



Eye Contact

by

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One key element of facial expression is eye contact. It is estimated that 80 percent of nonverbal communication takes place with your face and eyes. Eye contact is the cement that binds together speakers and their audiences. When you speak, your eyes involve your listeners in your presentation.

There is no faster way to break a communication bond between you and the audience than failing to look at your listeners. No matter the size of your audience, each listener wants to feel that you are talking directly to him or her.

Looking at your listeners as individuals convinces them that you are sincere, are interested in them, and care whether or not they accept your message. Effective eye contact is also an important feedback device that makes the speaking situation a two-way communication process. By looking at your audience, you determine how they are reacting to your presentation.

How To Use Your Eyes Effectively

Your eyes convey a message to your audience. Here are tips to help you use your eyes to better communicate with your audience.

- Know your material. Know your material backward and forward, so you don't have to devote mental energy to scanning your note cards for the next topic (an audience interprets this latter behavior negatively, perceiving that you are unsure about what follows your last point). Prepare well and rehearse often so you don't have to depend heavily on notes.

- Establish a visual bond. Select one person and maintain eye contact with that person long enough to establish a visual bond, about five to ten seconds. Then shift your gaze to another person. In a small group, this is relatively easy. With larger crowds it's difficult. Instead select one or two individuals in each section of the room and establish personal bonds with them. This will leave each listener with the impression you're talking directly to him or her.

- Monitor visual feedback. While you are talking, your listeners are responding with their own nonverbal message such as a smile or nod of the head. Use your eyes to seek out this valuable feedback. If individuals aren't looking at you, they may not be listening, either. Reasons for this include the following:

- They can't hear you. Solution: If you are not using a microphone, speak louder.

- They are bored. Solution: Use humor, increase your vocal variety, or add powerful gestures or body movements.

- They are puzzled. Solution: Repeat or rephrase what you have just said.

- They are fidgeting nervously. Solution: You may be using distracting mannerisms. Heighten your self-awareness of your voice and body language.

On the other hand, if your listener's faces indicate interest and close attention, don't change a thing. You're doing a great job.

Lenny Laskowski is an international professional speaker and the author of the book, [*10 Days to More Confident Public Speaking*](#) and several other publications. Lenny's products can be purchased "on-line" from this website at: <http://www.ljlseminars.com/catalog.htm>. Lenny is also available for hire to speak to your organization, college or association. Lenny also provides in-house seminars and workshops. Why not contact Lenny today for your next function or event. You can reach Lenny at 1-860-559-0202 or E-mail him at: Sales@LJLSeminars.com.