

# Nonverbal Communication

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## IMPROVING YOUR NONVERBAL SKILLS AND READING BODY LANGUAGE

Good communication is the foundation of successful relationships, both personal and professional. But we communicate with much more than words. Most of the messages we send other people are nonverbal. Nonverbal communication includes our facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, and tone of voice. The ability to understand and use nonverbal communication, or body language, is a powerful tool that can help you connect with others, express what you really mean, navigate challenging situations, and build better relationships.

### In This Article:

- [What is nonverbal communication?](#)
- [Types of nonverbal communication](#)
- [How nonverbal communication can go wrong](#)
- [Effective nonverbal communication](#)
- [Tips for reading body language](#)

## What is nonverbal communication and body language?

Nonverbal communication, or body language, is a vital form of communication—a natural, unconscious language that broadcasts our true feelings and intentions in any given moment, and clues us in to the feelings and intentions of those around us.

When we interact with others, we continuously give and receive wordless signals. All of our nonverbal behaviors—the gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make—send strong messages. These messages don't stop when you stop speaking either. Even when you're silent, you're still communicating nonverbally.

Oftentimes, what we say and what we communicate through body language are two totally different things. When faced with these mixed signals, the listener has to choose whether to believe your verbal or nonverbal message, and, in most cases, they're going to choose nonverbal.

### Why nonverbal communication matters

The way you listen, look, move, and react tells the other person whether or not you care, if you're being truthful, and how well you're listening. When your nonverbal signals match up with the words you're saying, they increase trust, clarity, and rapport. When they don't, they generate tension, mistrust, and confusion.