

Lynda Goldman

OXFORD

You're Hired... Now What?

**An Immigrant's Guide to Success
in the Canadian Workplace**



“Fellow immigrants, before your first day at work, read this!”

Marvi Yap, Client Services Director, AV Communications

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Key Features



Look for these features throughout the book. They provide tips and ideas to help you familiarize yourself with the Canadian workplace.



Look for these features throughout the book. They feature immigrants' stories to illustrate key points.

Foreword

As an Executive Director of a growing, highly diverse company, I have learned over the years that an employee's technical or "hard" skills are only one part of his or her success at work. Employees' ability to communicate effectively, build good working relationships with their colleagues and supervisors, and project a professional image are critical for their success in the workplace and their ability to move forward in their careers.

Our organization is one of a number across Canada that offers services to help prepare and place newcomers in the Canadian workplace. These services have often focused on teaching job search skills and linking newcomers with employers and placing them in meaningful employment. We know, however, that once newcomers find work, they often experience barriers to moving ahead in their careers. Like all employees who want to succeed at work, newcomers need to learn about the culture of their new workplaces, how to build relationships, and how to navigate their way up the career ladder.

This book is an invaluable guide for newcomers about to begin their first jobs in Canada, or for anyone involved in helping newcomers transition smoothly into their careers. It offers tips on such basics as how to write a business memo and how to leave an effective voice message, but also offers advice on more complex issues such as how to build professional networks in Canada and how to develop effective relationships with your managers and colleagues.

Finally, I would recommend this book as a resource for Canadian employers. As we see increasingly diverse workplaces across Canada, and as employers depend on the skills newcomers bring, companies need new and better ways to integrate immigrant employees into the workplace and to support this diversity. Successful businesses can use *You're Hired ... Now What?* to build strategies to help all their employees grow in their careers, succeed in their workplace, and fully contribute their skills to the success of the company and the Canadian economy overall.

Allison Pond
Executive Director
ACCES Employment

Introduction

Congratulations—you're hired! You are about to start working in Canada.

Starting a new job is a lot like moving to a foreign place. When you arrived in Canada, people's actions and habits may have surprised or puzzled you. You had to learn about the basics of living in Canada—everything from Canadian food and housing to surviving your first Canadian winter.

Now you are about to put all this together in the workplace. The business world has its own culture, which varies from industry to industry and from company to company.

This book is filled with information that will apply to any workplace. It will also give you strategies for things such as getting along with your co-workers and manager and speaking and writing business English. It's your job to apply these ideas to your specific workplace.

But first, let's think about baking a cake. You may be wondering, "What does baking a cake have to do with working in Canada?" Think of it this way: Oil and water are two ingredients of a cake. Each is valuable on its own. But if you pour oil into a glass of water the liquids don't mix. The oil floats on top of the water. However, if you add flour, sugar, chocolate, and other ingredients, mix them together and bake the whole thing in the oven, you get something delicious: cake!

The same idea applies to mixing cultures in the workplace. At first there may be clashes between people who see things differently—they don't naturally mix well. One person has a slow-moving manner, while another person is quick-acting. One person likes to discuss ideas for a while before making decisions, while another person prefers to make decisions quickly.

This book focuses on how to work in Canada. Many of the principles of living in Canada are based on our ideas about work—how much time we spend working, our view of the value of work, and what it means to succeed.

Why this book was written

Many books and courses tell you how to find a job. But few resources tell you how to *keep* the job, and succeed, after you are hired.

You may have already read *Arrival Survival Canada* and *How to Find a Job in Canada*, both of which should set you up for getting a job. Now you have the job, and you also have the challenge of understanding your Canadian workplace.

The most common question immigrants have about the Canadian workplace is, “How do I succeed?” This book answers that question.

What will you learn from this book?

When you are starting at a new company, you don't need lots of theory about how to succeed. You need practical tips that you can put into action. This book will help you ...

- understand Canada's workplace culture, and how to work well in your job in Canada
- project a professional image in person, in writing, and on the telephone
- learn and use business language and workplace jargon
- get along well with your manager, co-workers, and clients
- use Canadian business etiquette to make a great first impression
- avoid problems with office politics and gossip
- network and build relationships within your company, with clients, and with others in your industry
- manage your time and be productive so you accomplish more
- speak with confidence at meetings, business events, and conferences

Who will benefit from this book?

