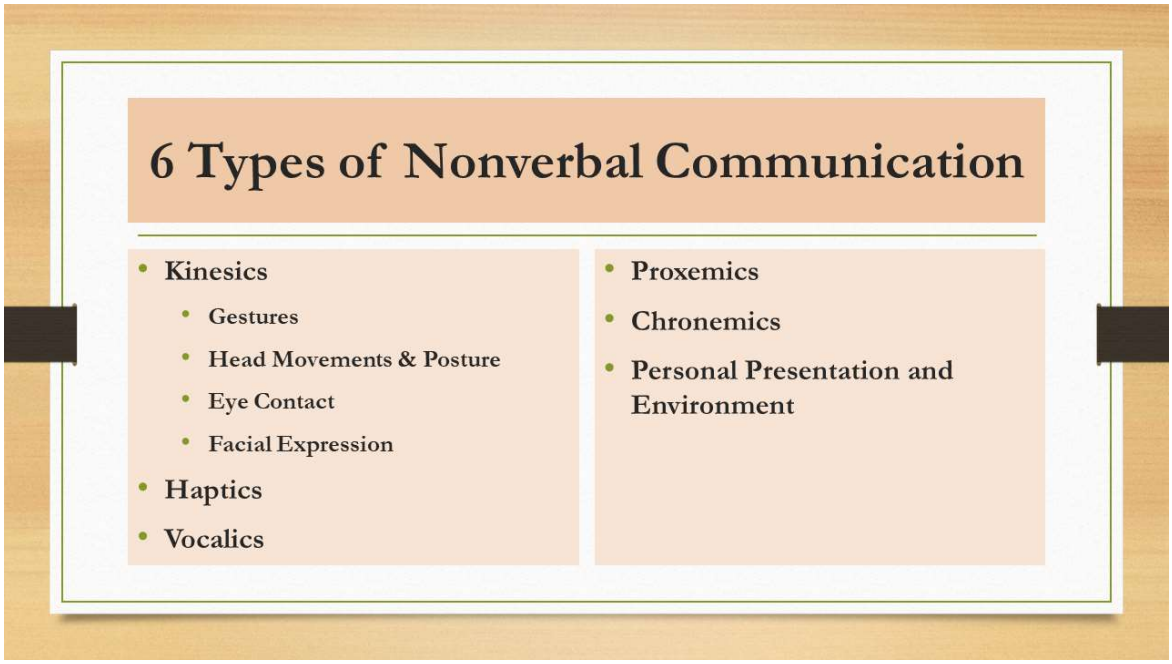
Lesson 9.2 Types of Nonverbal Communication

Just as verbal language is broken up into various types, there are also particular categories of nonverbal communication. As we focus on each category, keep in mind that nonverbal signals often work in concert with each other, combining to repeat, modify, or contradict the verbal message being sent. In the next section, we'll find out how we can improve our competence in sending and interpreting nonverbal cues, but first let's clarify those six specific categories of "nonverbals."



Nonverbal Categories

1. Kinesics

The word kinesics comes from the root word *kinesis*, which means “movement,” and refers to the study of hand, arm, body, and face movements. Specifically, this section will outline the use of *gestures, head movements & posture, eye contact, and facial expressions* as nonverbal communication.

Gestures- There are three main types of gestures: adaptors, emblems, and illustrators. Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 36.

Adaptors are touching behaviors and movements that indicate internal states typically related to arousal or anxiety. Adaptors can be targeted toward the self, objects, or others. In regular social situations, adaptors result from uneasiness, anxiety, or a general sense that we are not in control of our surroundings. Many of us subconsciously click pens, shake our legs, or engage in other adaptors during classes, meetings, or while waiting as a way to do something with our excess energy. Use of object adaptors can also signal boredom as people play with the straw in their drink or peel the label off a bottle of beer. Smartphones have become common object adaptors, as people can fiddle with their phones to help ease anxiety.

Emblems are gestures that have a specific agreed-on meaning. These are still different from the signs used by hearing-impaired people or others who communicate using American Sign Language (ASL). Even though they have a generally agreed-on meaning, they are not part of a formal sign system like ASL that is explicitly taught to a group of people. A hitchhiker's raised thumb, the "OK" sign with thumb and index finger connected in a circle with the other three fingers sticking up, and the raised middle finger are all examples of emblems that have an agreed-on meaning or meanings with a culture. Emblems can be still or in motion; for example, circling the index finger around at the side of your head says "He or she is crazy," or rolling your hands over and over in front of you says "Move on."

Illustrators are the most common type of gesture and are used to illustrate the verbal message they accompany. For example, you might use hand gestures to indicate the size or shape of an object. Unlike emblems, illustrators do not typically have meaning

on their own and are used more subconsciously than emblems. These largely involuntary and seemingly natural gestures flow from us as we speak but vary in terms of intensity and frequency based on context. Although we are never explicitly taught how to use illustrative gestures, we do it automatically. Think about how you still gesture when having an animated conversation on the phone even though the other person can't see you.

