

# AN AMERICAN GESTUARY

by

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*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*

# An American Gestuary

## Preface

### Guide to the Use of the Gestuary

*What counts as a gesture*

*The parts of an entry*

*Schema of gestures*

### Gestures in the order of their appearance

#### *Combinable gestures*

Yes–nodding

Yes–eyes only

No–shaking your head

#### *Facial Expressions*

Intense look

Biting your lip

Biting your tongue

Need to urinate or defecate

Smile

Smile of commiseration

Forced smile

Nervous smile

C'mon, smile

Laughing with

Laughing at

Angry look

Irony–the long face

Quizzical look

#### *Combinations of combinable gestures*

OK ? Please? (Yes + Quizzical look)

Yes, I understand (Yes + Smile)

Bemused appreciation (No + Smile)

Yes, now I've got it (Yes + Intense look)

"I don't think so" (No + Quizzical look)

Threat (Yes + Angry look)

Emphatic threat (No + Angry look)

Disbelief–negative–yes (Irony + Yes)

Disbelief–negative–no (Irony + No)

#### *Pointing*

Finger point

Finger point–touch or grab

Pointing behind–index finger

Pointing behind–thumb

Pointing with an object

Head point

Eyes point

### *Pronouns*

Me

“Moi?”

“Not me!”

Humble me

“You”–singular

“Him”/“Her”/“It”

“You”–plural, sweeping

“You”–plural, successive

“Them”

“Us”

### *Directing Movement*

Go that way–finger

“Here!”

Go that way–palm

“Come here”

Up / Down

Get up

“Be seated”

Move in a circle

Directing movement of people who are behind you

“After you”

Come here–dog pat

Get out of here

Get out of here–threat

“You–Out!”–finger

“You–Out!”–thumb

Slapping your leg to get someone to come to you

Clapping hands for a dog

Go that way–head

Come here—head

“Closer, closer”

Come here–finger crook

“Come on, come on”–circular

“Come on”–hand clap

“Come on, come on”–circular, impatience

“Come on, come on”–finger snap

“Come on, come on”–hand clap, impatience

Whistling like for a dog

“Stop!”

“Whoa!”

“Whoa!”–calm down

Double pat–Go

## *Greetings, Farewells, Introductions*

### *Hello–Goodbye*

Waving hello

    Straight-arm hello

Waving goodbye

    Baby wave

Howdy–finger

Howdy–head

Nod of the head–acknowledgement, approval, thanks

Tip of the hat—acknowledgement

Tip of the hat—admiration

Refusal to acknowledge a greeting

Salute

    Salute–mocking

Clenched fist salute

Peace sign

Blowing a kiss

Getting ready to leave

“Welcome”

### *Shaking hands*

Handshake–acknowledgement

    Introduction

    Shake hands–reconciliation

    Offering your hand in friendship

    Refusing to shake hands

    Shake on it

### *Variations and alternatives to the handshake as greeting or farewell*

Patting the back–greeting

Glad-handing

Handshake with one hand on shoulder or arm

Embrace–Hug

Two-handed handshake

Embrace and kissing the air

Kiss on the cheek

Embrace and kiss each other’s cheek

Kiss a woman’s hand

Kiss on the mouth

### *Jocular greetings*

“Give me five”

The fist bump

Tap on the jaw greeting

Stomach pat greeting

*Formal responses to an introduction*

Bowing

Bowing–acknowledging applause

Swami

Curtseying

Curtseying–acknowledging applause

Standing on being introduced

*Approval*

More or less–hand

More or less–head

It doesn't matter to me

Pat on the back

Patting yourself on the back

Safe!

Pat on the ass–approval

Knee slap approval

Thumbs up

Thumb up–sighting

“Got’cha”

“All right!”–fist down

“All right!”–fist in

“All right!”–fist up

“Hoo, hoo, hoo!”–fist pump

Chest bump

Hand slap–celebration

High five

“A-OK”

“Perfect”

Applause

Clapping in unison after a show

Clapping in unison before a show

Cheering

Hands clasped in approval

Acknowledging applause

Hands up for applause

Hold the applause

The wave

*Success, Self-Approval*

Victory–arms raised

V for victory

Victory–clenched fists

“The winner”

“The winner”–self-congratulations

Holding out your lapels

Polishing your nails

Scoring a point

“I used my head”  
Showing off how strong you are  
Gorilla chest beat

### *Mistakes*

“Blast!”–finger snap  
“Blast!”–head slap  
“Blast!”–cover eyes  
“Blast!”–leg slap  
“Damn!”  
Shooting yourself in the head  
“Blee, blee, blee”–lower lip  
“Oops!”  
Ducking your head  
Fingers crossed–lying  
Hanging your head in shame  
Surrender  
Surrender–white flag  
“So arrest me”  
“Aw, come on”–evading responsibility  
“Nobody here but us chickens”

### *Disapproval, Anger, Challenges, Threats*

No–hand wave  
Shaking your finger at someone  
Through–no way  
Thumbs down  
Pout  
“Bad, bad”  
Stern look  
    Slapping a ruler on your palm  
Arms akimbo–anger  
Staring at someone  
    Averting your eyes  
Turning your back on someone  
Spitting  
“I’m up to here with you”  
Wringing someone’s neck  
“No way”–arms crossed  
    Show me  
“Don’t push me”–fist in palm  
Challenge–chin thrust  
Shaking your fist at someone  
“You wanna fight?”  
Fist in someone’s face  
The finger  
Slap–female to male  
Slap–female to female  
Slap–male to male

Slap—male to female  
Slapping—fake  
Spanking

*Turning away wrath*

“Time out”  
“Sorry”

*Disrespect*

“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”—tongue out  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”—wiggle hands at ears  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”—wiggle hand at nose  
Giving the raspberries  
“I’m not listening”  
Nazi salute  
Standing to attention

*Being rude*

Putting your feet on a table  
Taking someone’s seat  
Not giving up your seat  
Belching  
Farting