Canadian immigrants who ...

- have just been hired and are about to start a new job
- are looking for a job, and want to understand the Canadian workplace so they can succeed more quickly
- have been working for some time, and want to progress higher in their company

Managers and human resources professionals who ...

- want to guide new immigrant employees and help them succeed
- would like to learn more about the work styles and thought processes of employees from different cultures
- are struggling with common cultural misunderstandings in the workplace

Once managers become sensitive to the challenges that Canadian immigrants face, they can head off many problems, harness employees' talent, and groom employees for leadership roles.

How is This Book Different?

This is the only book written specifically for Canadian immigrants that tells you how to succeed in Canada. You'll benefit from the following features:

- Real-life stories give you example to illustrate each concept.
- Canadian Business Concepts offer tips and ideas about common business practices in Canada
- Photos and illustrations provide visual reinforcement
- Clear, simple language makes the text easy to understand if English is not your first language
- Business Buzzwords help you understand common slang, jargon, and acronyms in the workplace
- Action plans at the end of chapters help you put your new knowledge into action
- Quotations from business leaders across Canada—many of them immigrants themselves who have succeeded in the Canadian workplace—give encouragement and solutions to many of your challenges

How to read this book

Employees

If you are about to start your first job in Canada, it's a good idea to read Section 1: Getting Started before you begin your job. It will give you an overview of the Canadian workplace and what to expect in your first weeks on the job.

After that, you don't have to read the whole book at once. Read one or two chapters at a time, or skip ahead to the chapters that are most important to you.

If you have been on the job for some time, feel free to skip around to the chapters that are most relevant to you. However, it's a good idea to read the first chapters as well, as they may fill in some gaps in your knowledge and understanding of the Canadian workplace.

Managers and human resources professionals

Reading Section 1: Getting Started will help you understand the main cultural challenges that your employees face. The whole book will give you a wealth of information that you can use to coach your employees to greater success.

You may also appreciate reading the hard-won wisdom of vice-presidents and managers from large corporations—immigrants who have succeeded in the Canadian workplace.

To your success!

Lynda Goldman

Questions or comments? Join me at my blog,
www.YoureHiredNowWhat.Wordpress.com

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my loving and supportive family: my husband, John Berish, and my daughters, Tara and Andrea Berish who inspired me, and my parents Millicent and Max Goldman, who always encouraged me to achieve more than I ever thought I could!

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Actions Speak Louder Than Words



In the business world we communicate in many ways, such as by talking and by writing emails and memos. We also communicate non-verbally, using body language.

In This Chapter

- Non-verbal communication in the Canadian workplace
- Understanding people's gestures and postures
- How to use body language to connect with people
- How to use body language to look like a leader
- Body language that makes a great first impression

Non-verbal communication in the Canadian workplace



Amirul, from Southeast Asia, was meeting with his new manager for the first time. His manager was sitting very casually, with an arm draped over the side of a chair. Partway through the meeting, the manager leaned back and crossed his leg, so that the bottom of his shoe was facing Amirul. Amirul was offended. He felt that his new manager didn't respect him, and wondered if he had made the wrong decision in accepting the job.

Have you ever been made uncomfortable by someone touching your shoulder or arm in a business situation? Do you wonder if you should shake hands or just nod and smile when you meet someone? Have you ever stepped closer to a co-worker and caused him to step back?

These are all examples of the effects of body language, or non-verbal communication, in the workplace. With non-verbal communication we send messages through eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, touch, smell, and interpersonal distance.

Amirul was offended because in his country, showing the bottom of your shoe is a sign of disrespect. However, in Canada, it is nothing more than a casual gesture.

People from different cultures have different ways of acting and of interpreting body language. These silent signals can be confusing. This chapter explains body language, or non-verbal communication, in the Canadian workplace.

Interpersonal space



Maria, from Venezuela, was discussing a project with her colleague Christina. Maria wanted to have a warm, friendly relationship, so she moved closer to Christina and touched her lightly on the arm. Christina involuntarily stepped back. Maria stepped closer again and Christina stepped further back. Within a few minutes, Christina was backed up against a desk and Maria was confused and hurt.

