

Preparing for the Interview

Nonverbal Cues are Important

Many interviews fail because of lack of proper communication. But communication is more than just what one says. Often it's the nonverbal communication that we are least aware of, yet speaks the loudest. Following are the top five nonverbals, ranked in order of importance, when it comes to interviewing.

- **Eye Contact** – unequaled in importance! If you have a habit of looking away while listening, it shows lack of interest and a short attention span. If you fail to maintain eye contact while speaking, at a minimum it shows a lack of confidence in what you are saying and at a maximum may send the subtle indication that you may be lying. Don't just assume you have good eye contact. Ask, watch, then practice. Ask others if you ever lack proper eye contact. If they respond that you sometimes do, ask if it was during speaking or listening. Take note. Sit down with a friend and practice until you are comfortable maintaining sincere, continuous eye contact.
- **Facial Expressions** – It is amazing the large number of people who are totally unaware of sullen, bewildered, or even mildly hysterical expressions plastered on their faces – often during the entire course of an interview. Take a good, long, hard look at yourself in the mirror. Look at yourself as others would. Then modify your facial expressions – first eliminate any negative overall characteristics that might exist, then add a simple feature that nearly every interviewee forgets – a smile! Not a silly grin, but a true and genuine smile that says you are a happy person and delighted to be interviewing.
- **Posture** – Posture sends the signal of your confidence and power potential. Stand tall, walk tall, and most of all, sit tall. Height is not what's important, posture is. Sit at the front edge of your chair, slightly leaning forward, intent on the subject at hand.
- **Gestures** – Contrary to popular belief, gestures should be limited during the interview. So, don't use artificial gestures to supposedly heighten the importance of the issue at hand. It will merely come off as theatrical. When you do use gestures, make sure they are sincere and meaningful.
- **Space** – Recognize the boundaries of your personal space and that of others. If you are typical of most Americans, it will range between 30 and 36 inches. Be prepared, however, not to back up or move away from someone who has smaller personal space than your own. Hang in there, take a deep breathe, and stand your ground. For most of us, merely the awareness of our personal space is enough to consciously prompt us to stand firm. If you have a smaller than average personal space, make sure you keep your distance so that you don't intimidate someone who possesses a larger personal space.