*Disparaging Comments*

Shaking your head in disbelief  
“How did I get stuck with such an idiot?”  
Telephone—foolish talk  
“Get this guy”—thumb  
“Big deal”  
“Whoop dee doo”  
Poo—pooing  
Mock yawn  
Mock sympathy—violin  
“He’s crazy”  
“You’re hot”  
Chatterbox  
Disdain/Sneer  
Supercilious/Contempt  
“She’s (he’s) stuck up”  
Smug look  
“Are you putting me on?”  
Raising an eyebrow  
Loser  
Sticking a knife into someone  
Sniffing  
“Pee yew”  
Try to make yourself vomit  
Scorn  
Fat

### *Getting Attention*

Clearing your throat for attention  
“Here I am”  
“Excuse me”—index finger  
Snapping your fingers to get someone’s attention  
Rapping on a table for attention  
Tapping a glass for attention  
Tap on shoulder for attention  
Tugging on a sleeve for attention  
“Psst”  
Standing up to get attention  
Lifting someone’s chin  
Turning someone’s face to you—abruptly  
Turning someone’s face to you—gently  
Snapping your fingers in front of someone’s eyes  
Grabbing someone’s lapel  
Knocking on a door  
“Shave and a haircut, two bits”

### *Demands and Requests*

More  
Less  
Tell me more  
Poke in the ribs—stop  
“Come again?”  
Call me  
“Shhh”  
Mock whisper  
Tiptoeing  
Sit down here  
Thumbing a ride  
Roll down your window  
Waiter, the check—writing in the air  
Waiter, the check—writing on your palm  
Begging like a puppy  
Kneeling  
A joint?  
Cigarette?

### *Surprise, Disbelief, Confusion, Anxiety, Relief*

Surprised look  
Horror  
“Oh my God”  
“Wow”  
No?—surprised  
Scratching your head  
Shrugging your shoulders  
“So?” “Why?”

“Fyoo”  
“Whyoo”  
“Bwww bwww bwww”

*Anxiety, Relief*

Biting your nails  
Gulp  
Loosening your collar  
Sigh of relief  
Tired  
Donkey burble  
Panting–fatigue  
“Whew!”–I’m glad that’s over  
“Whew!”–that was a close call

*Thinking*

“Let me think”–frown  
“Let me think”–fingers to bridge of nose  
That’s odd  
“Let me think”–eye roll  
“Let me think”–finger held up  
“Let me think”–hand to chin  
Thinking–hand against head  
Thinking–fingers in a tent  
Arms akimbo–thinking  
Hands clasped behind back–thinking  
Thinking–finger snapping  
“That’s it!”–finger in air  
“That’s it!”–finger snap  
Hand above eyes—sighting

*Shared Feeling, Embarrassment*

Walking arm-in-arm  
Walking hand-in-hand  
Holding hands in a circle  
Arm around someone’s shoulder  
Looking into someone’s eyes  
“What a shame”  
“What a shame”–exasperation  
My heart is breaking for you  
“There, there”  
Patting a knee–reassuring  
Hand on knee reassuring  
“Eeee”  
“Get out of here”–embarrassment  
“Aw, shucks”  
Covering your mouth–embarrassment  
Poke in ribs–shared joke  
Wink

### *Eating and Drinking*

Rubbing your hands in anticipation  
Licking your lips  
“Ahhh”  
    “Ohhh”—contentment  
“Ohhh”—indigestion  
“I’m full”  
Waving hand in front of mouth—hot food  
Thirst  
“A toast!”  
Refusing to toast  
Another round  
Holding a plate out for more food

### *Work*

Let’s get down to work—dust hands  
Let’s get down to work—wipe hands on pants  
Let’s get down to work—hitch up your pants  
That’s that—dust hands  
    That’s that—dust hands—metaphorical  
That’s that—shoot

### *Miscellaneous Commentary*

Sleep  
Married  
Pregnant  
Quotes  
Death—closing the eyes  
Death—covering the face  
Taking your hat off—respect

### *Time*

Time  
You’re late  
Time’s up  
“Just a sec”  
Hands clasped behind your back—waiting  
Tapping your foot—impatient waiting  
Drumming your fingers—impatient waiting  
Twiddling your thumbs

### *Money*

Money  
“Pay up”  
Begging with outstretched palm  
Passing the hat  
Snapping paper money

### *Luck, Superstitions, Oaths*

Fingers crossed—good luck  
“Oh Lord, let it be”  
May it come to pass—head only  
Making the sign of the cross  
Knock on wood  
Throwing salt over your shoulder  
I swear  
“Cross my heart”  
My lips are sealed  
Putting your hand over your heart  
Saluting the flag

### *How Much, Counting*

“Just a bit”  
“A short distance”—hitchhiking  
This small  
This big  
This size by this size  
This tall  
Counting to yourself  
Counting to others  
One  
Two  
Three  
Four  
Five  
Six  
Seven  
Eight  
Nine  
Ten  
Zero  
Nothing—empty hands

### *Sexual and Obscene*

What a babe!  
She’s stacked  
Wolf whistle  
Salivating over someone or something  
Leer—tongue out  
Wiggling your tongue  
Pat on the ass—sexual  
Hand on knee—sexual  
Limp wrist  
Licking your eyebrow  
Batting your eyelashes  
Wink—sexual

Kiss, kiss  
“He’s jerking you around”  
Pelvic thrust  
Mooning  
Exposing your breasts  
“Eat me!”

### *Offerings and Refusals*

#### Offerings:

Offering your hand for a handshake  
Offering you hand to walk hand-in-hand  
Offering your am to walk arm-in-arm  
Offering your cheek to be kissed  
Offering your lips to be kissed

#### Refusals:

No thanks  
Static refusal  
Active refusal  
Strong rejection refusal  
Refusing someone’s hand  
Refusing someone’s arm  
Refusing to kiss someone’s cheek  
Refusing to kiss someone on the lips

Offering your hand in assistance

Offering an object

Offering something–hand point

“Voila!”

## INDICES

In each section the gestures are listed alphabetically by title.

