

## Body Language Is A Giveaway To A First Impression

Have you heard this before? “*You never get a second chance to make a first impression.*”

Princeton University psychologists discovered that first impressions are formed in the blink of an eye—about one-tenth of one second! Other studies say you may get seven seconds to make an impression, but longer exposure doesn't seem to change the first impression.

Your facial expression, your posture and your gestures announce how you really feel and think. When used properly, body language can help you develop positive work relationships, bond with members of your team, improve your productivity and present your ideas with more impact.

In an article to *Forbes*, Carol Kinsey Goman offers body language Tips for Career Success. Five Tips will be covered in this *Career Headlines* and five in the next issue.

**1. Smile.** Smiles have a powerful effect. The human brain prefers happy faces. Smiling stimulates your own sense of well-being and tells those around you that you are approachable and trustworthy. For a positive conversation, smile when appropriate.

**2. Stand tall and take up space.** Keeping your posture erect, your shoulders back, and your head high makes you look confident. You will look more powerful to those seated, and you can add to that impression by moving around.

**3. Widen your standing position.** When you stand with your feet close together, you may appear hesitant or unsure of yourself. But when you widen your stance, relax your knees and center your weight in your lower body, you look more confident.

**4. Lower your voice pitch.** At work, the quality of your voice can be a deciding factor in how people perceive you. A higher-pitched voice suggests nervousness. By putting your lips together and saying, “Um hum, um hum, um hum,” you can relax your voice before making an important phone call or going into a meeting.

**5. Maintain eye contact.** You may be an introvert, or shy, or your cultural background may have taught you that extended eye contact is not appropriate. To encourage yourself to make eye contact, which is preferred in the U.S., try looking into another person's eyes long enough to notice what color they are.

**Action:** With a partner, develop a two-minute conversation that assumes you are meeting each other for the first time. To make the best impression possible, follow the suggestions above while speaking. Which of the body language suggestions are easiest and hardest for you?

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Note to teachers: The *Nonverbal Communication* and *Presenting Yourself* lessons in *Job Ready Career Skills* will lead your students to better use of body language. View lesson titles below and try a sample lesson from the Communicating Skills category by clicking on the links below.

