



## Body Movement / Walking Patterns

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Changing your position or location while speaking is the broadest, most visible physical action you can perform. Therefore it can either help drive your message home or spell failure for even the most well-planned speech.

Moving your body in a controlled, purposeful manner creates three benefits:

1. Supports and reinforces what you say
2. Attracts an audience's attention
3. Burns up nervous energy and relieves physical tension

However, body movement can work against you. Remember this one rule:

**NEVER MOVE WITHOUT A REASON**

The eye is inevitably attracted to a moving object, so any body movement you make during a speech invites attention. Too much movement, even the right kind, can become distracting to an audience. Bear in mind the following types of body movement:

- Stepping forward during a speech suggest you are arriving at an important point.
- Stepping backward indicates you've concluded an idea and want the audience to relax for a moment.
- Lateral movement implies a transitional it indicates that you are leaving one thought and taking up another. For example, if you are ready to move on to your next point, move slowly sideways until you are standing next to the lectern.

The final reason for body movement is the easiest; to get from one place to another. In almost every speaking situation, you must walk from the location you are addressing your audience to your props, especially if you are using visual aids. Always change positions by leading with the foot nearest your destination.

You may ask, Why move in the first place? Moving forces people to focus and follow you. The way you walk from your seat to the speaker's location is very important. When you are introduced,

you should appear eager to speak. Many speakers look as though they are heading toward execution.

- Walk confidently from your seat to the lectern. Pause there a few seconds and then move out from behind the lectern. It is wise to use the lectern as a point of departure, not a barrier to hide behind. I personally do not use lecterns.

- Smile before you say your first words.

- Don't stand too close or move beyond the first row of people.

- Walking stresses an important idea. It is essential that you walk with purpose and intention, not just a random shift of position. For example, taking about three steps, moving at a slight angle, usually works best.

- Use three positions with visual aids, Your "home" position is front and center. The other two positions should be relatively near the "home" position. You can move to the right of the lectern and then to the left. Using and varying these three positions prevents you from favoring one side of the audience. If you're speaking on stage, these three positions are called front center, stage left, and stage right. Never stand in front of any visual aid.

- Practice your walking patterns to and from your three positions. These positions should be planned just as your hand gestures are, to some degree. For example, you want your body to move and gesture naturally. However, since most people are nervous about speaking in public, they tend to stiffen their muscles and hold back their natural tendency to gesture. Let your body tell you when it wants to move.

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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](mailto:Sales@LJLSeminars.com). You can also write to us at: 3600 S. College Rd. Ste. E-308, Wilmington, NC, USA.