### **Gestures Listed by Age and Gender**

#### *Children principally*

Baby wave  
Giving the raspberries  
Fingers crossed–lying  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”–tongue out  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”–wiggle hands at ears  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”–wiggle hand at nose  
Tugging on a sleeve for attention

#### *Men only*

“Aw, shucks”–embarrassment  
“Eat me!”  
Getting ready to leave  
Glad-handing  
Gorilla chest beat  
Licking your eyebrow  
Limp wrist  
Mooning  
Pelvic thrust  
Polishing your nails  
Pregnant  
She’s stacked  
Standing on being introduced  
Tip of the hat—acknowledgement  
Tip of the hat—admiration  
“What a babe!”

#### *Women only*

Baby wave  
Batting your eyelashes  
Covering your mouth–embarrassment  
Curtseying–introduction  
Curtseying–acknowledging applause  
Embrace and kissing the air  
Exposing your breasts  
He’s jerking you around  
Slap–female to male

#### *Man with woman only*

Kiss a woman’s hand  
Kneeling (proposing)  
Slap–male to female

*Man with man only*

Glad handing  
Slap–male to male  
Tap on the jaw greeting  
The fist bump  
Stomach pat greeting

*Woman with woman only*

None found so far.???  
Slap–female to female

*Man with woman or woman with woman only*

Embrace and kissing the air  
Kiss on the cheek  
Embrace and kiss each others cheek  
Walking arm-in-arm  
Walking hand-in-hand

*Woman with man only*

Slap–female to male

*Adult to Child principally*

In preparation  
Spanking

*Child to Child principally*

In preparation

*People to animals*

In preparation.  
“Bad, bad”  
Come here–dog pat

**Communicative postures**

In preparation.

**Stylized Emotions**

In preparation.

**Reciprocal gestures**

*Active reciprocal gestures*

*Two people only*  
Chest bump  
Embrace and kiss each other’s cheek  
Embrace and kissing the air  
Embrace–hug  
Fist bump

“Give me five!”  
Handshake with one hand on shoulder or arm  
Handshake–acknowledgement  
Hand slap celebration  
High five  
Introduction  
Kiss a woman’s hand  
Kiss on the cheek  
Kiss on the mouth  
Looking into someone’s eyes  
Shake hands–reconciliation  
Shake on it  
Two-handed handshake  
The Winner  
Walking arm–in–arm  
Walking hand-in-hand

*Group*

*May be done by one person*

Applause  
Cheering  
“Hoo, hoo, hoo”–fist pump

*At least two people*

A toast!  
Introducing someone

*Large group only*

Clapping in unison–before a show  
Clapping in unison–after a show  
Holding hands in a circle  
The wave

*Responsive reciprocal gestures*

A joint?  
Cigarette?  
Howdy–finger  
Howdy–head  
Nod of the head–acknowledgement  
Offering an object  
Offering something–hand point  
Offering your hand in friendship  
Snapping your fingers to get someone’s attention  
Straight-arm hello  
Tip of the hat—acknowledgement  
Tip of the hat—admiration  
Waving goodbye  
Waving hello

**Touch Gestures** These may be done by only one person but involve touching another.

Arm around someone's shoulder  
Chest bump  
Death-closing the eyes  
Death-covering the body  
Embrace and kiss each other's cheek  
Embrace and kissing the air  
Embrace-hug  
Fist bump  
"Give me five!"  
Glad-handing  
Grabbing someone's lapel  
Hand on knee reassuring  
Hand on knee-sexual  
Hand slap-celebration  
Handshake with one hand on shoulder or arm  
Handshake-acknowledgement  
Holding hands in a circle  
High five  
Introduction  
Kiss a woman's hand  
Kiss on the cheek  
Kiss on the mouth  
Lifting someone's chin  
Pat on the back-approval  
Pat on the ass-sexual  
Pat on the back  
Patting the back-greeting  
Poke in the ribs-shared joke  
Poke in the ribs-stop  
Shake hands-reconciliation  
Shake on it  
Slap-female to male  
Slap-female to female  
Slap-male to male  
Slap-male to female  
Spanking  
Stomach pat greeting  
Tap on shoulder for attention  
Tap on the jaw-greeting  
The winner  
There, there  
Tugging on a sleeve for attention  
Turning someone's face to you-abruptly  
Turning someone's face to you-gently  
Two-handed handshake  
Walking arm-in-arm  
Walking hand-in-hand

## **Gestures Involving a Standard Object**

“A toast!”

Death—closing the eyes

Death—covering the face

Double pat—Go

Drumming your fingers—impatient waiting

Grabbing someone’s lapel

Holding a plate out for more food

Holding out your lapels

Knock on wood

Knocking on a door

Passing the hat

Pointing with an object

Putting your feet on a table

Rapping on a table for attention

Saluting the flag

“Shave and a haircut, two bits”

Slapping a ruler on your palm

Snapping paper money

Surrender—white flag

Swearing on a Bible

Tapping a glass for attention

Telephone—foolish talk

Throwing salt over your shoulder

Tip of the hat—acknowledgement

Tip of the hat—admiration

## **Index by principal part of body used**

In a few cases a gesture may be listed in two places.

### *Head*

“Aw, come on”—evading responsibility  
Acknowledging applause  
Bemused appreciation  
Biting your tongue  
“Bwww bwww bwww”  
Call me  
Challenge—chin thrust  
“Come again?”  
Come here—head  
Covering your mouth—embarrassment  
Disbelief—negative—no  
Disbelief—negative—yes  
Ducking your head  
Emphatic threat  
“Fyoo”  
Go that way—head  
Gulp  
Loosening your collar  
Hanging your head in shame  
Head point  
Howdy—head  
Humble me  
“I don’t think so”  
“I’m not listening”  
Laughing at  
Laughing with  
May it come to pass—head only  
“More or less”—head  
No—shaking your head  
“Nobody here but us chickens”  
Nod of the head—acknowledgement, approval, thanks  
“Not me”  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”—tongue out  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”—wiggle hand at nose  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”—wiggle hands at ears  
OK? Please?  
“Oops!”  
“Pee yew”  
“Psst”  
Scratching your head  
Shaking your head in disbelief  
Shooting yourself in the head  
“She’s (he’s) stuck up”  
Sniffing

