

Body Language Cue #1: The Lip Purse

Lip pursing is when the lips push or mash together in a hard line.

What it Means: People subconsciously do this when they are holding something back. We purse our lips when we want to say something but are either being interrupted or think we shouldn't say what's really on our minds.

Tip: Be sure to allow the person a safe space to share their thoughts. Take note that you might not be getting all of the information available and keep pursuing the truth.

Body Language Cue #2: Anger

There are two nonverbal clues to know when confrontation is coming and to block it from erupting into a fight:

- a chin jut
- battle stance with hands on your hips and feet widely planted

What it Means: Both of these cues signal anger. Chin jutting is when someone sticks out their chin.

The battle stance is done to take up space and is a high-territorial move. People use the battle stance to show superiority.

Tip: If a tense subject comes up and you see a chin jut or someone goes into battle stance, it is time to change the subject, go into reassurance mode, or take a break.

Body Language Cue #3: How to Know When Someone Is Lying

Lie detection is a complex science with 7 steps, but a classic clue that should raise a red flag is when someone says something negative ("no") but nods their head up and down (a "yes" response). Keep an eye out for these physical inconsistencies and be sure to verify the information.

Tip: If this happens, keep asking questions until you learn more.

Building Rapport Body Language Cue #4: Mimicry

Mimicry is when you subtly mimic or copy the body language of the person you are speaking with. Mimicry goes back to the ancient world—body language expert Mark Bowden studied and practiced the use of masks by ancient shamans and how they and other tribe members would dance to represent the movements of an animal.

The shamans would learn how to move like the animal, and more importantly, think like the animal. Because they would tap into the animal's mind, the shamans would gain a distinct advantage when hunting the animal or learning to defend from it.

What it Means: Anytime you want something to go more smoothly, you can use mimicry to build rapport. You can also notice if someone is mirroring you—subconsciously, we do this with people we like, and it is a good indicator of how someone feels about you.

Tip: If you need to calm someone down, show respect, or get on the same page, subtly mirror their posture or speaking speed. If you want to know how someone feels about you, pay attention to if they copy your seating behaviour or hand gestures.

Body Language Cue #5: Touch

What it Means: A light touch on the arm is a great way to get someone to help you. In one study, students who received a supportive touch on the back of their arm from a teacher were nearly 2 times as likely to volunteer in class.

Similarly, if you have an upcoming project and would like to recruit a volunteer, make sure to add a little touch before you ask.

Be careful about touch – some people dislike it.

Do you know your team well enough to be confident in when/when not to touch – to support, to ask, to confirm etc.

Body Language Cue #6: Saying "Yes"

What it Means: Got a difficult-to-persuade audience coming up? Or showcasing a new idea and want support? Try reviewing as much positive verbal vocabulary as possible:

Yes."

OK."

Good."

You are right."

Of course."

Absolutely."

Being open and positive compels the audience to open up more. You may find it easier to win over listeners or gain support and potentially even build a greater level of intimacy.

So how do we emphasise a nonverbal yes? Try using nonverbal cues such as nodding, leaning towards the person (but not overly leaning), using open body language, showing your palms facing up rather than downwards, and smiling.

Body Language Cue #7: Torso Turning

Torso turning is when you turn your body toward someone.

What it Means: Torso turning is a way to signal attraction. It can also be used to make people feel included. When you're in a group, make sure to turn your torso to the person talking or the person you want to connect with the most.

Body Language Cue #8: The Business Handshake

In business, you have to know how to shake hands. The best handshakes are firm but not domineering. An aggressive handshake is when a dominant person has their hand "on top" of the clasp. The weaker person will often take the bottom part of the handshake by exposing the underside of their wrist—which is a physically weaker position. You often see politicians jockey for the dominant handshake position when meeting in front of cameras.

Two equals should just shake hands up and down, completely vertically, with no one on the top or bottom.

Body Language Cue #9: Steepling

Steepling is when someone brings their hands up toward their chest or face and presses the tips of their fingers together.

What it Means: This is a gesture of confidence, self-assuredness, and even superiority. This can easily be done to inspire confidence in yourself and others during a meeting or interview. This is an easy one for females, in particular, since it is seen as assertive, not aggressive.

Tip: Not sure where to rest your hands during the meeting? Try the steeple!

On the other hand, be careful of the handgun steeple. This looks similar to a steeple but with both hands clasped together and the thumb and index finger sticking out (like a handgun ready to shoot), but it means something totally different.

The handgun steeple demonstrates aggressive feelings. It emphasises what you're saying and can also be used to shoot down someone's ideas. Use it to say you mean business; never to establish a team environment.

Body Language Cue #10: Smiling

What it Means: Contrary to popular belief, smiling is actually seen as a sign of submission. Submissive people tend to smile more at leaders to show they are agreeable and nonthreatening to their power. However, alphas or leaders (think Clint Eastwood) smile much less because their power is enough to keep people in line. Females, in particular, need to be careful not to oversmile, as it puts them in a submissive position. Dr. Nancy Henley found that women smile in 87 percent of social encounters, while men smile only 67 percent of the time.

Body Language Cue #11: Eye gaze

The definition of an eye gaze is when someone stares at you and keeps looking.

What it Means: Giving someone an eye gaze can show active aggression and fear. Coupled with an intense look like furrowed brows it can mean someone's trying to show you who's boss.

People also avoid eye gazing when they feel unconfident or submissive.

In a study, Japan's Osaka University used a robot called Robovie to test eye gaze. It played the role of a travel agent booking a negotiation and looked at two different people. When the two people were looked at equally, they took turns speaking. But when Robovie only glanced at one person, the other spoke less. And when Robovie completely ignored one person, the ignored person spoke the least. It was consistent about 97% of the time, which goes to show how powerful eye gaze can be!

Body Language Cue #12: Territorial Claiming

Messages that indicate you are taking over territory include:

leaning on, touching, standing close to other people's objects
leaning against an exit or entry point ("I own this exit!")

What it Means: Whoever takes control of the donuts and coffee is the commander of the space. They may have great status and the attention of others. Even great leaders serve coffee or pour drinks to welcome guests. Controlling these prime areas emphasises service to others.

Body Language Cue #13: Laughing

What it Means: Did you know laughing can give away power and signal submission? It might not even be that "fake" kind of laugh, but a genuine laugh that nonverbally says, "Every joke you say is funny! I'm acknowledging you!"

Body Language Cue #14: Arm Folding

The definition of arm folding is when someone crosses their arms in front of their body, forming a barrier. The person may even use one arm or objects to form a barrier, instead of both arms.

What it Means: Leaders usually reinforce dominance by not folding their arms. This shows they are open and relaxed, not stiff and closed.

New volunteers, on the other hand, might cross with both arms or one, especially in new or unfamiliar situations. They might do this because they're new and feeling apprehensive around more experienced volunteers.