**Types of Non Verbal Communication**

According to experts, a substantial portion of our communication is nonverbal. Every day, we respond to thousands on nonverbal cues and behaviors including [postures](https://www.verywell.com/understanding-body-language-2795399), facial expression, eye gaze, gestures and tone of voice. From our handshakes to our hairstyles, nonverbal details reveal who we are and impact how we relate to other people. Scientific research on nonverbal communication and behavior began with the 1872 publication of Charles Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. Since that time, abundant research on the types, effects, and expressions of unspoken communication and behavior. While these signals are often so subtle that we are not consciously aware of them, research has identified several different types of nonverbal communication. In many cases, we communicate information in nonverbal ways using groups of behaviors. For example, we might combine a frown with crossed arms and unblinking eye gaze to indicate disapproval.

**1. Facial Expressions**

[Facial expressions](https://www.verywell.com/understanding-body-language-2795399) are responsible for a huge proportion of nonverbal communication. Consider how much information can be conveyed with a smile or a frown. The look on a person's face is often the first thing we see, even before we hear what they have to say.

While nonverbal communication and behavior can vary dramatically between cultures, the [facial expressions](https://www.verywell.com/understanding-emotions-through-facial-expressions-3024851) for happiness, sadness, anger, and fear are similar throughout the world.

**2. Gestures**

Deliberate movements and signals are an important way to communicate meaning without words. Common [gestures](https://www.verywell.com/understanding-body-language-2795399) include waving, pointing, and using fingers to indicate numeric amounts. Other gestures are arbitrary and related to culture.

In courtroom settings, lawyers have been known to utilize different nonverbal signals to attempt to sway juror opinions.

An attorney might glance at his watch to suggest that the opposing lawyer's argument is tedious or might even roll his eyes at the testimony offered by a witness in an attempt to undermine his or her credibility. These nonverbal signals are seen as being so powerful and influential that some judges even place limits on what type of nonverbal behaviors are allowed in the courtroom.

**3. Paralinguistic**

Paralinguistic refers to vocal communication that is separate from actual language. This includes factors such as tone of voice, loudness, inflection and pitch. Consider the powerful effect that tone of voice can have on the meaning of a sentence. When said in a strong tone of avoice, listeners might interpret approval and enthusiasm. The same words said in a hesitant tone of voice might convey disapproval and a lack of interest.

**4. Body Language and Posture**

Posture and movement can also convey a great deal on information. Research on body language has grown significantly since the 1970's, but popular media have focused on the over-interpretation of defensive postures, arm-crossing, and leg-crossing, especially after publishing Julius Fast's book *Body Language*. While these nonverbal behaviors can indicate feelings and [attitudes](https://www.verywell.com/attitudes-how-they-form-change-shape-behavior-2795897), research suggests that body language is far more subtle and less definitive that previously believed.

**5. Proxemics**

People often refer to their need for "[personal space](https://www.verywell.com/understanding-body-language-2795399)," which is also an important type of nonverbal communication. The amount of distance we need and the amount of space we perceive as belonging to us is influenced by a number of factors including social norms, cultural expectations, situational factors, personality characteristics, and level of familiarity. For example, the amount of personal space needed when having a casual conversation with another person usually varies between 18 inches to four feet. On the other hand, the personal distance needed when speaking to a crowd of people is around 10 to 12 feet.

**6. Eye Gaze**

[The eyes play an important role](https://www.verywell.com/understanding-body-language-2795399) in nonverbal communication and such things as looking, staring and blinking are important nonverbal behaviors. When people encounter people or things that they like, the rate of blinking increases and pupils dilate. Looking at another person can indicate a range of emotions including hostility, interest, and attraction.

People also utilize eye gaze a means to determine if someone is being honest. Normal, steady eye contact is often taken as a sign that a person is telling the truth and is trustworthy. Shifty eyes and an inability to maintain eye contact, on the other hand, is frequently seen as an indicator that someone is lying or being deceptive.

**7. Haptics**

Communicating through touch is another important nonverbal behavior. There has been a substantial amount of research on the importance of touch in infancy and [early childhood](https://www.verywell.com/early-childhood-development-an-overview-2795077). [Harry Harlow's classic monkey study](https://www.verywell.com/harry-harlow-and-the-nature-of-love-2795255) demonstrated how deprived touch and contact impedes development. Baby monkeys raised by wire mothers experienced permanent deficits in behavior and social interaction. Touch can be used to communicate affection, familiarity, sympathy, and other [emotions](https://www.verywell.com/what-are-emotions-2795178). In her book *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters*, author Julia Wood writes that touch is also often used as a way to communicate both status and power. Researchers have found that high-status individuals tend to invade other people's personal space with greater frequency and intensity than lower-status individuals. Sex differences also play a role in how people utilize touch to communicate meaning. Women tend to use touch to convey care, concern, and nurturance. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to use touch to assert power or control over others.

**8. Appearance**

Our choice of color, clothing, hairstyles, and other factors affecting appearance are also considered a means of nonverbal communication. Research on [color psychology](https://www.verywell.com/color-psychology-2795824) has demonstrated that different colors can evoke different moods. Appearance can also alter physiological reactions, judgments, and interpretations. Just think of all the subtle judgments you quickly make about someone based on his or her appearance. These first impressions are important, which is why experts suggest that job seekers dress appropriately for interviews with potential employers.

Researchers have found that appearance can play a role in how people are perceived and even how much they earn. One 1996 study found that attorneys who were rated as more attractive than their peers earned nearly 15 percent more than those ranked as less attractive. Culture is an important influence on how appearances are judged. While thinness tends to be valued in Western cultures, some African cultures relate full-figured bodies to better health, wealth, and social status.

**9. Artifacts**

Objects and images are also tools that can be used to communicate nonverbally. On an online forum, for example, you might select an avatar to represent your identity online and to communicate information about who you are and the things you like. People often spend a great deal of time developing a particular image and surrounding themselves with objects designed to convey information about the things that are important to them. Uniforms, for example, can be used to transmit a tremendous amount of information about a person. A soldier will don fatigues, a police offers will wear a uniform, and a doctor will wear a white lab coat. At a mere glance, these outfits tell people what a person does for a living.