

It can Work for you or against you, but physically you are giving out signals. Better to get body and brain working In sync, then, says Kate Lovell

What does this picture tell you?

An over-egged CV may be enough to bag you an Interview, but will you be

able to dodge the swarm of evil questions those very embellishments have triggered, or will your body language give you away?

Body language can account for between 30-80% of the way a person makes an impact, depending upon the situation. The trouble is, language is so complex you can't always control what it is telling someone else. "The cardinal rule is that you can't spot a liar on the basis of a single tell," explains psychologist Dr Peter Collett and author of the *Book of Tells*, adding, "You have to take in as many as possible."

"Tells" (Originally a poker expression) are the messages your body inadvertently sends to others.

Since there are an infinite number of these, not even a synchronised swimmer could time them right to pull the wool over a trained eye, so what does this mean for you, the uncoordinated amateur? Well, you could try to avoid common signs of deception, such as lack of eye contact, fidgeting or scratching the nose, but that in itself might just give you away.

Common thought on what you should and shouldn't do could become a stumbling block. Some theories suggest that mimicking the body movements of the person you're

conversing with shows that you are on their wavelength. However, if you make a conscious effort to do this, as many neuro-linguistic programming advisers recommend, you may find that it backfires. "For example," says Collett, "if you mimic the actions of a highly dominant interviewer, there's a good chance that they'll feel challenged by you."

Body language seems to sit wide open for misinterpretation. If you actively try to suggest one thing, other tells may create a completely different impression. "I sat with my arms folded across my chest for the duration of the interview because I was determined to cover up the coffee stain on my shirt," recalls Emma Hawkins, who then worked in a call centre specialising in health. "They thought I was being defensive and because of that, I didn't get the job."

Of course, there are plenty of other factors that can come into play. Same sex interviews are likely to evoke different dynamics such as deliberately trying to avoid flirtation or trying to find some sort of commend ground. Shyness may make you seem rude, whilst over-confidence could be seen as arrogance.

And, to make things worse, it's not just body language that you have to be aware of, but the way you try to cover your tracks. Reports suggest that there are more clues to deception in the voice, than in the subliminal tells

you give out. According to some theories, the intonation of your voice will rise, whenever you start to tell a fib. Of course, this characteristic would be hard to spot if you were talking to someone whose voice you were unused to. An easier way could be to listen to what is actually being said. "Liars," says Collett, "are more likely to talk in circumlocution. They're also more likely to avoid giving any specific details."

In an interview situation, this may become obvious if you've lied on your resume. Tapping a few key words into Google and hitting "search" may have translated into "extensive research experience" on your CV, but in practice it couldn't be further from the truth. If an interviewer asks you to give examples of experience you've not actually got, you could find yourself in a bit of a pickle.

So, how can you work your way around this? Don't lie. There are plenty of alternative ways to make yourself look good. "What you put down on your CV will shape the types of questions that an interviewer asks you," says John Lees, a career coach author. "It's therefore important not to allude to experience you haven't got, but to draw attention to the qualities that make you stand out."

Collett calls this "defining your own ground", or creating your own discussion points. "Think about your USPs – your unique selling points – and make them into a central focus on your CV" he advises, "this way your interviewer will ask you about the attributes and experiences you want them to hear." This should help you to steer the interview into a direction you are more comfortable with and it will show. In theory, the more comfortable you are, the more confident and able you will come across.

But, in among all these obstacles, there must be a solution. **"Be personable, think confident and stay calm. Present yourself smartly and as the kind of person that would be easy to work with,"** says Narelle Lester of recruitment consultants Regan and Dean. **Above all, don't lie on your CV or in the interview itself. "Once you dig yourself a hole, you may as well just keep on digging."**