Spitting  
“That’s odd”  
Threat  
Try to make yourself vomit  
“What a shame”  
“Whyoo”  
Yes, I understand  
Yes, now I’ve got it  
Yes–nodding

### *Face*

“Are you putting me on?”  
Angry look  
Averting your eyes  
Batting your eyelashes  
Biting your lip  
“Blee, blee, blee”–lower lip  
Blowing a kiss  
C’mon smile  
Clearing your throat for attention  
Disdain/Sneer  
Donkey burble  
“Eeeee”  
Embrace and kiss each other’s cheek  
Embrace and kissing the air  
Eyes point  
Forced smile  
Get out of here–threat  
Giving the raspberries  
Hand above eyes – sighting  
Horror  
Intense look  
Irony–the long face  
Kiss a woman’s hand  
Kiss on the cheek  
Kiss on the mouth  
Kiss, kiss  
Leer–tongue out  
Let me think–eye roll  
“Let me think”–frown  
Licking your lips  
Lifting someone’s chin  
Looking into someone’s eyes  
Mock whisper  
Mock yawn  
Nervous smile  
No?–surprised  
“Oh my God”

Panting–fatigue  
“Perfect”  
Pout  
Quizzical look  
Raising an eyebrow  
Salivating over someone or something  
Scorn  
“Shhh”  
Sigh of relief  
Smile  
Smile of commiseration  
Smug look  
Staring at someone  
Stern look  
Supercilious/Contempt  
Surprised look  
Telephone—foolish talk  
Thirst  
Tired  
Whistling like for a dog  
Wiggling your tongue  
Wink  
Wink–sexual  
Wolf whistle  
“Wow”  
Yes–eyes only

### *Tongue*

Begging like a puppy  
Biting your tongue  
Giving the raspberries  
Leer–tongue out  
Panting–fatigue  
Panting from the heat  
Salivating over someone or something  
Thirst  
Tongue out anticipation  
Wiggling your tongue

### *Hand(s)*

“A toast!”  
“After you”  
Another round  
Applause  
“Be seated”  
“Big deal”  
“Blast!”–cover eyes  
“Blast!”–head slap  
“Blast!”–leg slap

Blowing a kiss  
Call me  
Chatterbox  
Clapping in unison after a show  
Clapping in unison before a show  
Clapping hands for a dog  
“Closer, closer”  
“Come again?”  
“Come here”  
Come here–dog pat  
“Come on!”–hand clap  
“Come on!”–hand clap, impatience  
“Come on, come on”–circular, impatience  
“Come on, come on”–circular  
Covering your mouth–embarrassment  
“Cross my heart”  
Death–closing the eyes  
Death–covering the face  
Directing movement of people who are behind you  
Double pat–Go  
Get out of here  
Get out of here–threat  
Get up  
Getting ready to leave  
“Give me five!”  
Glad-handing  
Go that way–palm  
“Got’cha”  
Grabbing someone’s lapel  
Hand on knee–sexual  
Hand slap–celebration  
Hands up for applause  
Handshake with one hand on shoulder or arm  
Handshake–acknowledgement  
High five  
“Hmmm”–hand to chin  
Hold the applause  
Holding a plate out for more food  
Holding out your lapels  
Humble me  
“I’m full”  
“I’m up to here with you”  
Introduction  
Kiss a woman’s hand  
Knee slap approval  
Less  
Let’s get down to work–dust hands  
Lifting someone’s chin

Making the sign of the cross  
Married  
“Me?” “Moi?”  
Money  
More  
“More or less”—hand  
Move in a circle  
My heart is breaking for you  
My lips are sealed  
No—hand wave  
Offering your hand in friendship  
Pat on the ass—approval  
Pat on the ass—sexual  
Pat on the back  
Patting the back—greeting  
Patting yourself on the back  
Putting your hand over your heart  
Rubbing your hands in anticipation  
Salute  
Salute—mocking  
Shake hands—reconciliation  
Shake on it  
She’s stacked  
Shooting yourself in the head  
Sit down here  
Slap—female to male  
Slap—female to female  
Slap—male to male  
Slap—male to female  
Slapping—fake  
Slapping a ruler on your palm  
Slapping your leg to get someone to come to you  
Snapping paper money  
“Sorry”  
Sticking a knife into someone  
Stomach pat greeting  
“Stop!”  
Straight-arm hello  
Swami  
Tapping a glass for attention  
That’s that—shoot  
That’s that—dust hands  
Thinking—hand against head  
This big  
This small  
Tip of the hat—acknowledgement  
Tip of the hat—admiration  
Tugging on a sleeve for attention  
Turning someone’s face to you—abruptly

Turning someone's face to you—gently  
Two-handed handshake  
Up / Down  
“Us”  
Waiter, the check—writing in air  
Waiter, the check—writing on your palm  
Waving goodbye  
Waving hello  
Waving hand in front of mouth—hot food  
“Whoa!”  
“Whoa!”—calm down  
Wringing someone's neck

*(To be added later)*

*Above shoulders*

*Chest*

*Shoulder level*

*Waist level*

*Near head*

*With face*

### *Finger(s)*

A joint?  
“A-OK”  
“A short distance”—hitchhiking  
“Bad, bad”  
Baby wave  
Biting your nails  
“Blast”—finger snap  
Cigarette?  
Come here—finger crook  
Drumming your fingers—impatient waiting  
“Eat me!”  
Finger point  
Finger point—touch or grab  
Fingers crossed—good luck  
Fingers crossed—lying  
Go that way—finger  
“He's crazy”  
“Him” / “Her” / “It”  
Howdy—finger  
“I used my head”  
“I'm not listening”  
“Just a bit”  
“Just a sec”  
“Let me think”—finger held up  
“Let me think”—fingers to bridge of nose  
Licking your eyebrow

