Body Language: Body Language Signs

You can tell how someone is feeling by their body language signs. It’s useful to be able to read people’s body language because what people say and what they feel are often not the same. Studies have shown that of the information that we receive from other people: 10% is from what they actually say; 40% is from the tone and speed of their voice; 50% is from their body language.

Head (Body Language Signs)

- A tilted head symbolizes interest in someone or something.
- A lowered head is a negative signal that communicates acceptance of defeat.
- Running fingers through hair can mean that someone is frustrated or that they’re preening themselves because they feel attractive.
- Fondling or patting down hair demonstrates insecurity and a lack of self-confidence.
- The occasional nod from a listener to a speaker is a positive message; it’s an indication that they are listening and are interested.
- Too much nodding implies that a listener has lost interest, is not really listening and is simply nodding to be polite.
- Touching or tugging an ear indicates indecision; though it’s also sometimes done when a person is being untruthful.
- Someone may touch or slightly rub their nose if they are doubtful about what is being said or if they are rejecting an idea.
- People often pinch the bridge of their nose and close their eyes when making a negative evaluation.
- People place their hand on their cheek when they’re thinking or evaluating.
- A genuine smile engages the whole face (including the eyes) and is usually larger on the right side.
- A false smile will often only engage the lips, and will be fairly symmetrical or larger on the left side.
- A person stroking their chin is evaluating or making a decision.
- Projecting the chin towards another person demonstrates defiance or aggression.
- Clearing the throat or swallowing air is a sign of anxiety.

Eyes (Body Language Signs)

- Failing to look someone in the eyes displays a lack of confidence.
- Lowering the eyes is a sign of submission, fear or guilt.
- Staring is interpreted as aggression and implies a person feels dominant and powerful.
- Looking directly into another person’s eyes without staring signifies self-assurance.
- Sizing up a person by looking at them from head to toe is associated with assessing them as either as a potential threat or as a sexual partner.
- Continual glancing at something or someone suggests a desire for that thing or person.
- Blink rate increases when someone is nervous or assessing something.
- Looking upwards and to the right indicates that someone is recalling a memory.
- Looking upwards and to the left implies that a person is using the imaginative / creative part of their brain.
- When a person looks directly upwards they are thinking.
- A widening or brightening of a person’s eyes shows an increased interest in a situation / conversation.
- People who feel insulted, caught-out or threatened, will likely break eye contact.
- A quick glance sideways during a conversation can be used to show irritation at the last comment made.
- Eyes moving from side to side whilst talking suggest that what is being said is not meant to be heard by other people.
- A person who consistently looks around them is bored with a situation / conversation.

Upper Body (Body Language Signs)
Pushing the chest forward draws attention to it; for women this is seen as a provocative romantic display whereas for men it’s a show of strength and power.

A person may push their shoulders back to demonstrate their power and signify that they don’t fear attack.

A pulled back chest with forward curled shoulders is a defensive position taken by people who want others to know that they are no threat to them.

A person with folded / crossed arms is placing a barrier between themselves and their surroundings; indicating that they’re not happy with what is being said or done.

Open arms, particularly when combined with showing palms, mean that someone is approachable and willing to communicate with others.

Upward facing palms signify that a person’s defenses are down and that they’re speaking sincerely with an open heart.

Outward, upward hand movements express an open and positive message.

Open palms occasionally touching the chest imply honesty.

Using hands with downward facing palms symbolizes a calming action.

A palm facing outwards towards someone signals to that person to stop what they are doing or not come any closer.

Positioning hands behind the back shows that someone is relaxed and comfortable; though it can also be used on purpose to convey a message of power and confidence.

Finger pointing is interpreted as either a sign of assertiveness or a sign of aggression.

Tapping or drumming fingers communicates impatience or frustration.

Biting fingernails represents insecurity and nervousness.

Fiddling with items (e.g. keys or a pen) can be a sign of nerves or anxiety; alternatively it may be done as a result of boredom or impatience.

Interlinked fingers, finger tips touching or index fingers pressed together, are positive gestures that show a person is thinking, evaluating or deciding.

Sides of the palms close together with extended fingers (forming the shape of a plate) is an action often used when offering thoughts or ideas to people.

Fingers held together and curled upwards (forming the shape of a cup) is a gesture used when someone is pleading for something.

Touching the front of the neck symbolizes concern about what another person is saying.

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**Lower Body (Body Language Signs)**

Walking briskly with an upright posture shows confidence.

A normal, relaxed standing pose is with the feet positioned at shoulder width.

The wider a person’s feet are positioned from each other, the more dominant and powerful they feel.

Standing with hands on hips expresses either readiness or aggression.

Leaning back with the hips pushed forward is a provocative and suggestive gesture; it can also signify that a person feels powerful.

In a relaxed sitting pose, the thighs are typically slightly open, with legs running in parallel from the hips.

Sitting with legs open / apart means that a person is comfortable and is feeling secure in their surroundings.

Sitting legs may point (with knees or feet) at the most interesting person in a room or in a person’s desired direction of travel (i.e. towards a door).

Crossed legs can be either a negative, defensive position or a relaxed, comfortable one; it depends on how tense a person's leg muscles are.

Legs crossed towards someone suggest a greater level of interest in them than legs crossed away from them.

A slightly kicking / bouncing foot when sitting with crossed legs suggests boredom or impatience.

Crossing ankles is a sign of being fairly relaxed, especially when the legs are stretched forward and the person is leaning back.

The ‘figure-of-four cross’ occurs when one ankle is placed on top of the other legs' knee, with the top leg's knee pointing sideways; this signals confidence and power.