Head Movements and Posture- We generally group head movements and posture together because they are often both used to acknowledge others and communicate interest or attentiveness. In terms of head movements, a head nod is a universal sign of acknowledgment in cultures where the formal bow is no longer used as a greeting. In these cases, the head nod essentially serves as an abbreviated bow. An innate and universal head movement is the headshake back and forth to signal "no." This nonverbal signal begins at birth, even before a baby has the ability to know that it has a corresponding meaning. Babies shake their head from side to side to reject their mother's breast and later shake their head to reject attempts to spoon-feed. Allan Pease and Barbara Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language* (New York, NY: Bantam, 2004), 232.

This biologically based movement then sticks with us to be a recognizable signal for "no." We also move our head to indicate interest. For example, a head up typically indicates an engaged or neutral attitude, a head tilt indicates interest and is an innate submission gesture that exposes the neck and subconsciously makes people feel more trusting of us, and a head down signals a negative or aggressive attitude. Allan Pease and Barbara Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language* (New York, NY: Bantam, 2004), 232–34.

There are four general human postures: *standing, sitting, squatting, and lying down.* Owen Hargie, *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 63.

Within each of these postures there are many variations, and when combined with particular gestures or other nonverbal cues they can express many different meanings. Most of our communication occurs while we are standing or sitting. One interesting standing posture involves putting our hands on our hips and is a nonverbal cue that we use subconsciously to make us look bigger and show assertiveness. When the elbows are pointed out, this prevents others from getting past us as easily and is a sign of attempted dominance or a gesture that says we're ready for action. In terms of sitting, leaning back shows informality and indifference, straddling a chair is a sign of dominance (but also some insecurity because the person is protecting the vulnerable front part of his or her body), and leaning forward shows interest and attentiveness. Allan Pease and Barbara Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language* (New York, NY: Bantam, 2004), 243–44.

Eye Contact- We also communicate through eye behaviors, primarily eye contact. While eye behaviors are often studied under the category of kinesics, they have their own branch of nonverbal studies called oculesics, which comes from the Latin word *oculus*, meaning "eye." The face and eyes are the main point of focus during communication, and along with our ears our eyes take in most of the communicative information around us. The saying "The eyes are the window to the soul" is actually accurate in terms of where people typically think others are "located," which is right behind the eyes. Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 40.

Certain eye behaviors have become tied to personality traits or emotional states, as illustrated in phrases like “hungry eyes,” “evil eyes,” and “bedroom eyes.” To better understand oculesics, we will discuss the characteristics and functions of eye contact.

Eye contact serves several communicative functions ranging from regulating interaction to monitoring interaction, to conveying information, to establishing interpersonal connections. In terms of regulating communication, we use eye contact to signal to others that we are ready to speak or we use it to cue others to speak. I’m sure we’ve all been in that awkward situation where a teacher asks a question, no one else offers a response, and he or she looks directly at us as if to say, “What do you think?” In that case, the teacher’s eye contact is used to cue us to respond. During an interaction, eye contact also changes as we shift from speaker to listener. Americans typically shift eye contact while speaking—looking away from the listener and then looking back at his or her face every few seconds. Toward the end of our speaking turn, we make more direct eye contact with our listener to indicate that we are finishing up. While listening, we tend to make more sustained eye contact, not glancing away as regularly as we do while speaking. Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama, *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*, 5th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 276.

Aside from regulating conversations, eye contact is also used to monitor interaction by taking in feedback and other nonverbal cues and to send information. Our eyes bring in the visual information we need to interpret people’s movements, gestures, and eye contact. A speaker can use his or her eye contact to determine if an audience is

engaged, confused, or bored and then adapt his or her message accordingly. Our eyes also send information to others. People know not to interrupt when we are in deep thought because we naturally look away from others when we are processing information. Making eye contact with others also communicates that we are paying attention and are interested in what another person is saying. As we found in a previous unit, eye contact is a key part of active listening. Eye contact can also be used to intimidate others. We have social norms about how much eye contact we make with people, and those norms vary depending on the setting and the person.

Staring at another person in some contexts could communicate intimidation, while in other contexts it could communicate flirtation. As we learned, eye contact is a key immediacy behavior, and it signals to others that we are available for communication. Once communication begins, if it does, eye contact helps establish rapport or connection. We can also use our eye contact to signal that we do not want to make a connection with others. For example, in a public setting like an airport or a gym where people often make small talk, we can avoid making eye contact with others to indicate that we do not want to engage in small talk with strangers. Another person could use eye contact to try to coax you into speaking, though. For example, when one person continues to stare at another person who is not reciprocating eye contact, the person avoiding eye contact might eventually give in, become curious, or become irritated and say, “Can I help you with something?”

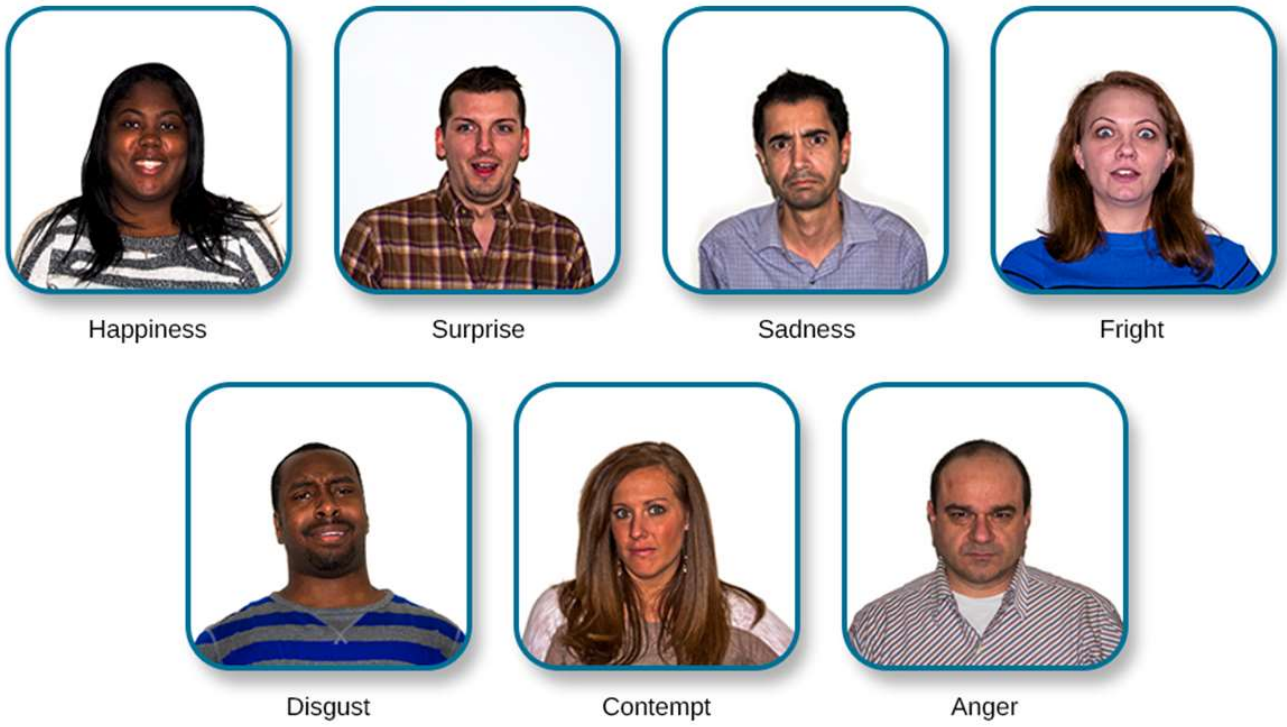
As you can see, eye contact sends and receives important communicative messages that help us interpret others’ behaviors, convey information about our thoughts and

feelings, and facilitate or impede rapport or connection. This list reviews the specific functions of eye contact:

- Regulate interaction and provide turn-taking signals
- Monitor communication by receiving nonverbal communication from others
- Signal cognitive activity (we look away when processing information)
- Express engagement (we show people we are listening with our eyes)
- Convey intimidation
- Express flirtation
- Establish rapport or connection

Facial Expressions- Our faces are the most expressive part of our bodies. Think of how photos are often intended to capture a particular expression “in a flash” to preserve for later viewing. Even though a photo is a snapshot in time, we can still interpret much meaning from a human face caught in a moment of expression, and basic facial expressions are recognizable by humans all over the world. Much research has supported the universality of a core group of facial expressions: happiness (or joy), sadness, fear, anger, surprise, contempt, and disgust. The first four are especially identifiable across cultures. Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 35.

However, the triggers for these expressions and the cultural and social norms that influence their displays are still culturally diverse. If you’ve spent much time with babies you know that they’re capable of expressing all these emotions. Getting to see the pure and innate expressions of joy and surprise on a baby’s face is what makes playing peek-a-boo so entertaining for adults. As we get older, we learn and begin to follow display rules for facial expressions and other signals of emotion and also learn to better control our emotional expression based on the norms of our culture.



Smiles are powerful communicative signals and, as you'll recall, are a key immediacy behavior. Although facial expressions are typically viewed as innate and several are universally recognizable, they are not always connected to an emotional or internal biological stimulus; they can actually serve a more social purpose. For example, most of the smiles we produce are primarily made for others and are not just an involuntary reflection of an internal emotional state. Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 35.

These social smiles, however, are slightly but perceptibly different from more genuine smiles. People generally perceive smiles as more genuine when the other person smiles "with their eyes." This particular type of smile is difficult if not impossible to fake because the muscles around the eye that are activated when we spontaneously or genuinely smile are not under our voluntary control. It is the involuntary and spontaneous contraction of these muscles that moves the skin around our cheeks, eyes, and nose to create a smile that's distinct from a fake or polite smile. Dylan Evans, *Emotion: The Science of Sentiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 107.

2. Haptics

Think of how touch has the power to comfort someone in moment of sorrow when words alone cannot. This positive power of touch is countered by the potential for touch to be threatening because of its connection to sex and violence. To learn about the power of touch, we turn to haptics, which refers to the study of communication by touch. We probably get more explicit advice and instruction on how to use touch than any other form of nonverbal communication. A lack of nonverbal communication competence related to touch could have negative interpersonal consequences; for example, if we don't follow the advice we've been given about the importance of a firm handshake, a person might make negative judgments about our confidence or credibility.

A lack of competence could have more dire negative consequences, including legal punishment, if we touch someone inappropriately (intentionally or unintentionally). Touch is necessary for human social development, and it can be welcoming, threatening, or persuasive. Research projects have found that students evaluated a library and its staff more favorably if the librarian briefly touched the patron while returning his or her library card, that female restaurant servers received larger tips when they touched patrons, and that people were more likely to sign a petition when the petitioner touched them during their interaction. Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 46.

There are several types of touch, including *functional-professional, social-polite, friendship-warmth, love-intimacy, and sexual-arousal touch.* Richard Heslin and Tari

Apler, “Touch: A Bonding Gesture,” in *Nonverbal Interaction*, eds. John M. Weimann and Randall Harrison (Longon: Sage, 1983), 47–76.

At the *functional-professional* level, touch is related to a goal or part of a routine professional interaction, which makes it less threatening and more expected. For example, we let barbers, hairstylists, doctors, nurses, tattoo artists, and security screeners touch us in ways that would otherwise be seen as intimate or inappropriate if not in a professional context.

At the *social-polite* level, socially sanctioned touching behaviors help initiate interactions and show that others are included and respected. A handshake, a pat on the arm, and a pat on the shoulder are examples of social-polite touching. A handshake is actually an abbreviated hand-holding gesture, but we know that prolonged hand-holding would be considered too intimate and therefore inappropriate at the functional-professional or social-polite level. At the functional-professional and social-polite levels, touch still has interpersonal implications. The touch, although professional and not intimate, between hair stylist and client, or between nurse and patient, has the potential to be therapeutic and comforting. In addition, a social-polite touch exchange plays into initial impression formation, which can have important implications for how an interaction and a relationship unfold.

Of course, touch is also important at more intimate levels. At the *friendship-warmth* level, touch is more important and more ambiguous than at the social-polite level. At this level, touch interactions are important because they serve a relational

maintenance purpose and communicate closeness, liking, care, and concern. The types of touching at this level also vary greatly from more formal and ritualized to more intimate, which means friends must sometimes negotiate their own comfort level with various types of touch and may encounter some ambiguity if their preferences don't match up with their relational partner's. In a friendship, for example, too much touch can signal sexual or romantic interest, and too little touch can signal distance or unfriendliness.

At the *love-intimacy* level, touch is more personal and is typically only exchanged between significant others, such as best friends, close family members, and romantic partners. Touching faces, holding hands, and full frontal embraces are examples of touch at this level. Although this level of touch is not sexual, it does enhance feelings of closeness and intimacy and can lead to *sexual-arousal* touch, which is the most intimate form of touch, as it is intended to physically stimulate another person.

Touch is also used in many other contexts— for example, during play (e.g., arm wrestling), during physical conflict (e.g., slapping), and during conversations (e.g., to get someone's attention). Stanley E. Jones, "Communicating with Touch," in *The Nonverbal Communication Reader: Classic and Contemporary Readings,* 2nd ed., eds. Laura K. Guerrero, Joseph A. Devito, and Michael L. Hecht (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1999).

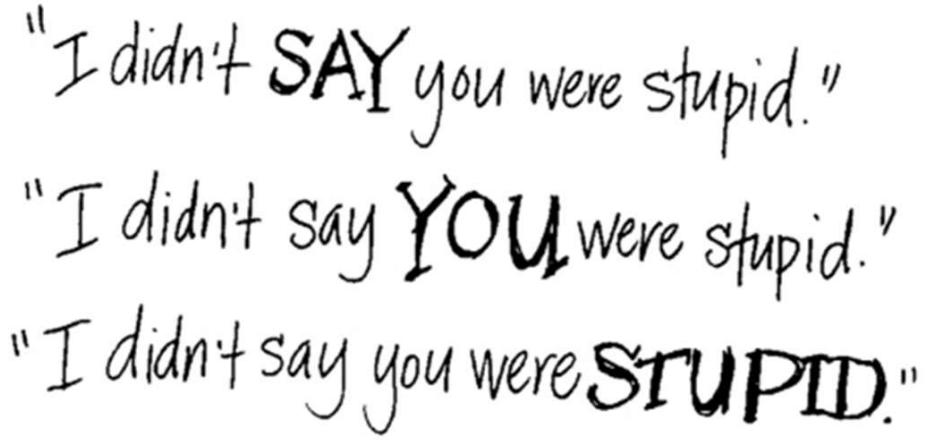
We also inadvertently send messages through accidental touch (e.g., bumping into someone). During a first date or less formal initial interactions, quick fleeting touches

give an indication of interest. For example, a pat on the back is an abbreviated hug. Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 4.

In general, the presence or absence of touching cues us into people's emotions. So as the daters sit across from each other, one person may lightly tap the other's arm after he or she said something funny. If the daters are sitting side by side, one person may cross his or her legs and lean toward the other person so that each person's knees or feet occasionally touch. Touching behavior as a way to express feelings is often reciprocal. A light touch from one dater will be followed by a light touch from the other to indicate that the first touch was OK. While verbal communication could also be used to indicate romantic interest, many people feel too vulnerable at this early stage in a relationship to put something out there in words. If your date advances a touch and you are not interested, it is also unlikely that you will come right out and say, "Sorry, but I'm not really interested." Instead, due to common politeness rituals, you would be more likely to respond with other forms of nonverbal communication like scooting back, crossing your arms, or simply not acknowledging the touch.

3. Vocalics

We learned earlier that *paralanguage* refers to the vocalized but nonverbal parts of a message. Vocalics is the study of paralanguage, which includes the vocal qualities that go along with verbal messages, such as *pitch, volume, rate, vocal quality, and verbal fillers.* Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 69–70.



Pitch helps convey meaning, regulate conversational flow, and communicate the intensity of a message. Even babies recognize a sentence with a higher pitched ending as a question. We also learn that greetings have a rising emphasis and farewells have falling emphasis. Of course, no one ever tells us these things explicitly; we learn them through observation and practice. We do not pick up on some more subtle and/or complex patterns of paralanguage involving pitch until we are older. Children, for example, have a difficult time perceiving sarcasm, which is usually conveyed through paralinguistic characteristics like pitch and tone rather than the actual words being spoken. Adults with lower than average intelligence and children have difficulty reading sarcasm in another person's voice and instead may interpret literally what they say. Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 26.

Paralanguage provides important context for the verbal content of speech. For example, *volume* helps communicate intensity. A louder voice is usually thought of as more intense, although a soft voice combined with a certain tone and facial expression can be just as intense. We typically adjust our volume based on our setting, the distance between people, and the relationship. While communicating online or using our cell phones, most of us know that TYPING IN ALL CAPS is usually seen as offensive, as it is equated with yelling.

A voice at a low volume or a whisper can be very appropriate when sending a covert message or flirting with a romantic partner, but it wouldn't enhance a person's credibility if used during a job interview.

Speaking *rate* refers to how fast or slow a person speaks and can lead others to form impressions about our emotional state, credibility, and intelligence. As with volume, variations in speaking rate can interfere with the ability of others to receive and understand verbal messages. A slow speaker could bore others and lead their attention to wander. A fast speaker may be difficult to follow, and the fast delivery can actually cause distraction during a conversation. David B. Buller and Judee K. Burgoon, "The Effects of Vocalics and Nonverbal Sensitivity on Compliance," *Human Communication Research* 13, no. 1 (1986): 126–44.

Our *tone* of voice can be controlled somewhat with pitch, volume, and emphasis, but each voice has a distinct quality known as a vocal signature. Voices vary in terms of resonance, pitch, and tone, and some voices are more pleasing than others. People

typically find pleasing voices that employ vocal variety and are not monotone, are lower pitched (particularly for males), and do not exhibit particular regional accents. Many people perceive nasal voices negatively and assign negative personality characteristics to them. Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 71.

Verbal fillers are sounds that fill gaps in our speech as we think about what to say next. They are considered a part of nonverbal communication because they are not like typical words that stand in for a specific meaning or meanings. Verbal fillers such as “um,” “uh,” “like,” and “ah” are common in regular conversation and are not typically disruptive. As we learned earlier, the use of verbal fillers can help a person “keep the floor” during a conversation if they need to pause for a moment to think before continuing on with verbal communication.

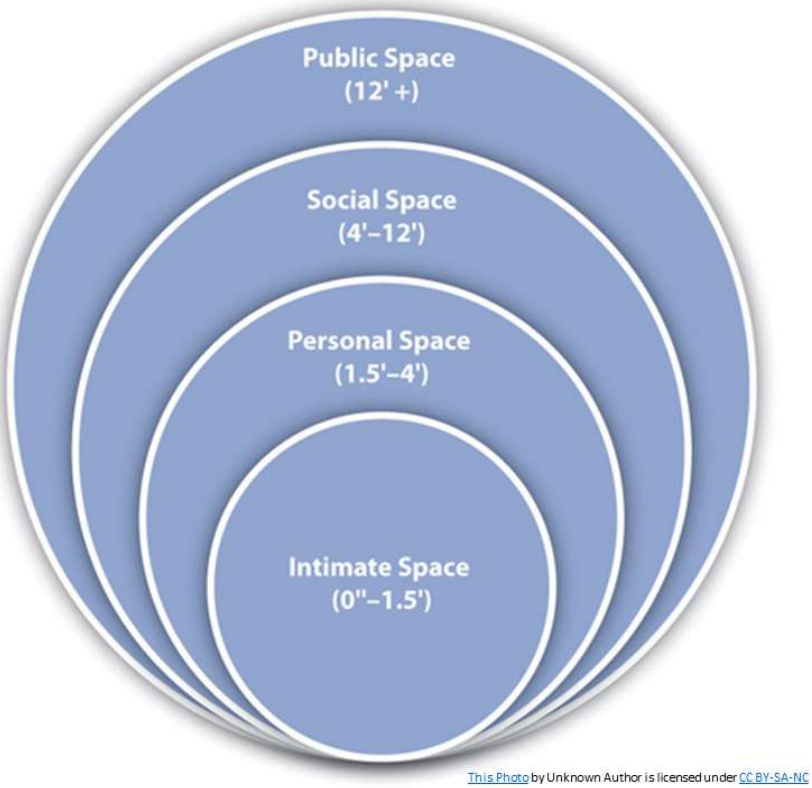
4. Proxemics

Proxemics refers to the study of how space and distance influence communication. We only need look at the ways in which space shows up in common metaphors to see that space, communication, and relationships are closely related. For example, when we are content with and attracted to someone, we say we are “close” to him or her. When we lose connection with someone, we may say he or she is “distant.” In general, space influences how people communicate and behave. Smaller spaces with a higher density of people often lead to breaches of our personal space bubbles. If this is a setting in which this type of density is expected beforehand, like at a crowded concert or on a train during rush hour, then we make various communicative adjustments to manage the space issue. Unexpected breaches of personal space can lead to negative reactions, especially if we feel someone has violated our space voluntarily, meaning that a crowding situation didn’t force them into our space. Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 44.

To better understand how proxemics functions in nonverbal communication, we will more closely examine the proxemic distances associated with personal space and the concept of territoriality.

We all have varying definitions of what our “personal space” is, and these definitions are contextual and depend on the situation and the relationship. Although our bubbles

are invisible, people are socialized into the norms of personal space within their cultural group. Scholars have identified four zones for North Americans, which are *public, social, personal, and intimate distance.* Edward T. Hall, "Proxemics," *Current Anthropology* 9, no. 2 (1968): 83–95.



The zones are more elliptical than circular, taking up more space in our front, where our line of sight is, than at our side or back where we can't monitor what people are doing. You can see how these zones relate to each other and to the individual. Even within a particular zone, interactions may differ depending on whether someone is in the outer or inner part of the zone.

Public Space (12 Feet or More)- Public and social zones refer to the space four or more feet away from our body, and the communication that typically occurs in these zones is formal and not intimate. Public space starts about twelve feet from a person and extends out from there. This is the least personal of the four zones and would typically be used when a person is engaging in a formal speech and is removed from the audience to allow the audience to see or when a high-profile or powerful person like a celebrity or executive maintains such a distance as a sign of power or for safety and security reasons. In terms of regular interaction, we are often not obligated or expected to acknowledge or interact with people who enter our public zone. It would be difficult to have a deep conversation with someone at this level because you have

to speak louder and don't have the physical closeness that is often needed to promote emotional closeness and/or establish rapport.

Social Space (4 to 12 Feet)- Communication that occurs in the social zone, which is four to twelve feet away from our body, is typically in the context of a professional or casual interaction, but not intimate or public. This distance is preferred in many professional settings because it reduces the suspicion of any impropriety. The expression "keep someone at an arm's length" means that someone is kept out of the personal space and kept in the social/professional space. If two people held up their arms and stood so just the tips of their fingers were touching, they would be around four feet away from each other, which is perceived as a safe distance because the possibility for intentional or unintentional touching doesn't exist. It is also possible to have people in the outer portion of our social zone but not feel obligated to interact with them, but when people come much closer than six feet to us then we often feel obligated to at least acknowledge their presence.

Personal Space (1.5 to 4 Feet)- Personal and intimate zones refer to the space that starts at our physical body and extends four feet. These zones are reserved for friends, close acquaintances, and significant others. Much of our communication occurs in the personal zone, which is what we typically think of as our "personal space bubble" and extends from 1.5 feet to 4 feet away from our body. Even though we are getting closer to the physical body of another person, we may use verbal communication at this point to signal that our presence in this zone is friendly and not intimate. Even people who know each other could be uncomfortable spending too much time in this zone unnecessarily. This zone is broken up into two subzones, which helps us negotiate close interactions with people we may not be close to interpersonally. Matthew McKay, Martha Davis, and Patrick Fanning, *Messages: Communication Skills Book*, 2nd ed. (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 1995), 59.

The outer-personal zone extends from 2.5 feet to 4 feet and is useful for conversations that need to be private but that occur between people who are not interpersonally close. This zone allows for relatively intimate communication but doesn't convey the intimacy that a closer distance would, which can be beneficial in professional settings. The inner-personal zone extends from 1.5 feet to 2.5 feet and is a space reserved for communication with people we are interpersonally close to or trying to get to know. In this subzone, we can easily touch the other person as we talk to them, briefly placing a hand on his or her arm or engaging in other light social touching that facilitates conversation, self-disclosure, and feelings of closeness.

Intimate Space (1.5 Feet and Less)- As we breach the invisible line that is 1.5 feet from our body, we enter the intimate zone, which is reserved for only the closest friends, family, and romantic/intimate partners. It is impossible to completely ignore people when they are in this space, even if we are trying to pretend that we're ignoring them. A breach of this space can be comforting in some contexts and annoying or frightening in others. We need regular human contact that isn't just verbal but also physical. We have already discussed the importance of touch in nonverbal communication, and in order for that much-needed touch to occur, people have to enter our intimate space. Being close to someone and feeling their physical presence can be very comforting when words fail. There are also social norms regarding the amount of this type of closeness that can be displayed in public, as some people get uncomfortable even seeing others interacting in the intimate zone. While some people

are comfortable engaging in or watching others engage in PDAs (public displays of affection) others are not.

So what happens when our space is violated? Although these zones are well established in research for personal space preferences of US Americans, individuals vary in terms of their reactions to people entering certain zones, and determining what constitutes a "violation" of space is subjective and contextual. For example, another person's presence in our social or public zones doesn't typically arouse suspicion or negative physical or communicative reactions, but it could in some situations or with certain people. However, many situations lead to our personal and intimate space being breached by others against our will, and these breaches are more likely to be upsetting, even when they are expected. We've all had to get into a crowded elevator or wait in a long line. In such situations, we may rely on some verbal communication to reduce immediacy and indicate that we are not interested in closeness and are aware that a breach has occurred. People make comments about the crowd, saying, "We're really packed in here like sardines," or use humor to indicate that they are pleasant and well adjusted and uncomfortable with the breach like any "normal" person would be. Interestingly, as we will learn in our discussion of territoriality, we do not often use verbal communication to defend our personal space during regular interactions. Instead, we rely on more nonverbal communication like moving, crossing our arms, or avoiding eye contact to deal with breaches of space.

Territoriality- is an innate drive to take up and defend spaces. This drive is shared by many creatures and entities, ranging from packs of animals to individual humans to

nations. Whether it's a gang territory, a neighborhood claimed by a particular salesperson, your preferred place to sit in a restaurant, your usual desk in the classroom, or the seat you've marked to save while getting concessions at a sporting event, we claim certain spaces as our own. There are three main divisions for territory: *primary, secondary, and public.* Owen Hargie, *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 70–71.

Sometimes our claim to a space is official. These spaces are known as our *primary territories* because they are marked or understood to be exclusively ours and under our control. A person's house, yard, room, desk, side of the bed, or shelf in the medicine cabinet could be considered primary territories.

Secondary territories don't belong to us and aren't exclusively under our control, but they are associated with us, which may lead us to assume that the space will be open and available to us when we need it without us taking any further steps to reserve it. This happens in classrooms regularly.

Students often sit in the same desk or at least same general area as they did on the first day of class. There may be some small adjustments during the first couple of weeks, but by a month into the semester, there is usually little to not major chance in desks.

Public territories are open to all people. People are allowed to mark public territory and use it for a limited period of time, but space is often up for grabs, which makes public

space difficult to manage for some people and can lead to conflict. To avoid this type of situation, people use a variety of objects that are typically recognized by others as nonverbal cues that mark a place as temporarily reserved— for example, jackets, bags, papers, or a drink. There is some ambiguity in the use of markers, though. A half-empty cup of coffee may be seen as trash and thrown away, which would be an annoying surprise to a person who left it to mark his or her table while visiting the restroom.

5. Chronemics

Chronemics refers to the study of how time affects communication. Time can be classified into several different categories, including *biological, personal, physical, and cultural time.* Peter A. Andersen, *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999), 65–66.

Biological time refers to the rhythms of living things. Humans follow a circadian rhythm, meaning that we are on a daily cycle that influences when we eat, sleep, and wake. When our natural rhythms are disturbed, by all-nighters, jet lag, or other scheduling abnormalities, our physical and mental health and our communication competence and personal relationships can suffer. Keep biological time in mind as you communicate with others. Remember that early morning conversations and speeches may require more preparation to get yourself awake enough to communicate well and a more patient or energetic delivery to accommodate others who may still be getting warmed up for their day.

Personal time refers to the ways in which individuals experience time. The way we experience time varies based on our mood, our interest level, and other factors. Think about how quickly time passes when you are interested in and therefore engaged in something. Individuals also vary based on whether or not they are future or past oriented. People with past-time orientations may want to reminisce about the past, reunite with old friends, and put considerable time into preserving memories and keepsakes in scrapbooks and photo albums. People with future-time orientations may spend the same amount of time making career and personal plans, writing out to-do lists, or researching future vacations, potential retirement spots, or what book they’re going to read next.

Physical time refers to the fixed cycles of days, years, and seasons. Physical time, especially seasons, can affect our mood and psychological states. Some people experience seasonal affective disorder that leads them to experience emotional distress and anxiety during the changes of seasons, primarily from warm and bright to dark and cold (summer to fall and winter).

Cultural time refers to how a large group of people view time. Polychronic people do not view time as a linear progression that needs to be divided into small units and scheduled in advance. Polychronic people keep more flexible schedules and may engage in several activities at once. Monochronic people tend to schedule their time more rigidly and do one thing at a time. A polychronic or monochronic orientation to time influences our social realities and how we interact with others.

Additionally, the way we use time depends in some ways on our status. For example, doctors can make their patients wait for extended periods of time, and executives and celebrities may run consistently behind schedule, making others wait for them. Promptness and the amount of time that is socially acceptable for lateness and waiting varies among individuals and contexts. Chronemics also covers the amount of time we spend talking. We've already learned that conversational turns and turn-taking patterns are influenced by social norms and help our conversations progress. We all know how annoying it can be when a person dominates a conversation or when we can't get a person to contribute anything.