The physical distance between people is very much influenced by culture. The space between people is called interpersonal space. This involves how closely two people stand to one another. Territorial space is the arrangement we make with furniture such as chairs in our offices or other environments.

Most immigrants to Canada come from countries that are more densely populated than Canada, and so they are accustomed to less personal space. Canada is a large country, and Canadians are used to large open spaces. This difference can lead to tension during an otherwise pleasant interaction because Canadians may feel crowded when people stand closer to them than they are used to.

We all have our individual comfort zones, or “space bubbles,” and we only allow certain people inside these bubbles. Here are the zones for Canadians:

Zone	Amount of Space	When Does This Apply?
Intimate	Less than 45 cm (18 inches)	Interacting with family or close friends
Personal	45 cm to 120 cm (18 inches to 4 feet)	Giving instructions or working with others
Social	120 cm to 3.5 m (4 - 12 feet)	Most business situations, such as meetings or discussions
Public	More than 3.5 m (12 feet)	Giving a speech

Generally, North Americans and Europeans stand about one metre (three feet), or an arm’s length, apart. South Americans and people from India tend to stand closer than most Canadians do.



Canadian business people generally stand an arm’s length from each other. The handshake is the only time most people touch in business.

Be aware that coming too close to others may intimidate or threaten them. In addition, you may be from a culture in which you have not dealt with women in managerial positions and you may not be sure how close or far to stand from them.

Here's how to tell whether you are making someone feel uncomfortable: watch to see whether someone moves backward when you move toward him, or if he uses furniture to create a space between the two of you, such as moving behind a desk. He may just want a little more elbow room. Try to stop yourself from stepping forward. Give him some breathing space so he feels more at ease with you. In Canada, people move into another person's space to shake hands, and then they step away.

Canadians generally face each other when they talk. In some other cultures people prefer a side-by-side arrangement, which helps them avoid direct eye contact. Canadians expect to have direct eye contact in business dealings. If this practice is not part of your culture, it is important to try to face people and make more eye contact. (See the section on Eye contact on pages 100 and 101).

Territorial space

We get information about business people through the location of their offices and the arrangement of their furniture, such as chairs and tables. The office environment sends non-verbal messages about who is in power and how people should interact.

People of higher status usually have private offices that have a lot of space. They tend to have more windows and their offices tend to be located on higher floors than those of their employees. The president of the company may have a corner office, or the best view of the city. The president's or owner's desk may face a large window, or be positioned in front of imposing pictures on the wall. With an expensive chair, this creates a throne-like effect.

High-ranking executives have their territory protected by doors and secretaries, with both acting as barriers to access. They often have large wooden desks and high-backed leather chairs with arms. This gives an image of power and authority.

Managers may have smaller offices than executives, with or without windows. Some managers want to create a more casual atmosphere, to encourage people to work together. To model this exchange of ideas, they may have their desks located in the same area as the people who work for them.

People at other levels in the company may have an open arrangement of workspaces in a common area, or they may have their space divided into cubicles. They generally share a communal kitchen where they can get coffee or tea and store lunches in a fridge.

When visiting the offices of managers or executives, be sure to respect the managers' territory and space. Never put your personal belongings—such as briefcase, purse, or papers—on their desks. Don't sit down until they indicate where you should sit; take your cues from the person whose office you are in.

Touch



Jason, from Ontario, was attending a national sales meeting. After three days of training with colleagues from across the country, he was confused when Lucie, a female colleague from Quebec, gave him a kiss on both cheeks. At first he thought she might be interested in dating him. Then he noticed that Lucie kissed everyone in the group.

For most Canadians, the appropriate amount of touch is limited to shaking hands when meeting someone and when parting company. Many people from Quebec have a different attitude, in that they hug and kiss in business settings more often. In fact, it is quite common for business people to greet each other with a kiss on each cheek or part with a hug at the end of a meeting. However, this is not universal, so take your cues from the individuals you meet.

At your place of business, hierarchy is involved in determining who may make physical contact with others in the workplace. The general understanding is that people of higher status can touch people of lower status or those who are younger. The president of a company or a manager should initiate a handshake with an employee, and may even touch an employee on the shoulder or arm, but employees normally do not touch the boss or president.

However, a male manager or president must be careful of touching a female employee, as it could be interpreted as sexual harassment. Most people are careful not to touch someone of the opposite sex in the workplace except to shake hands.

