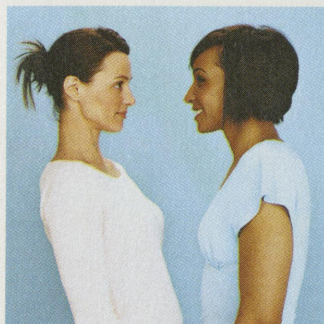


And in Your Body...

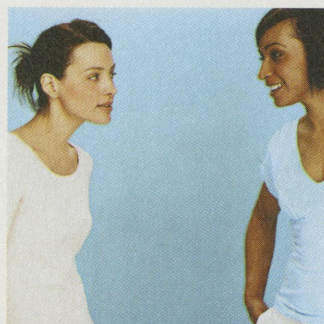


STANDING TOO CLOSE

IT COULD MEAN: She's needy or angry.

BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She's from a culture where people tend to stand closer.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: "This is typically an aggressive gesture," says Professor Whitey Brewer. But different cultures have different rules about space. "North Americans like a distance of two to three feet, while some Europeans want to be closer," says Ramsey. If you're uncomfortable, subtly take a step or two back.



STANDING TOO FAR AWAY

IT COULD MEAN: She's afraid.

BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She's simply more comfortable at this distance.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: "This is typically a passive gesture indicating fear," says Brewer. But for cultural and other reasons, people generally choose a distance they're comfortable with. If you need to get closer, do so, says actress Susan Stewart. Just be careful not to crowd your listener.



SLOUCHING

IT COULD MEAN: She has bad posture.

BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She's skeptical or disrespectful.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: "This is often a way of showing, 'I'm above it all, and I don't care,'" says Tavlin. It can also be a tipoff that someone is lying, especially if accompanied by another sign, such as crossed arms or an averted gaze.



CROSSING ARMS

IT COULD MEAN: She is cold or simply finds this position comfortable.

BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She's angry or defiant, or feels vulnerable.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: With arms and elbows pulled tightly into the body, the gesture may reveal acute nervousness or chronic anxiety, says Givens. Held less tightly against the chest, with elbows elevated and projecting outward, the crossed arms suggest arrogance, dislike, or disagreement.

The Sign Language of Success

Finessing your nonverbal exchanges can help put others at ease and make them more receptive to your spoken message.

- Rather than staring at someone straight on, "rotate your focus to something slightly to the right or left of the person you're talking to," suggests executive coach Steven Watts. "Constant staring can make people feel uncomfortable or nervous."
- If you tend to fidget, make sure both feet are planted firmly on the floor. Clenching your toes in your shoes can help prevent toe tapping and other nervous foot movements.
- If you're a naturally hands-on person, keep in mind that touching the back of a person's hand, wrist, or forearm is the gesture least likely to offend. "These parts of the body are less personal," says anthropologist David Givens. The shoulder is too emotional; the head is an absolute no-no.
- Should you find yourself standing too close to someone, make a joke and change the distance, saying something like "Sorry. I'm a little in your face, aren't I?" as you move back.

THE EXPERTS

Whitey Brewer is an adjunct faculty member, teaching nonverbal communication, at Loyola Marymount University, in Los Angeles.

David Givens is an anthropologist and the director of the Center for Nonverbal Studies, in Spokane, Washington.

Maria Katrina Karos is a trial lawyer in Dallas.

Carol Moss is a life coach and a licensed clinical social worker in Wilmette, Illinois.

Audrey Nelson, Ph.D., is a corporate-communications consultant in Boulder, Colorado.

Lydia Ramsey is the author of *Manners That Sell* (Longfellow Press, \$20).

Susan Stewart is an actress in New York City.

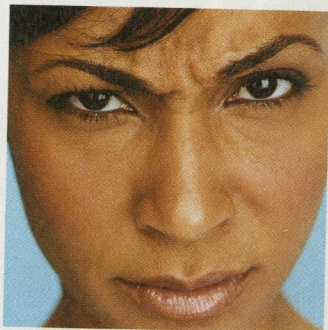
Barbara Tannenbaum is a senior lecturer in the department of theater, speech, and dance at Brown University, in Providence, Rhode Island.

Steven Tavlin is a private investigator with the Holmes Detective Bureau, in New York City.

Steve Watts is the CEO of Bold Approach, a business-development and training firm in Boise, Idaho.

It's Written on Your Face...

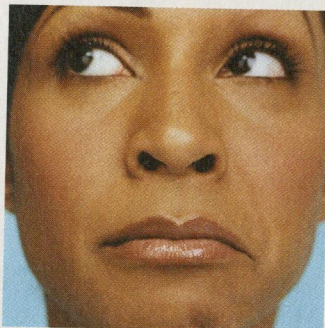
Body language can almost always be interpreted in more than one way. Following are 18 gestures, with advice for reading them from a team of experts in nonverbal communication.



FURROWING BROW

IT COULD MEAN: She's thinking.
BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She disapproves of or disagrees with what you're saying. Or else she can't hear you.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: "This almost always means something negative," says trial lawyer Maria Katrina Karos. It is often a cue people use to tell you something is wrong, says author Lydia Ramsey: They want you to ask them what they're thinking.

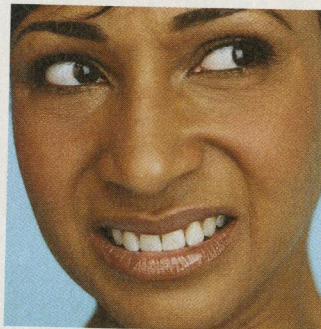


FROWNING

IT COULD MEAN: She's unhappy or uncomfortable.

BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She's concentrating.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: Some people frown without realizing it, so don't comment on the frowning directly, says anthropologist David Givens. If it happens during a job interview, you might ask, "Did that answer the question?" With a friend, just ask if she's OK.

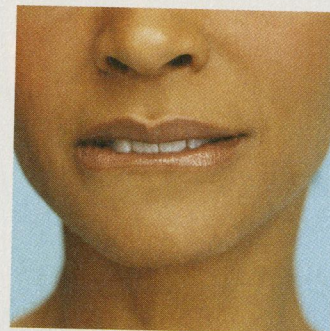


GRIMACING

IT COULD MEAN: Nothing. It's just a tic or a bad habit.

BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She doesn't like what you're saying.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: This is typically a sign of discomfort or displeasure, says Ramsey. But she warns against reading too much into it: "Some people just always have unpleasant expressions on their faces."

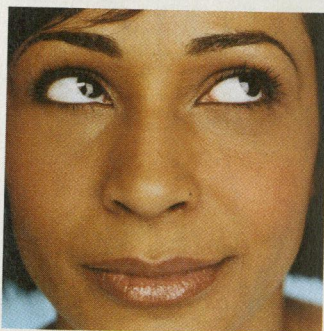


LIP BITING

IT COULD MEAN: She's flirting.
BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She's shy or feels pressured.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: Suspects sometimes do this when they're trying to remember an event or concoct a story, says private investigator Steven Tavlin. It's a sign of discomfort. To put the person at ease, avoid direct staring and lower your voice. You might even back up or turn away slightly. "The idea is to take the pressure off," says Givens.

And in Your Eyes...



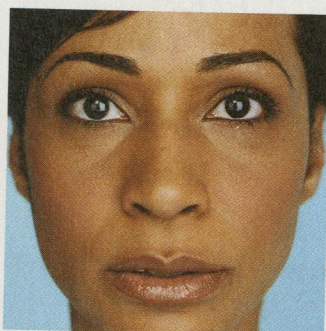
ROLLING EYES

IT COULD MEAN: She's trying to be funny.

BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She is frustrated, doesn't like you, or doesn't respect you.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY:

"Eye rolling is one of the nonverbal signs that is pretty much always aggressive," says executive coach Steve Watts. He recommends politely confronting the eye-roller, asking, "Do you disagree?" to get negative feelings out in the open.



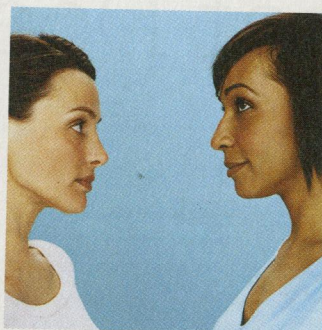
STARING

IT COULD MEAN: She's concentrating on what you're saying, or she's smitten with you.

BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She's being rude and aggressive.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY:

Eye contact rarely lasts longer than three seconds before one or both people experience a powerful urge to glance away, says Givens. If the starrer is making you feel uncomfortable, look away briefly to give her the hint.



AVOIDING EYE CONTACT

IT COULD MEAN: She's shy.

BUT IT MIGHT MEAN: She's lying or trying to provoke you.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: Don't assume the worst based on this clue alone (see Spotting a Liar, following page). And be aware of varying cultural interpretations of eye contact, says corporate-communications consultant Audrey Nelson. "We associate eye contact with honesty, but in Japan avoiding eye contact is a sign of respect."

tip

If you want to seem powerful and assertive in a room, don't cross your legs. Instead, take up space. Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart, or sit with both feet firmly on the ground, even if this means you need to sit forward a bit.