“Me”  
“Not me”  
Peace sign  
“Perfect”  
Pointing behind–index finger  
Quotes  
Scoring a point  
Scratching your head  
Shaking your finger at someone  
“Shhh”  
Snapping your fingers in front of someone’s eyes  
Snapping your fingers to get someone’s attention  
“That’s it!”–finger in air  
“That’s it!”–finger snap  
The finger  
“Them”  
Thinking–finger snapping  
Thinking–fingers in a tent  
Time’s up  
Try to make yourself vomit  
“Whoop dee doo”  
“You”–plural successive  
“You”–plural sweeping  
“You”–singular  
“You’re hot”  
“You–Out!”–finger

### *Thumb*

“Get this guy!”–thumb  
Pointing behind–thumb  
Thumb up–sighting  
Thumbing a ride  
Thumbs down  
Thumbs up  
Twiddling your thumbs  
“You–Out!”–thumb

### *Fist or knuckles*

“All right!”–fist down  
“All right!”–fist in  
“All right!”–fist up  
Clenched fist salute  
Damn!  
“Don’t push me”–fist in palm  
Fist in someone’s face  
Gorilla chest beat  
“Hoo, hoo, hoo!”–fist pump  
Knock on wood  
Knocking on a door

Polishing your nails  
Rapping on a table for attention  
Shaking your fist at someone  
“Shave and a haircut, two bits”  
“So arrest me”  
Tap on the jaw greeting  
The fist bump  
Victory-clenched fists  
“You wanna fight?”

*Arm(s) (including hands)*

Begging with outstretched palm\  
Clapping hands for a dog  
Embrace and kiss each other’s cheek  
“Excuse me”—index finger  
Hand on knee—reassuring  
“Here I am”  
I swear  
Kiss on the cheek  
Knocking on a door  
Nazi salute  
Offering an object  
Offering something—hand point  
Offering your hand in assistance  
“No way”—arms crossed  
Patting a knee—reassuring  
“Pay up”  
Poke in the ribs—shared joke  
Poke in the ribs—stop  
Poo-pooing  
Roll down your window  
“Shave and a haircut, two bits”  
Show me  
Showing off how strong you are  
Slapping your leg to get someone to come to you  
“So arrest me”  
Straight-arm hello  
Surrender  
Taking your hat off—respect  
Tap on shoulder for attention  
“The winner”  
“The winner”—self-congratulations  
“There, there”  
“Time out”  
Through—no way  
Throwing salt over your shoulder  
Time  
V for victory

Victory-clenched fists  
Victory—arms raised  
“Welcome”  
You’re late

*Upper torso, including hands and/or arms*

Arm around someone’s shoulder  
Arms akimbo—anger  
Arms akimbo—thinking  
Begging like a puppy  
Bowing—acknowledging applause  
Bowing—introduction  
Cheering  
Exposing your breasts  
Fat  
Hands clasped behind back—thinking  
Hands clasped behind back—waiting  
Hands clasped in approval  
“How did I get stuck with such an idiot?”  
It doesn’t matter to me  
Limp wrist  
“Loser”  
Mock sympathy-violin  
“Oh Lord, let it be”  
“Ohhh”—indigestion  
Pregnant  
Shrugging your shoulders  
Sleep  
“So?” “Why?”  
Swami  
Telephone—foolish talk  
Tell me more  
“Voila!”  
“Whew!”—I’m glad that’s over  
“Whew!”—that was a close call

*Feet*

Tapping your foot—impatient waiting  
Tiptoeing

*Entire body*

“Ahhh”  
“Aw, shucks”  
Chest bump  
Curtseying—acknowledging applause  
Curtseying—introduction  
“Eat me!”  
Embrace and kissing the air  
Embrace—Hug

“Get out of here”–embarrassment  
Hands clasped behind back–thinking  
Hands clasped behind back–waiting  
“He’s jerking you around”  
Kneeling  
Let’s get down to work–hitch up pants  
Let’s get down to work–wipe hands on pants  
Mooning  
Pelvic thrust  
Standing on being introduced  
Standing to attention  
Standing up to get attention  
The wave  
Turning your back on someone  
Walking arm-in-arm  
Walking hand-in-hand

## Alphabetical index by title

A joint?  
“A-OK”  
“A short distance”–hitchhiking  
“A toast!”  
Acknowledging applause  
Active refusal  
“After you”  
“Ahhh”  
“All right!”–fist down  
“All right!”–fist in  
“All right!”–fist up  
Angry look  
Another round  
Anxiety, Relief  
Applause  
“Are you putting me on?”  
Arm around someone’s shoulder  
Arms akimbo–anger  
Arms akimbo–thinking  
Averting your eyes  
“Aw, come on”–evading responsibility  
“Aw, shucks”  
Baby wave  
“Bad, bad”  
Batting your eyelashes  
“Be seated”  
Begging like a puppy  
Begging with outstretched palm  
Belching  
Bemused appreciation  
“Big deal”  
Biting your lip  
Biting your nails  
Biting your tongue  
“Blast!”–cover eyes  
“Blast!”–finger snap  
“Blast!”–head slap  
“Blast!”–leg slap  
“Blee, blee, blee”–lower lip  
Blowing a kiss  
Bowing  
Bowing–acknowledging applause  
“Bwww bwww bwww”  
C’mon, smile  
Call me  
Challenge–chin thrust

Chatterbox  
Cheering  
Chest bump  
Cigarette?  
Clapping in unison after a show  
Clapping in unison before a show  
Clapping hands for a dog  
Clearing your throat for attention  
Clenched fist salute  
“Closer, closer”  
“Come again?”  
“Come here”  
Come here–dog pat  
Come here–finger crook  
Come here—head  
“Come on”–hand clap  
“Come on, come on”–circular  
“Come on, come on”–circular, impatience  
“Come on, come on”–finger snap  
“Come on, come on”–hand clap, impatience  
Counting to others  
Counting to yourself  
Covering your mouth–embarrassment  
“Cross my heart”  
Curtseying  
Curtseying–acknowledging applause  
“Damn!”  
Death–closing the eyes  
Death–covering the face  
Disbelief–negative–yes  
Directing movement of people who are behind you  
Disbelief–negative–no  
Disdain/Sneer  
“Don’t push me”–fist in palm  
Donkey burble  
Double pat–Go  
Drumming your fingers–impatient waiting  
Ducking your head  
“Eat me!”  
“Eeee”  
Eight  
Embrace and kiss each other’s cheek  
Embrace and kissing the air  
Embrace–Hug  
Emphatic threat  
“Excuse me”–index finger  
Exposing your breasts  
Eyes point  
Farting