Canada is not a high-touch society. If you come from Italy, Greece, or South America, where people touch each other more frequently, be careful that you do not touch your co-workers too often or touch people who are uncomfortable with physical contact in the workplace.

It may be second nature for you to connect by touching a friend on the arm, but you may be making your Canadian colleagues feel uncomfortable. Observe how often people in your workplace touch each other, and hold yourself back from touching people if they seem uncomfortable or don't reciprocate the contact.



Canadian Business Concept: Shaking hands is the only time most Canadians allow strangers to enter their intimate personal space and have physical contact. After the handshake, people step back out of the intimate zone.

Smell—a sensitive subject

Smell is a powerful tool of communication, and the way people respond to a scent is very personal. Just as some people salivate at the aromas of freshly brewed coffee or pungent cheese, other people are repelled by them. And we can be instantly transported back in time by the aroma of a food we had when we were young.

In the same way, bodily smells that seem wonderful to one person can seem disgusting to another. Scent is so powerful that we often make judgments about people based on the way they smell before we even say, “Hello.”

Canadians place high importance on personal hygiene. It is normal for Canadians to shower daily, to wash their hair frequently, to brush their teeth after every meal or at least twice a day, and to apply deodorant and change their clothes daily.

If you observe advertisements on television and in magazines, you will notice many products designed to remove body odours, including body washes and soaps, toothpastes and mouthwashes, deodorants, laundry detergents, perfumes, and colognes. It is considered acceptable to smell like mint (in toothpaste or mouthwash), or like flowers or fruits (in shampoos and soaps), or like the outdoors (in laundry detergents).

People from many other cultures are not as particular about eliminating smells as Canadians are. In some cultures, body odour is considered natural and people do not feel the need to mask it. Individuals from France and Iran often use strong perfumes and colognes without worrying that the scents might bother some co-workers. Today, many Canadian offices are perfume-free and people are asked not to wear any scent because it causes allergic reactions for some people.



Canadians respond negatively to the smell of smoke.

Most westerners respond negatively to what they consider bad smells such as perspiration, sour breath, or clothes that smell stale. Smoke and pungent foods like garlic can stick to clothing and cause a negative reaction from co-workers. This can have a big impact on working relationships because people may avoid working with someone whose odour they consider offensive.

Refer back to Chapter 4 for tips on avoiding body odour and keeping your work clothes fresh. Take note that if you cook with strong-smelling spices, the smell can linger and you may have to launder your clothes more often.

Food at the office

Food is another area where unwelcome smells can cause problems. If you pack a lunch for work, be careful not to bring foods that have strong odours, such as sardines, curries, and garlic. If you eat at your desk or in a communal kitchen, your co-workers will not appreciate the smells that remain after lunch.

Foods that are warmed in the microwave will give off an odour. Save your delicious curries and garlic pasta for dinner at home. Sandwiches, salads, yogourts, and fruits are all good choices for the workplace.

Understanding people's gestures and postures



Tom, from China, was in a training session for a new product at his job in Vancouver. After the session, the trainer asked Tom if he had understood everything. Tom nodded, because he didn't want to imply that the trainer hadn't explained herself well. In fact, Tom hadn't understood several points, but didn't want to cause offence by asking questions.

People everywhere use their bodies to communicate messages. We look at people's faces first to read their emotions.



Our faces show a range of expressions and give instant information about our thoughts and feelings.

Facial expressions are almost universal. There are at least six facial expressions that seem to be found everywhere in the world: Happiness, sadness, surprise, fear, anger, and disgust. These expressions communicate very strong feelings. In many cases people choose their words carefully, but facial expressions reveal their true feelings.

In some countries, people show their emotions freely. In other countries, people are taught to keep a straight face and not reveal their emotions. For example, in China, it is considered bad manners to frown, because it can cause other people embarrassment. This is why Tom didn't reveal his lack of understanding.

We use our head, arms, hands, shoulders, and even legs and feet to make gestures and emphasize what we are saying. Posture and gestures mean different things in different cultures, and they can easily be misinterpreted.



A face-to-face conversation

Here are descriptions of some common body language signals to help you understand and connect better with Canadians and other cultures in your workplace.

Canadians generally face each other while speaking, and make direct eye contact for at least 50 percent of the time. This may vary from what is done in your culture. In some Asian cultures, people prefer a side-by-side arrangement and don't make much direct eye contact.

