

CONVEYING YOUR MESSAGE

Interpreting Gestures

A gesture is a non-verbal message that is made with a specific part of the body. Gestures differ greatly from region to region, and from culture to culture. Below we have included a brief list of gestures and their common interpretation in North America.

Gesture	Interpretation
Nodding head	Yes
Shaking head	No
Moving head from side to side	Maybe
Shrugging shoulders	Not sure; I don't know
Crossed arms	Defensive
Tapping hands or fingers	Bored, anxious, nervous
Shaking index finger	Angry
Thumbs up	Agreement, OK
Thumbs down	Disagreement, not OK
Pointing index finger at someone/something	Indicating, blaming
Pointing middle finger (vertically)	Vulgar expression
Handshake	Welcome, introduction
Flap of the hand	Doesn't matter, go ahead
Waving hand	Hello
Waving both hands over head	Help, attention
Crossed legs or ankles	Defensive
Tapping toes or feet	Bored, anxious, nervous

What other gestures can you add to the list?



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