Fat  
Finger point  
Finger point–touch or grab  
Fingers crossed–good luck  
Fingers crossed–lying  
Fist bump, the  
Fist in someone’s face  
Five  
Forced smile  
Four  
“Fyoo”  
Get out of here  
“Get out of here”–embarrassment  
Get out of here–threat  
“Get this guy”–thumb  
Get up  
Getting ready to leave  
“Give me five”  
Giving the raspberries  
Glad-handing  
Go that way–finger  
Go that way–head  
Go that way–palm  
Gorilla chest beat  
“Got’cha”  
Grabbing someone’s lapel  
Gulp  
Hand on knee reassuring  
Hand on knee–sexual  
Hand above eyes – sighting  
Hand slap–celebration  
Hand above eyes – sighting  
Hands clasped in approval  
Hands clasped behind back–thinking  
Hands clasped behind your back  
Hands up for applause  
Handshake with one hand on shoulder or arm  
Handshake–acknowledgement  
Hanging your head in shame  
“He’s crazy”  
“He’s jerking you around”  
Head point  
“Here I am”  
“Here!”  
High five  
“Him” / “Her” / “It”  
Hold the applause  
Holding hands in a circle

Holding a plate out for more food  
Holding out your lapels  
“Hoo, hoo, hoo!”–fist pump  
Horror  
“How did I get stuck with such an idiot?”  
Howdy–finger  
Howdy–head  
Humble me  
“I don’t think so”  
I swear  
“I used my head”  
“I’m full”  
“I’m not listening”  
“I’m up to here with you”  
Intense look  
Introduction  
Irony–the long face  
It doesn’t matter to me  
“Just a bit”  
“Just a sec”  
Kiss a woman’s hand  
Kiss on the mouth  
Kiss, kiss  
Knee slap approval  
Kneeling  
Knock on wood  
Knocking on a door  
Laughing at  
Laughing with  
Leer–tongue out  
Less  
“Let me think”–eye roll  
“Let me think”–finger held up  
“Let me think”–fingers to bridge of nose  
“Let me think”–frown  
“Let me think”–hand to chin  
Let’s get down to work–dust hands  
Let’s get down to work–hitch up your pants  
Let’s get down to work–wipe hands on pants  
Licking your eyebrow  
Licking your lips  
Lifting someone’s chin  
Limp wrist  
Looking into someone’s eyes  
Loosening your collar  
Loser  
Making the sign of the cross  
Married

May it come to pass—head only  
Me  
Mock sympathy—violin  
Mock whisper  
Mock yawn  
“Moi?”  
Money  
Mooning  
More  
More or less—hand  
More or less—head  
Move in a circle  
My heart is breaking for you  
My lips are sealed  
Nazi salute  
Need to urinate or defecate  
Nervous smile  
Nine  
No thanks  
“No way”—arms crossed  
No?—surprised  
“Nobody here but us chickens”  
Nod of the head—acknowledgement, approval, thanks  
Not giving up your seat  
“Not me!”  
Nothing—empty hands  
No—hand wave  
No—shaking your head  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”—tongue out  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”—wiggle hand at nose  
“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”—wiggle hands at ears  
Offering an object  
Offering something—hand point  
Offering your hand in assistance  
Offering your hand in friendship  
“Oh Lord, let it be”  
“Oh my God”  
“Ohhh”—contentment  
“Ohhh”—indigestion  
OK ? Please?  
One  
“Oops!”  
Passing the hat  
Pat on the ass—approval  
Pat on the ass—sexual  
Pat on the back  
Panting—fatigue  
Patting a knee—reassuring

Patting the back–greeting  
Patting yourself on the back  
“Pay up”  
Peace sign  
“Pee yew”  
Pelvic thrust  
“Perfect”  
Pointing behind–index finger  
Pointing behind–thumb  
Pointing with an object  
Poke in ribs–shared joke  
Poke in the ribs–stop  
Polishing your nails  
Poo–pooing  
Pout  
Pregnant  
Pronouns  
“Psst”  
Putting your feet on a table  
Putting your hand over your heart  
Quizzical look  
Quotes  
Raising an eyebrow  
Rapping on a table for attention  
Refusal to acknowledge a greeting  
Refusal to acknowledge a greeting  
Refusing to shake hands  
Refusing to toast  
Roll down your window  
Rubbing your hands in anticipation  
Salivating over someone or something  
Salute  
Salute–mocking  
Saluting the flag  
Scoring a point  
Scorn  
Scratching your head  
Seven  
Shake hands–reconciliation  
Shake on it  
Shaking your finger at someone  
Shaking your fist at someone  
Shaking your head in disbelief  
“Shave and a haircut, two bits”  
“She’s (he’s) stuck up”  
She’s stacked  
“Shhh”  
Shooting yourself in the head

Show me  
Showing off how strong you are  
Shrugging your shoulders  
Sigh of relief  
Sit down here  
Six  
Slap—female to male  
Slap—female to female  
Slap—male to male  
Slap—male to female  
Slapping—fake  
Slapping a ruler on your palm  
Slapping your leg to get someone to come to you  
Sleep  
Smile  
Smile of commiseration  
Smug look  
Snapping paper money  
Snapping your fingers in front of someone's eyes  
Snapping your fingers to get someone's attention  
Sniffing  
“So arrest me”  
“So?” “Why?”  
“Sorry”  
Spitting  
Standing on being introduced  
Standing to attention  
Standing up to get attention  
Staring at someone  
Static refusal  
Stern look  
Sticking a knife into someone  
Stomach pat greeting  
“Stop!”  
Straight-arm hello  
Strong rejection refusal  
Supercilious/Contempt  
Surprised look  
Surrender  
Surrender—white flag  
Swami  
Taking someone's seat  
Taking your hat off—respect  
Tap on shoulder for attention  
Tap on the jaw greeting  
Tapping a glass for attention  
Tapping your foot—impatient waiting  
Telephone—foolish talk  
Tell me more