Canadians have relaxed postures and mannerisms, including slouching in their chairs. They may cross their legs during meetings, and may remain seated when someone enters the room. This differs from some more formal cultures, where people stand as a sign of respect when an older person or one of higher rank enters or leaves the room.

We can describe body language as *open* or *closed*. People display closed body language when they feel threatened or uncomfortable. They withdraw or hide their bodies by using various stances and physical shields for protection. They project the feeling that they are unfriendly and do not want to connect.



In closed body language, people put up barriers between themselves and others. The woman is hugging a book for protection.



In open body language, people face each other and make eye contact.

Keys to body language

- Open body language invites interaction. People face each other and make eye contact. In Canada, you should become comfortable with open body language in order to communicate well with others.
- In Canada, nodding the head generally means, “I agree with you.” It can also signal, “I hear you.”
- Tilting the head to the side shows interest, active listening, and concern.
- Holding your head up indicates confidence. Looking down gives the impression that you are shy, tired, or uninterested.
- Shrugging the shoulders with a palms-up gesture indicates that the person doesn’t know or care, or is bored or uninterested.
- People who are angry or defensive often lean forward, make direct eye contact, and point their fingers.
- An open palm suggests honesty and sincerity. A closed fist can be considered menacing, and hands on the hips can be seen as defiant.
- Canadians look at people’s faces for signs, such as a smile or nod, to see if they are interested or following the conversation. If you don’t show any emotion on your face, Canadians may feel uncomfortable, and not know whether they are relating to you.
- We look at people’s faces to find out their moods and feelings. When your face and words don’t match, you send a mixed message. For example, if someone asks how you are feeling and you answer “fine” but look sad and downcast, people get a confusing message. When your verbal and non-verbal language don’t match, people believe what they see rather than the words you say.



Shrugging the shoulders indicates indifference or uncertainty.



Confrontational body language: leaning forward, pointing fingers

- It is important to show the right amount of emotion on your face. If you come from a culture that displays all your emotions, you may be perceived as being out of control or aggressive. On the other hand, if you don't let any emotion register on your face, Canadians may think that you have little interest in the conversation. Try to stay in the middle, and display appropriate emotions for the workplace.

Habits and mannerisms that annoy people



Dan was in an early-morning business meeting. He was tired and yawned continually. He also looked at his watch several times. At the end of the meeting his manager called him aside and asked what was wrong. Dan was surprised. He hadn't realized that his actions were sending such strong signals about how tired and bored he was.



We all have unconscious habits and mannerisms that annoy people or cause negative reactions. We generally don't realize when our mannerisms show that we are anxious, bored, confused, impatient, or preoccupied.

To appear calm and relaxed, avoid these gestures.

Do not . . .

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✗ scratch yourself continually | ✗ drum or tap your fingers on the desk |
| ✗ bite or lick your lips | ✗ spit |
| ✗ play with your hair, moustache, or beard | ✗ clear your throat repeatedly |
| ✗ pick your teeth or fingernails | ✗ sigh out of boredom |
| ✗ tap your feet | ✗ play with objects such as a pen or paper clip |
| ✗ adjust your glasses continually | ✗ glance at your watch constantly |
| ✗ click your pen | |



Preoccupied

Impatient



How to use body language to connect with people



Stan, from the Philippines, went to a job interview. His handshake was very soft, and he didn't make much eye contact in order to show respect to the owner of the company. The owner decided not to hire Stan because of the poor impression he made. Stan didn't show the confidence that other job candidates showed by making direct eye contact and having a firm handshake.

In Canada, there are three important parts of a greeting: the handshake, the smile, and eye contact. The essential parts of each are described here.

The handshake

The handshake is a unique occasion because it is the only time that Canadians allow strangers to enter intimate personal space and have physical contact. (The exception is in Quebec. See the section on Touch on page 90.)



To Canadians, a firm handshake shows that you are confident, sincere, and friendly. You'll make a great first impression by being the first to extend your hand.



A good handshake: clasp hands web-to-web

If you come from a culture where a weak handshake is normal, it is important to try to make your handshake firmer. Here's how to do it:

- Extend your hand straight and clasp the other person's hand firmly and comfortably. The webs between your thumbs and forefingers should meet.
- Shake firmly once or twice and then let go. Don't keep pumping up and down.
- Don't turn your hand up or down, or clasp people's fingers. Canadians view this as a soft, weak handshake.



A poor handshake: Don't turn your hand or clasp the other person's fingers

- Adjust your handshake to the person you are meeting. Don't overpower a woman who has a delicate hand, but still give a firm handshake.

Who shakes hands?

Canada is not hierarchal when it comes to handshakes. Men shake hands with men and with women, and women shake hands with each other in a business setting.

People in senior positions should offer their hands first, but it is perfectly fine for anyone to offer their hand. It shows respect and professionalism.

You should shake hands when ...

- you are introduced to someone
- you say goodbye to someone
- you meet someone you haven't seen for some time
- a meeting is beginning or ending
- you feel it is appropriate

When you meet someone, extend your hand, step forward, smile, and say something like, "I'm pleased to meet you, (name of person)."

What if you aren't comfortable shaking hands, because of your faith or for other reasons? As mentioned in Chapter 3, you can smile and nod, and say, "It's not my custom to shake hands, but I am very pleased to meet you."

You may also find that some people are reluctant to shake hands in winter, when colds and the flu are circulating. These individuals may tell you they have a cold or are coming down with something. Many people appreciate this consideration because they don't want to get sick themselves.

What if you are sick? In general it is fine to tell someone why you are not shaking hands, but it may be awkward to tell an important client that you are not feeling well. In this case, try to wash your hands very well before your meeting. You can also keep a small bottle of sanitizing gel or cloths (available in most drugstores) in your briefcase or purse to clean your hands before you meet people.

Smiling



Jin, from Korea, didn't understand why people were always asking him if he was angry or upset, even when he was feeling good. Jin didn't smile much during work hours because he felt that business was serious. Koreans perceive people who smile a great deal to be shallow. At his job in Canada, he was puzzled to see people smiling at him in meetings, and felt very uncomfortable.

People of all cultures are taught to control facial expressions and mask emotions in situations where they are not appropriate. For example, in Canada we understand that we should not cry in a business meeting or openly yawn during a boring presentation.

To Canadians, a smile indicates happiness, but in other cultures smiling may cover a range of emotions:

- Asians smile when they are embarrassed, or to conceal discomfort.
- Koreans perceive business people who smile to be insincere.
- Germans only smile “when there is something to smile about.”
- The people of Thailand smile a great deal.

Canadians perceive a person who smiles to be sincere, warm, caring, and likeable. This does not mean you should go around smiling broadly all the time! In fact, too much smiling might lead co-workers to think you are strange. It’s important to smile in the appropriate circumstances.

Here’s how and when to smile in Canada:

- When someone smiles at you, you should return the smile.
- When you meet someone for the first time, make eye contact and smile warmly and sincerely. You should be thinking, “I’m really happy to meet this person!”
- A broad, open-mouthed smile, especially with lots of teeth showing, can seem insincere because it is easy to “put on” or fake.
- A warm, genuine smile involves the muscles of the mouth, jaw, and eyes. It is easy to contract the muscles of the mouth, but not as easy to engage the eyes. In a relaxed smile, the lips are closed or parted slightly. Have a warm, steady gaze, and allow your eyes to crinkle at the corners.

Eye contact



Lee was new in the department and wanted to make a good impression. When her manager talked to her, she lowered her eyes to show respect. Unfortunately, her manager didn’t understand Lee’s body language, and thought that Lee was shy and insecure. As a result, the manager was reluctant to give Lee a new assignment with an important client.

In Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and parts of Europe, direct eye contact is important to building relationships. Eye contact is considered a sign of respect and attentiveness. People who avoid eye contact may be considered insecure, unfriendly, dishonest, untrustworthy, or lacking in self-confidence.

In other cultures, people don't make much eye contact. In Asian cultures, people lower their eyes as a sign of respect, and feel that prolonged eye contact shows bad manners. In the Middle East, however, eye contact can be so intense that it exceeds the comfort zone for most people in Canada.

Aim to maintain eye contact about 60 to 70 percent of the time. This eye contact should not be steady, though. Look at the other person's eyes for a second or two, then move your eyes away for a few seconds. Keep your attention on the person's face by looking at his nose, chin, or forehead. You can alternate between direct eye contact and looking away, as long as you keep your attention around the face.

