



tipsheet

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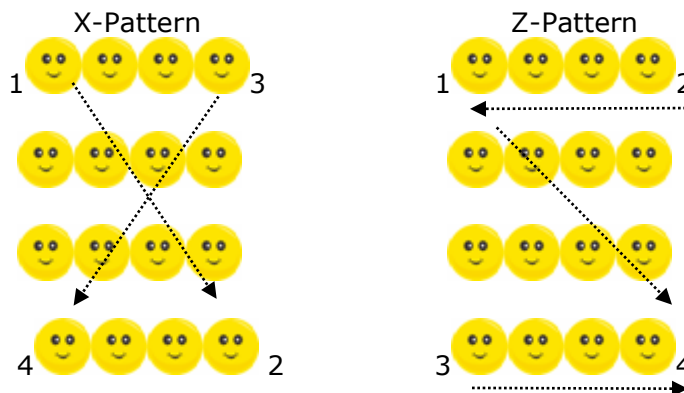
Presentation Body Language

A great presentation isn't just about what you have to say but also about how you say it. The "how" involves a comprehensive view of your body language: your eye contact, facial expressions, hand gestures, posture, and use of room space.

EYE CONTACT^[1]

Have you ever been told to pick a point in the back of the room and concentrate on it when presenting in front of an audience? If you have, ignore that advice! To create a presenter-audience connection, you must make and maintain effective eye contact. During a presentation, you are the center of attention and all eyes are on you. The following practice techniques will help facilitate eye contact with your audience:

X & Z patterns: Start at position 1 and move along the dotted lines, making eye contact along the way, to position 2, 3, etc. Change up the pattern so that you don't appear robotic or rehearsed. Making eye contact should have a natural feel.



What to keep in mind	What to avoid
Move your head and neck, not just your eyes.	Don't appear deliberate in your movements.
Be mindful of those who aren't in your plain view or who end up facing your back or exposed shoulder. Occasionally turn to them to acknowledge their presence.	Don't alienate your audience by ignoring a section that's not in your immediate view.
Find a friendly face. If you need a boost of confidence, refer to that friendly face.	Don't concentrate so much on a friendly/familiar face that you alienate the rest of the audience.

When you successfully engage your audience members, they will develop an interest in what you have to say.

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Convey a level of interest and excitement for your topic by showing an alert expression and smiling.

What to keep in mind	What to avoid
Make certain your expressions are appropriate for the mood of the topic and/or moment in the presentation.	Don't overuse one expression.
Be aware of the non-verbal message you are sending with each facial expression.	Don't show anger or discomfort in your face when challenged.

^[1]Schultz, H. (2005). *Business scenarios: A context-based approach to business communication*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

HAND GESTURES^[2]

Use hand gestures to emphasize a point or draw the audience's attention to a specific area on a slide. As is the case with facial expressions, hand gestures are only effective when they're used purposefully and appropriately. Avoid the following gestures:

Gesture	Reason to avoid
Crossing your arms	May appear to be establishing a shield between yourself and the audience
Grabbing hold of the podium	May appear to be using podium as a "security blanket" due to nervousness
Leaning on podium	May appear to be too informal
Putting hand(s) in pocket(s)	May appear to be too casual
Using chopping or waving motions	May be perceived as a nervous gesture
Twisting notes	Conveys nervousness. Also, noise from crinkling papers can be distracting to your audience
Keeping arms rigid at sides	May come across as too formal and nervous

USE OF SPACE: MOVEMENT, PHYSICAL PLACEMENT, AND POSTURE

Movement: Some people feel comfortable standing still during a presentation; others prefer to "work the room" or use a hybrid of the two approaches. Moving through the room changes the dynamic of the presentation and conveys a personal touch. Shifting from side to side isn't an effective movement. This form of body language (like all others previously mentioned) should be purposeful, not mechanical. If you're presenting in a room where the projector screen is low, don't stand in front of the screen, blocking the audience's view.

Physical placement: Deciding on the appropriate positioning during your presentation depends on the audience's expectations, the number of people in the audience, and the environment you want to create. Be aware ahead of time of all of the aforementioned factors. For example, in a public speaking situation, the audience expects the speaker to stand up front. In a more formal business presentation, the presenter normally stands at a podium. Creating a participatory environment involves stepping out in front of the audience.

Posture: One of the best ways to convey confidence is via posture. When presenting, stand straight up--no slouching. Your weight should be distributed evenly. You shouldn't lean on one side more than the other. Uneven weight distribution conveys somewhat of a laissez-faire attitude. In addition to your body, your neck should also be straight. A tilted head demonstrates uncertainty and confusion.

All of these techniques may not apply universally. Body language (facial expressions, hand gestures, eye contact, etc.) won't be interpreted the same way in all cultures. Know your audience.

When communicating via body language, some approaches are more effective than others. You must develop your personal style in order to convey your message with confidence, clarity, and purpose.

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^[2] Tisdale, Judy J. (2005). *Effective Business Presentations*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall.