

Posture and Body Movement

When giving a presentation, many people feel anxious or intimidated. The way they carry themselves often sends this message to the audience, which can negatively affect how they are perceived. By paying attention to your posture and body stance, you can make a positive impression on your audience and can help you shake off your own discomfort and anxiety.

Relax your shoulders. This is where all the tension begins. Loosening your shoulders can help you to feel less nervous.

Keep your back straight. A straight back will help keep your shoulders down, making it easier for you to relax. If you try to tense your shoulders with a straight back, you'll notice that it's both difficult and uncomfortable. You can also project your voice more with a straightened back.

At rest, keep your hands in a comfortable position. The easiest place to rest your hands when not making meaningful gestures is at your sides. You can also lightly set them on the lectern or podium if it is available and unobtrusive. Crossing your arms or putting your hands in your pockets can look unprofessional and can even keep you from breathing properly.

Space your feet shoulder-width apart. This establishes a good, solid foundation for your body. It can keep you from tensing up and losing your balance.

Place one foot slightly in front of the other. Offsetting your feet can keep you from locking your knees, which impairs circulation and can even cause you to pass out. It also helps you maintain your balance and makes it difficult to shift your weight or sway, which can be distracting to the audience.

Move with purpose. Movement on the “stage” can be used to emphasize a point or create immediacy with the audience. Avoid pacing aimlessly across the dais or stage area. Instead, plan your movement to make your presentation more effective. For example, you may:

- Step toward the screen to point out and emphasize something shown on your presentation aids.
- Walk across the stage to indicate a change from one point to the next.
- Walk toward the audience to create a “closeness” or immediacy with them.

While you want your movement and posture to be natural, also be aware that it contributes to your nonverbal communication and effectiveness of your presentation.