

Six Wrong Ways to Make a Right First Impression— As a Speaker

Whether we are speaking to an individual or a group of 1000 people, our hand gestures can help us make a good first impression or they can be a distraction—and even a turnoff—for our listeners. We can avoid the six gesture habits that detract from our presentations by learning a strategy called “The Frozen Hand Gesture.”

First, here is what not to do:

Least Recommended:

1. ***Incessant Talker*** – the speaker never gestures. He talks fast and gulps air when inhaling. The group doesn’t see the speaker as confident or competent.
2. ***Hyperactive Talker*** – the speaker never stops gesturing or talking. The group becomes impulsive and unsafe.
3. ***Medicated Talker*** – the speaker never gestures. He pauses a very long time between thoughts. The group is bored and falls asleep.
4. ***“Thigh-workout” Talker*** – the speaker does gesture when talking, but he doesn’t have time to go to the gym so during each pause he drops his hands down to his thighs. The group sees the presentation as disjointed.
5. ***Belly Button Insecurity Talker*** – the speaker gestures well when talking, but during the pause, his hands return to his waist as if he is checking that his belly button didn’t vanish during the time he was talking. During each pause, the group thinks he is finished, so people are jolted when he starts talking again.
6. ***Milking Talker*** – the speaker skillfully gestures when talking and during each pause, he wisely doesn’t bring his hands back to his torso. However, he curls his fingers during the pause. The group wonders if he is from a dairy farm.

Recommended: “The Frozen Hand Gesture”

Talk	Pause	Talk	Pause	Talk
with gestures	freeze gestures	with gestures	freeze gestures	with gestures

Within seconds of the beginning of a presentation, listeners form an impression of the speaker. Listeners like to be around speakers who have the *intelligence* to hold their attention. So instead of demonstrating the six wrong ways to make a first impression, we use a reliable technique called a *Frozen Hand Gesture*. One part of the technique—the pause—creates the impression that we are intelligent and worth listening to. And unlike the spoken word, this non-verbal skill is effective cross-culturally. Here’s why the pause is so important. When we talk, listeners notice our culture; this includes the talking speed, volume, intonation, accent, facial expressions, and gestures. In contrast, when we pause they are impressed by our unspoken intelligence. Our comfort with the pause is a subliminal way to convey confidence and competency.

By meticulously following the above “Frozen Hand Gesture” chart, we avoid the “six wrong ways.” Instead, we easily hold the attention of our listeners. We talk with gestures and then, most importantly, we pause with a frozen hand gesture.

In summary, we make a good first impression by talking with our hands, pausing with the gesture *totally frozen*, and not moving a muscle until we begin talking again.

“See an entertaining and insightful 3-minute video of these techniques at www.michaelgrinder.com or www.youtube.com (Search “Michael Grinder Six Wrong Ways to Make a First Right Impression.”)