6. Personal Presentation and Environment

Personal presentation involves two components: our physical characteristics and the artifacts with which we adorn and surround ourselves. Physical characteristics include body shape, height, weight, attractiveness, and other physical features of our bodies. We do not have as much control over how these nonverbal cues are encoded as we do with many other aspects of nonverbal communication. As the unit on communication and perception noted, these characteristics play a large role in initial impression formation even though we know we "shouldn't judge a book by its cover." Although ideals of attractiveness vary among cultures and individuals, research consistently indicates that people who are deemed attractive based on physical characteristics have distinct advantages in many aspects of life. This fact, along with

media images that project often unrealistic ideals of beauty, have contributed to booming health and beauty, dieting, gym, and plastic surgery industries.

Clothing, jewelry, visible body art, hairstyles, and other political, social, and cultural symbols send messages to others about who we are. In the United States, body piercings and tattoos have been shifting from subcultural to mainstream over the past few decades. The physical location, size, and number of tattoos and piercings play a large role in whether or not they are deemed appropriate for professional contexts, and many people with tattoos and/or piercings make conscious choices about when and where they display their body art. Hair also sends messages whether it is on our heads or our bodies. Men with short hair are generally judged to be more conservative than men with long hair, but men with shaved heads may be seen as aggressive. Whether a person has a part in their hair, a mohawk, faux-hawk, ponytail, curls, or bright pink hair also sends nonverbal signals to others.

Jewelry can also send messages with varying degrees of direct meaning. A ring on the “ring finger” of a person’s left hand typically indicates that they are married or in an otherwise committed relationship. A thumb ring or a right-hand ring on the “ring finger” doesn’t send such a direct message. People also adorn their clothes, body, or belongings with religious or cultural symbols, like a cross to indicate a person’s Christian faith or a rainbow flag to indicate that a person is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, or an ally to one or more of those groups.

Lastly, the environment in which we interact affects our verbal and nonverbal communication. This is included because we can often manipulate the nonverbal environment similar to how we would manipulate our gestures or tone of voice to suit our communicative needs. The books that we display on our coffee table, the magazines a doctor keeps in his or her waiting room, the placement of fresh flowers in a foyer, or a piece of mint chocolate on a hotel bed pillow all send particular messages and can easily be changed. The placement of objects and furniture in a physical space can help create a formal, distant, friendly, or intimate climate.

In terms of formality, we can use nonverbal communication to convey dominance and status, which helps define and negotiate power and roles within relationships. Fancy cars and expensive watches can serve as symbols that distinguish a CEO from an entry-level employee. A room with soft lighting, a small fountain that creates ambient sounds of water flowing, and a comfy chair can help facilitate interactions between a therapist and a patient. In summary, whether we know it or not, our physical characteristics and the artifacts that surround us communicate much.

In Summary

- *Kinesics* refers to body movements and posture and includes the following components:
    - Gestures are arm and hand movements and include adaptors like clicking a pen or scratching your face, emblems like a thumbs-up to say “OK,” and illustrators like bouncing your hand along with the rhythm of your speaking.

    - Head movements and posture include the orientation of movements of our head and the orientation and positioning of our body and the various meanings they send. Head movements such as nodding can indicate agreement, disagreement, and interest, among other things. Posture can indicate assertiveness, defensiveness, interest, readiness, or intimidation, among other things.
    - Eye contact is studied under the category of oculesics and specifically refers to eye contact with another person's face, head, and eyes and the patterns of looking away and back at the other person during interaction. Eye contact provides turn-taking signals, signals when we are engaged in cognitive activity, and helps establish rapport and connection, among other things.
    - Facial expressions refer to the use of the forehead, brow, and facial muscles around the nose and mouth to convey meaning. Facial expressions can convey happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and other emotions.
- *Haptics* refers to touch behaviors that convey meaning during interactions. Touch operates at many levels, including functional-professional, social-polite, friendship-warmth, and love-intimacy.
- *Vocalics* refers to the vocalized but not verbal aspects of nonverbal communication, including our speaking rate, pitch, volume, tone of voice, and vocal quality. These qualities, also known as paralanguage, reinforce the meaning of verbal communication, allow us to emphasize particular parts of a message, or can contradict verbal messages.
- *Proxemics* refers to the use of space and distance within communication. US Americans, in general, have four zones that constitute our personal space: the public zone (12 or more feet from our body), social zone (4–12 feet from our body), the personal zone (1.5–4 feet from our body), and the intimate zone (from body contact to 1.5 feet away). Proxemics also studies territoriality, or how people take up and defend personal space.
- *Chronemics* refers the study of how time affects communication and includes how different time cycles affect our communication, including the differences between people who are past or future oriented and cultural perspectives on time as fixed and measured (monochronic) or fluid and adaptable (polychronic).
- *Personal presentation and environment* refers to how the objects we adorn ourselves and our surroundings with, referred to as *artifacts*, provide nonverbal cues that others make meaning from and how our physical environment— for

example, the layout of a room and seating positions and arrangements— influences communication.