

Reading Body Language

- [Strategies](#)
- [Follow-up Activities](#)

Aim:

Students will:

- Role play communication skills and barriers in interviewing;
- Observe and assess their own and their peers' use of body language and its effects on communication.

Overview:

- Students will role-play various face-to-face and telephone situations, observing the effect of body language on communication. They will complete an organizer, such as a table or chart, and reflect in their notes on the connections between the role-play and the interview assignment.

Time:

75 Minutes

Resources:

- copies of the organizer for each student
- [Communicating](#) (worksheet)

Strategies:

Key Question: How can body language affect communication?

Introduction:

- Review the elements of communication (e.g., sender, receiver, medium, message)
- Brainstorm in groups and develop two lists:
 - What hinders communication?
 - What contributes to good communication?
- Share one idea from each student in a round robin. On the board, list any ideas that deal with body language. Categorize these ideas as either hindering or contributing to communication.

Pair students:

- Instruct one partner (A) to be prepared to interview the other partner (B) on a topic (e.g., what their weekend was like). The goal is to converse for five minutes.
- Secretly direct all B partners to choose two of the following actions to carry out during the interview. Aside from the actions listed below, B partners are to respond naturally to the conversation initiated by their partner.
 - Look only at the floor or the ceiling.
 - Look just beyond but not at the partner. Keep your back turned to partner.
- Have students try to converse for five minutes. Most conversations will lag after a couple of minutes.

Debrief students with the following questions:

- What did you notice?
- What made the conversation very difficult?
- Were you able to converse for the full five minutes? Why not?
- How did body language affect the speaker? The listener?
- How did you feel when your partner would not look at you?

Replay the situation:

- This time secretly direct the A partners to refrain from making *any physical movement whatsoever* as they carry on a conversation about their hobbies, clubs, or interests.

Debrief students with the following questions:

- Were you able to talk and listen without making any physical response? Who could? Who couldn't?
- How did you feel as a listener or speaker not getting any feedback from your partner?

Reflect:

- Instruct students to write a paragraph or so on what these exercises have illustrated about the importance of body language and feedback in communication. Encourage them to reflect on how they can use these exercises to become better interviewers.

Divide the class into groups of three or four students:

- Using ideas generated by the group, have each student complete his/her own organizer on what contributes to good and bad communication.

Lesson Extension

Key Question: How can body distance and the arrangement of chairs contribute to a good or poor interview?

Pair students:

1. Have students arrange their chairs so that they are sitting side by side, then have them talk to each other for about a minute.
2. Have students then move their chairs into a more comfortable position. Most will arrange their chairs so that they face in towards each other.
3. Direct students to move their chairs together gradually until they become uncomfortably close. Are all the chairs arranged at approximately the same distance? What might account for the differences?
4. Direct students to move their chairs apart until they reach the point that conversation becomes difficult. In the discussion, note that the size of the room, the amount of noise and confusion, and the number of groups may all affect the distance that is comfortable.
5. Divide the class into groups of four. Ask students to arrange the chairs so that everyone in the group can comfortably take part in the discussion. Note the

arrangements. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of them. How does the size of the group influence the arrangement? What happens if one person is forced to sit behind another member of the group?

6. Role-play the discussion with photos, books, or other props. How do the props change the group dynamics?
7. Have students make notes on what these activities have shown them about the importance of body distance, chair arrangement, etc. during an interview.
8. Discuss what happens if an adult and/or a stranger and/or a member of the opposite sex is added to the group.
9. Ask one group to role play an interview situation for the class using a tape recorder with a cord that is too short and/or without a table on which to place the recorder. Repeat with another group using an extension cord. Discuss what happened to the discussion when the tape recorder was turned on. Also discuss what difference an inappropriately placed tape recorder can have.
10. If you are using a text containing a section on the importance of body language in communication, this is a good point for students to read it. Have them make additional notes to reinforce the class activities.

Homework:

- Watch a TV talk show. List the factors that contributed to and detracted from the interviews.

Follow-up Activities:

- If students are to make the first contact with community elders by telephone, role-play telephone conversations. Have students develop a list of key points they need to keep in mind when phoning the people they would like to interview. It is important to discuss the difference between “school time” and “community time.” Many students will regard the day-after-tomorrow as a lot of time to make an appointment, whereas adults in the community may regard two weeks from now as “soon.”
- Develop a letter of introduction appropriate to your school and community. See the [Sample Letter of Introduction](#).