your presentations. If you are presenting to a group with members from a culture or cultures that are unfamiliar to you, research common body language and its corresponding meaning in those cultures.

## REVIEW AND APPLY

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- In what ways can body language express emotion?
- Why is eye contact with your audience an important part of your speech?
- How can facial expressions enhance the content of your message?
- Why is too much body movement distracting for an audience?
- Why is it important to be aware of cultural differences in the use of body language?

## COMPLETE YOUR ASSIGNMENT



Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report.

**Review:** Return to page 3 to review your assignment.

**Organize:** Use the Project Checklist on page 12 to review the steps and add your own. This will help you organize and prepare your assignment.

**Schedule:** Work with the vice president education to schedule your speech.

**Prepare:** Prepare for your evaluation. Review the evaluation resources on pages 13–15 and share all resources with your evaluator before your speech. You may choose to share your evaluation resources online.



# PROJECT CHECKLIST

## Effective Body Language

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to deliver a speech with awareness of your intentional and unintentional body language, as well as to learn, practice, and refine how you use nonverbal communication when delivering a speech.

**Overview:** Prepare a 5- to 7-minute speech on a topic that lends itself to expression through your movement and gestures. Video record your presentation and get feedback from your mentor or another reviewer before speaking to your club. If you do not have access to a recording device, perform your speech in front of a mirror and make adjustments before your scheduled speech.

**This project includes:**

- A 5- to 7-minute speech

Below are tasks you will need to complete for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You may alter the following list to incorporate any other tasks necessary for your project.

Schedule your speech with the vice president education.

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Write your speech. Be sure to choose a topic that supports the use of body language.

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Rehearse your speech.

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If possible, have your mentor, a friend, or family member video record your speech. If you do not have access to a recording device, perform your speech in front of a mirror.

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After you have completed all components of the assignment, including your speech, return to page 4 to rate your skills in the post-project section.

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# EVALUATION FORM

## Effective Body Language

Member Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Speech Length: 5 – 7 minutes

**Speech Title** \_\_\_\_\_

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is for the member to deliver a speech with awareness of intentional and unintentional body language, as well as to learn, practice, and refine how he or she uses nonverbal communication when delivering a speech.

### Notes for the Evaluator

During the completion of this project, the member has spent time learning about and practicing his or her body language, including gestures and other nonverbal communication.

About this speech:

- The member will present a well-organized speech on any topic.
- Watch for the member's awareness of his or her intentional and unintentional movement and body language. Note distracting movements as well as movements that enhance the speech.
- The speech may be humorous, informational, or any style the member chooses.
- The speech is not a report on the content of the "Effective Body Language" project.

### General Comments

You excelled at:

You may want to work on:

To challenge yourself:

## EVALUATION FORM – Effective Body Language

For the evaluator: In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this form.

5 EXEMPLARY	4 EXCELS	3 ACCOMPLISHED	2 EMERGING	1 DEVELOPING	
<b>Clarity:</b> Spoken language is clear and is easily understood					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Vocal Variety:</b> Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Eye Contact:</b> Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Gestures:</b> Uses physical gestures effectively					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Audience Awareness:</b> Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Comfort Level:</b> Appears comfortable with the audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Interest:</b> Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Unintentional Movement:</b> Unintentional movement is limited and rarely noticeable					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Purposeful Movement:</b> Speech is strengthened by purposeful choices of movement					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

## Effective Body Language

This criteria lists the specific goals and expectations for the speech. Please review each level to help you complete the evaluation.

### Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

### Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

### Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

### Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

### Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs
- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
- 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs

- 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice
- 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

### Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

### Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

### Unintentional Movement

- 5 – Every movement is purposeful and enhances the speech
- 4 – Most or all movements appear intentional
- 3 – Unintentional movement is limited and rarely noticeable
- 2 – Unintentional movement detracts from speech
- 1 – Unintentional movement is highly distracting

### Purposeful Movement

- 5 – Speech is an exemplary example of the effective use of body language
- 4 – Speech is enhanced and improved by purposeful choices of movement
- 3 – Speech is strengthened by purposeful choices of movement
- 2 – Some movements appear purposeful
- 1 – Few movements appear purposeful





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