Ten  
“That’s it!”–finger in air  
“That’s it!”–finger snap  
That’s odd  
That’s that–shoot  
That’s that–dust hands  
That’s that–dust hands–metaphorical  
The finger  
“The winner”  
“The winner”–self-congratulations  
“Them”  
“There, there”  
Thinking–finger snapping  
Thinking–fingers in a tent  
Thinking–hand against head  
Thirst  
This big  
This size by this size  
This small  
This tall  
Threat  
Three  
Through–no way  
Throwing salt over your shoulder  
Thumb up–sighting  
Thumbing a ride  
Thumbs down  
Thumbs up  
Time  
“Time out”  
Time’s up  
Tip of the hat—acknowledgement  
Tip of the hat—admiration  
Tiptoeing  
Tired  
Try to make yourself vomit  
Tugging on a sleeve for attention  
Turning someone’s face to you–abruptly  
Turning someone’s face to you–gently  
Turning your back on someone  
Twiddling your thumbs  
Two  
Two-handed handshake  
Up / Down  
“Us”  
V for victory  
Victory–arms raised  
Victory–clenched fists

“Voila!”  
Waiter, the check—writing in the air  
Waiter, the check—writing on your palm  
Walking arm-in-arm  
Walking hand-in-hand  
Wave, the  
Waving goodbye  
Waving hand in front of mouth—hot food  
Waving hello  
“Welcome”  
What a babe!  
“What a shame”  
“What a shame”—exasperation  
“Whew!”—I’m glad that’s over  
“Whew!”—that was a close call  
Whistling like for a dog  
“Whoa!”  
“Whoa!”—calm down  
“Whoop dee doo”  
“Whyoo”  
Wiggling your tongue  
Wink  
Wink—sexual  
Wolf whistle  
“Wow”  
Wringing someone’s neck  
Yes, I understand  
Yes, now I’ve got it  
Yes—eyes only  
Yes—nodding  
“You wanna fight?”  
“You”—plural, successive  
“You”—plural, sweeping  
“You”—singular  
“You’re hot”  
You’re late  
“You—Out!”—finger  
“You—Out!”—thumb  
Zero

## ***Preface***

This is the first complete compilation for *An American Gestuary*. There is much work to be done, and we hope that you will help us by pointing out mistakes or questionable parts. Then we can write the Preface.

The essay that was meant as an introduction to this work is now published by the Advanced Reasoning Forum as *Conventional Gestures: Meaning and Methodology*.

## *Guide to the Use of the Gestuary*

### **What counts as a gesture**

This is a catalogue of conventional gestures. If one movement can have distinct meanings, we list separate gestures; they are *homonyms*. In particular, we list a metaphorical use of a gesture as a distinct gesture. If we were unsure whether one gesture is a variation of another or a separate gesture, we've given it a separate entry. If we were unsure whether a movement or posture is a gesture or only a stylized emotion or pantomime, we have given it an entry.

Some gestures can be distinguished from one another only by their facial expressions, which are difficult to illustrate. Though the difference in the expressions may be slight, the difference is recognized by Americans.

### **The parts of an entry**

Each entry for a gesture has the following items, as applicable.

**Title of the gesture** The title is the *name* of the gesture, if there is one.

If there is none, it is the *sound or phrase that is often spoken with the gesture* and which would typically elicit an image of the gesture for most people. That is enclosed in quotation marks.

If there is no such word or phrase, the title is a *short description of the movement and/or meaning* of the gesture.

**Head Shot** An illustration is given of the principal part of the movement in isolation. The symbol + between illustrations indicates successive movements starting at the left.

**Words spoken** This is a phrase or phrases or sound that can be spoken with the gesture. If the entry begins with "None" and then a word or phrase follows, typically no words are spoken.

**Name** The common name of the gesture, if there is one.

**Meaning and context of use** This is the meaning of the gesture, that is, some idea of how the gesture is usually understood. In some cases this is described as an emotion, and in some cases it is the reaction the gesture is meant to elicit.

Contexts in which the gesture can be used are sometimes noted. This entry includes whether the gesture is meant as a joke and whether it can be used only to an equal or inferior. If the description of the meaning does not make it clear, an indication is given whether the gesture is impolite.

A note is made if the gesture is a reciprocal one.

**Description of movement** If the movement or posture of the gesture might not be evident from the Head Shot, a description is given of how to do the gesture.

Just as there is variation in the pronunciation of words in the United States, so there is variation in how gestures are performed. There is no suggestion here that the illustrations are in any way prescriptive rather than descriptive.

**Context Cartoon** We illustrate the gesture in at least one context.

**Gender** A note is made if the gesture is restricted to one or certain pairs of genders.

**Diminutives** Most gestures have a range of diminutives by:

- Doing the gesture in a smaller space with smaller motion.
- Making the facial expression smaller.
- Not including a repetition.
- Using one hand rather than two.

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A diminutive of a gesture is noted only when it differs from the original in some way other than these and does not have a separate entry.

**Emphatics** Most gestures have a range of emphatics by:

- Doing the gesture in a larger space with larger motion.
- Making the facial expression larger.
- Repeating the gesture.
- Using two hands rather than one.

An emphatic of a gesture is noted only when it differs from the original in some way other than these and does not have a separate entry.

**Combinable gestures used with it** Combinable gestures are listed that can be done with the gesture, along with a description of how the meaning of the gesture is modified by such an addition if that is not just the combination of the two meanings.

**Related gestures** Cross-referencing is provided to homonyms, synonyms, antonyms, gestures related in meaning, and gestures related in form

**Combining role** For the combinable gestures, a short explanation is given of how the gesture functions in combination with other gestures.

**Variations** Sometimes a variation in movement is listed if that is not already given in the previous parts.

\*\*\*\*\* A distinct gesture that is closely related in form or more rarely meaning may be included as a separate entry at the end of an entry. In the Table of Contents such an entry is indented below the main entry.