Be sensitive to individual differences. Some people are uncomfortable with eye contact because of personality, cultural background, or mood. A shy person may feel overwhelmed by eye contact that is considered normal by other people. You should never stare at someone.

Avoid sunglasses or tinted glasses indoors, as they interfere with eye contact. We feel uncomfortable when we can't see someone's eyes, because we don't know where the person is looking.

How to use body language to look like a leader

What your hands reveal

People's hands often reveal their true feelings. When someone is nervous or upset, he may rub or wring his hands together, or clasp and unclasp them.

Hiding your hands in your pockets or behind your back gives the impression that you are secretive or have a hidden agenda. Show your hands to help build trust.





Hand gestures have different meanings in different cultures. For example, using the thumb and forefinger to make a circle means “okay” in Canada and the US. In Brazil, it’s an insult. This same gesture means “money” in Japan and in France it means “zero.”

In Canada, the common gesture of an upturned thumb means “okay,” or that everything is fine, and a thumb turned down means that things are not good. However, these are considered rude gestures in some countries.



Steepling is a common gesture in business. The name comes from the shape the hands make, which looks like a church steeple. This action is interpreted as a sign of confidence, or suggests that the person is making a decision. Sales people often look for this sign!

Posture

Have you noticed people who seem to have charisma, or “presence”? Chances are they have great posture—they stand and walk tall.

Good posture makes a strong impression because people notice it from across the room. It involves the whole body and is associated with self-confidence and leadership ability.

Poor posture—with slumped shoulders and lowered head—is associated with lack of self-confidence, poor leadership skills, and low interest. Moreover, people with poor posture are also perceived to pay less attention to detail and may be considered to be less reliable and capable.

Good posture is almost magical because it can make anyone appear more self-confident. It is a particularly valuable tool for anyone who is shorter than average height, has a high or weak voice, or can’t afford a top-quality wardrobe. In fact, good posture gives you many of the benefits of a new suit, without the cost!



What is good posture? Stand straight but not rigid. Balance your weight evenly on both feet. Relax your shoulders, but don't let them droop. Keep your chest up and your stomach in. Your head should be erect and your chin up, but in a comfortable manner. Your arms should hang naturally and comfortably at your side, with your fingers slightly curled.

When you walk, move purposefully to show that you are confident, professional, and relaxed. Keep an even pace and a deliberate stride. Don't drag or shuffle your feet.



Canadian Business Concept: Good posture works like magic, because it makes everyone appear more self-confident. Even if you don't feel confident, by simply pulling yourself up, you will appear to be more in charge.

Sit up straight

People who stand up straight are often surprised by how much they slump while sitting. Drooping shoulders are the most visible posture problem. Don't sink into your chair. It makes you disappear, both physically and psychologically.

To make a good impression, sit with your spine erect, but not too stiff. Lean slightly forward, and keep your hands in a comfortable position, ready to gesture.



Body language that makes a great first impression



Warm smiles and open body language invite interaction

In business, you can learn to use body language to make a great first impression to connect with people. Here is a summary of the key steps:

- Use open body language to invite interaction.
- Have a firm handshake. Smile and make eye contact when you shake hands.
- Maintain eye contact by looking at the other person's face (without overdoing it).
- Have a warm, genuine smile.
- Show people you are paying attention by keeping your body relatively still, leaning forward slightly, and nodding when appropriate.
- Observe other people's body language to understand them better. Do not invade their space, or touch people who don't like to be touched.
- Become aware of your own body language to communicate better with others.

Business Buzzwords

- breathing space
- closed body language
- comfort zone
- elbow room
- open body language
- silent signals

Chapter 5 Action Plan

1. Observe people's body language in your workplace.

- When do people shake hands?
- How close do people stand to each other?
- How often do they smile?
- How often do people touch each other?
- How much eye contact do people make?
- What kind of scent (or lack of scent) do you notice?

Write down three ways you can change your body language to fit in to the Canadian workplace more successfully.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

2. Practise making eye contact, smiling, and offering a firm handshake if these things are not part of your culture.

3. Observe the leaders at your company: managers, vice-presidents, the president, or CEO. How do they project leadership through their body language? _____

Write down one change you can make to your body language that will project leadership skills.
