

1.5.5 Presentation Skills

Introduction:

The Presentation skills cover.

1. Command and Movement
2. Eye Contact
3. Gestures

1. Command and Movement

POSTURE:

Keep your posture erect but relaxed. You want to stand up straight but not stiff. Your feet should be pointed at the audience with your weight evenly distributed. Do not place your weight on one hip, then shift to the other and back again. This shifting can distract the audience.

MOVEMENT:

Typically, speakers tend to stand in one spot, feet rooted like a tree to the ground. If your presentation will be delivered from a lectern, you should experiment. If appropriate, move to the side or front of the lectern to get nearer the audience. Many professional speakers do this. It is engaging, and audiences feel closer to the speaker without barriers. If you are using a microphone, then you will need an extension cord or lavalier mike. In a formal presentation, or if the lectern is at a head table, this technique may not be practical.

When not using a lectern, you should normally stay within 4-8 feet of the front row. Do not stay frozen in one spot but do not pace either. An occasional step to either side, or even a half-step towards the audience for emphasis, can enhance your presentation. Stay close, stay direct, and stay involved with your audience.

SHOULDER ORIENTATION:

When delivering a presentation, keep your shoulders oriented toward the audience. This will help keep your eye contact on the audience, where it should be. Shoulder orientation becomes critical when using visual aids. You will have to angle away from the audience but it should not be more than 45 degrees. **DO NOT SPEAK UNLESS YOU HAVE EYE CONTACT WITH THE AUDIENCE.**

Behavioral Skill : Command and Movement:

“Stand tall”. The difference between towering and cowering is totally a matter of inner posture. It is got nothing to do with height, it costs nothing and it is more fun.”

Malcolm Forbes

How do you hold yourself?

Checklist:

Determine an answer for each question listed below:

Repeat this exercise again after you have completed this chapter. You still may need more time experiencing your communication relationships to check every box, but review the book on a regular basis until you can complete all of them.

YES NO

 Do you lean back on one hip when you are talking in a small group?

YES NO

 Do you cross your legs when you are standing and chatting informally?

YES NO

 Is your upper body posture erect? Are your shoulders in a line or do they curve inwards towards your chest?

YES NO

 When you speak formally, do you plant yourself behind a lectern or table?

YES NO

 Do you communicate impatience by tapping your foot or a pencil when you are listening?

YES NO

 Do you know if you have the “fig leaf” or other nervous or inhibiting gesture habits when addressing a group?

YES NO

 Do you move around when talking informally?

2 Eye Contact

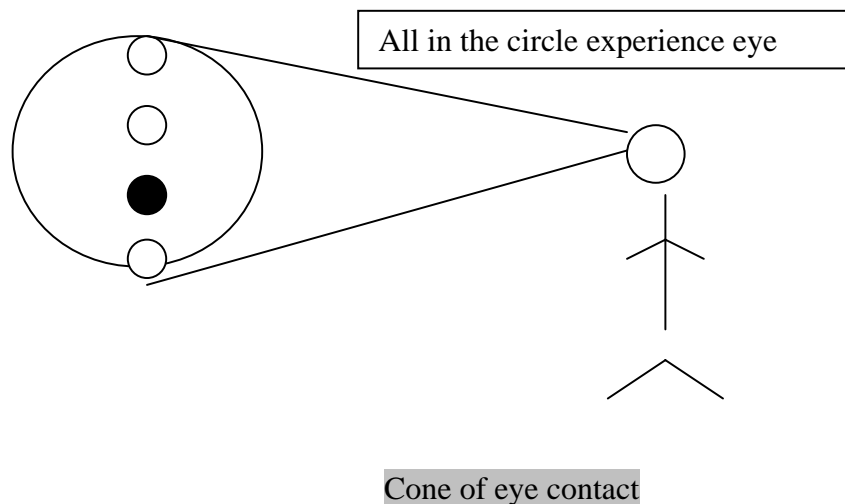
Interviewing a person who looked at the wall or floor when answering your questions would not inspire your confidence in that person. In our culture we expect good, direct eye contact. Yet in many presentations, a speaker will look at a spot on the back of the wall, or at a screen, or at notes—everywhere but into the eyes of the audience.

Eye contact opens the channel of communication between people. It helps establish and build rapport. It involves the audience in the presentation, and makes the presentation more personable. (This is true even in formal presentations.) Good eye contact between the speaker and audience also helps relax the speaker by connecting the speaker to the audience and reducing the speaker's feeling of isolation.

The rule of thumb for eye contact is 1-3 seconds per person. Try not to let your eyes dart around the room. Try to focus on one person, not long enough to make that individual feel uncomfortable, but long enough to pull him or her into your presentation. Then move on to another person.

When you give a presentation, do not just look at your audience—see them. Seek out individuals, and be aware that you are looking at them.

If the group is too large to look at each individual separately, make eye contact with individuals in different part of the audience. People sitting near the individuals you select will feel that you are actually looking at them. As the distance between a speaker and audience increases, a larger and larger circle of people will feel your “eye contact.”



Behavioral Skill : Eye Communication:

An eye can threaten like a loaded and leveled gun; or can insult like hissing and kicking; or in its altered mood by beams of kindness, make the heart dance with joy.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Where and how do you look?

Checklist:

Determine an answer for each question listed below:

Repeat this exercise again after you have completed this chapter. You still may need more time experiencing your communication relationships to check every box, but review the book on a regular basis until you can complete all of them.

YES NO

Do you know where you look when you are talking to another person?

YES NO

Are you aware where you look when you are listening to another person?

YES NO

Do you have a feel for how long to maintain eye communication in a one-on-one conversation?

YES NO

Do you know how long to maintain eye communication with specific individuals when presenting to a large group?

YES NO

Are you aware where you look when you look away from a person?

YES NO

Do you know what eye dart is and whether or not you have it?

YES NO

Do you realize that eye communication is the most important behavioral skill in interpersonal communications?

3 Gestures

The importance of natural gestures, uninhibited by anxiety, cannot be overstated. Too often anxiety holds back this important channel of communication. We use gestures for emphasis in normal conversation without thinking about what we are doing with our hand. Learn to gesture in front of an audience exactly as you would if you were having an animated conversation with a friend—nothing more, nothing less.

Using natural gestures will not distract from a presentation, however, doing one of the following certainly will:

1. Keeping hand in your pockets.
2. Or handcuffed behind your back.
3. Or keeping your arms crossed.

Behavioral Skill: Gestures / Facial Expressions:

“We do not know our presidents. We imagine them. We watch them intermittently and from afar, inferring from only a relatively few gestures and reactions what kind of people they are and whether they should be in charge. Much depends on our intuition and their ability at a handful of opportune moments to project qualities we admire and respect.”

Meg Greenfield

Are you aware how you look to others?

Checklist:

Determine an answer for each question listed below: Repeat this exercise again after you have completed this chapter. You still may need more time experiencing your communication relationships to check every box, but review the book on a regular basis until you can complete all of them.

YES NO

Do you smile under pressure, or does your face become a stone face?

YES NO

When you talk on the phone, do you find yourself smiling or frowning?

YES NO

Do you have an inhibiting gesture—an awkward place where your hands tend to go when speaking under pressure?

YES NO

Do you ever raise your hand or arm above waist level when making a presentation to a group?

YES NO

Do you lean forward and gesture when you are seated, just as you do when you are making a presentation?

YES NO

Do you communicate impatience by drumming your fingers on the table when you are listening?

YES NO

Do your fingers twitch if you try to keep them at your sides when you are speaking to a group?