

## What Should I Do With My Hands?

Many speakers mistakenly believe that hands should be hidden from view. Consequently, they dream up all kinds of ingenious hand tricks: hands secreted under the podium, hands clasped Indian-style behind their back, and hands military-style at their sides. Short of chopping them off, folks go to amazing lengths not to "talk with their hands."

Forget it. The best thing hands can do is to convey naturally, without much orchestration, the conviction and enthusiasm of your message. To discover exactly what your hands should be doing in front of an audience, take a look at how you use them when you think no one is watching--in one-to-one conversation, at dinner, or on the telephone. Then keep these tips in mind to make your gestures influential and relaxed as you "reach out" to a group.

### **Thumbs down for:**

- \*Moving arms wildly about.
- \*Making a hand gesture with no purpose.
- \*Repeating the same gesture over and over.
- \* Fiddling with or wringing hands.
- \* Keeping hands in any one tense position (like in your pockets) for too long.
- \* Folding hands over your crotch (known to speech coaches as the "figleaf position") or in other embarrassing positions. And please, keep your hands away from your nose or mouth!
- \* Keeping hands very close to your body--looks wimpy.
- \* Letting fingers hang loose--looks really wimpy.

### **Thumbs up for:**

- \* Observing and using gestures that come naturally.
- \* Keeping gestures above the waist and directing them outward for visibility and influence.
- \* Punctuating key thoughts and words with gestures.
- \* Using a variety of influential arm and hand positions, including one or two hands outstretched, palms facing upward, or parallel to each other.
- \* Using finger enumeration to designate points one, two, three.
- \* Resting one hand lightly on the desk or lectern while you use the other hand to gesture.

\*\*\*\*\* Above all, be natural. Don't just stand there, but also don't plan your movements so you look like a robot. \*\*\*\*\*