### **Schema of Gestures**

At the start of each section of gestures we provide a diagram or scheme of the gestures included in that section. The schema use the following conventions.

<b>bold face</b>	the gesture entry is in this section
light face	the gesture entry is in another section
<i>italics</i>	a subsection of the book in this section
<b>ITALICS</b>	a section of the book
——	when listed alone this is meant to include all gestures in the section
——	gestures are related in meaning (these may also be related in form)
——	gestures are related in form

Bold face gestures located under the same heading are understood to be connected in meaning even if no line connects them.

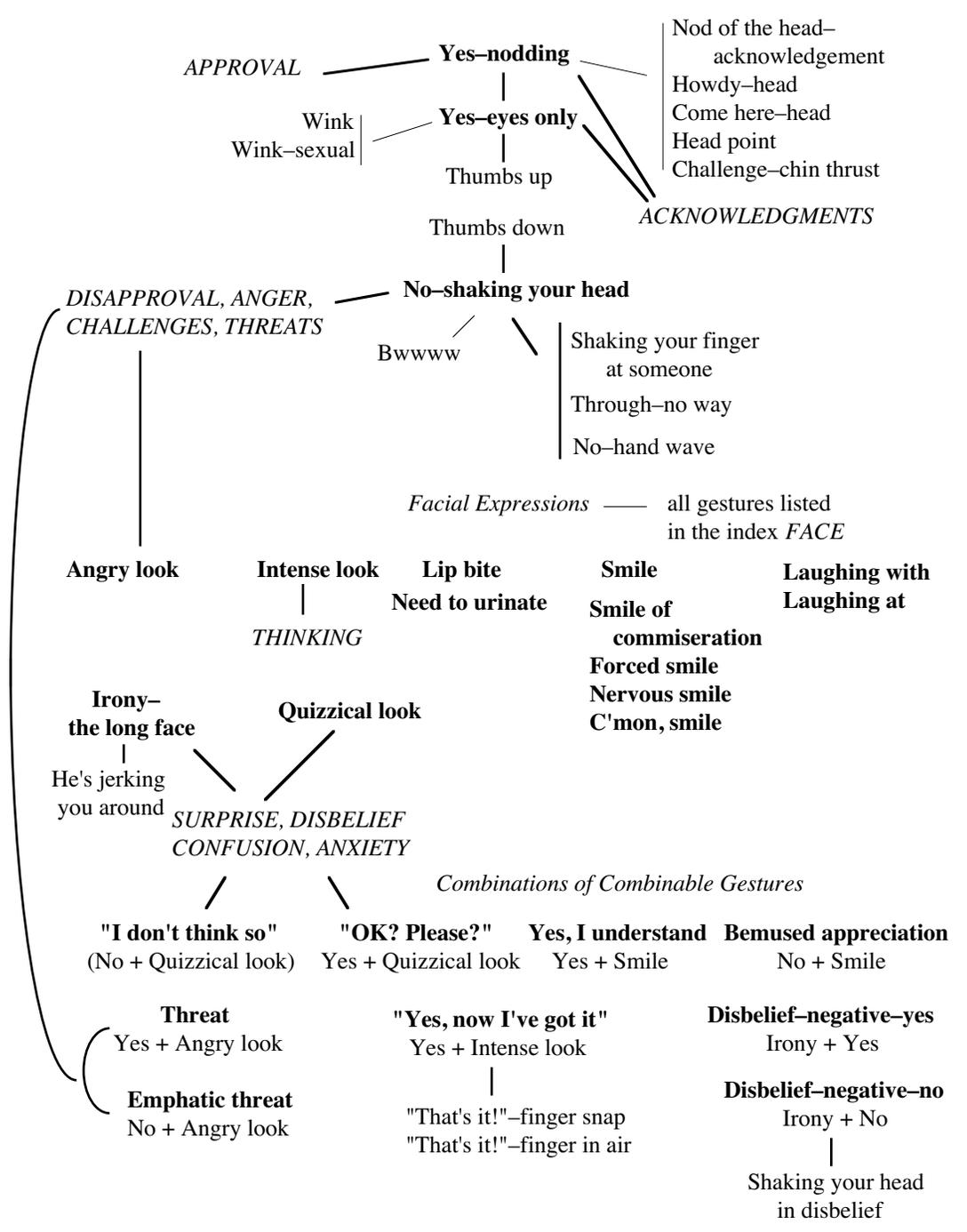
Bold face gestures located under the same heading are often linked by form, though we do not indicate that.

**NOTE** This collection is a draft, an attempt to collect and illustrate all common American conventional gestures. The grouping of gestures into sections, the cross-referencing, and the schematic presentation of the gestures in the sections, as well as the indices, should be seen as unfinished drafts. [This note will appear in the final version of this gestuary, too.]

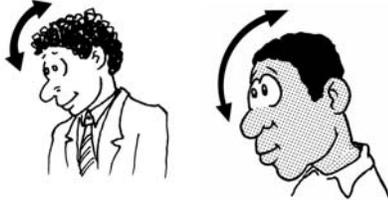
## ***Combinable Gestures***

The gestures in this section can be combined simultaneously with other gestures to add a specific meaning to the other gesture or to modify the meaning of the other gesture in a specific way. These are not the only combinable gestures, but they are the ones most commonly used in combinations. Included here are also some gestures closely related to these which are not themselves combinable.

Most of the gestures in the next section, *Pointing*, are also combinable, though more often in sequence than simultaneously.



**Yes-nodding**



flip the second one to face other direction

*Words spoken* None. "Yes."

*Name* Nodding your head. Nodding yes.

*Meaning* Yes. Agreement.

This can also be used for encouragement for someone to continue what they're doing, and is often used that way to encourage someone to keep talking.

*Description of movement* Tilt the head first forward and then back, repeating several times. The number of times the head is moved and the distance moved indicate more or less emphasis. The face is neutral or with a slight smile.

**CONTEXT CARTOON(S)** We need these. At least two. Offering food? The difficulty will be to give a context cartoon that does not involve another gesture.

*Role in combining*

When this gesture is combined with another gesture it gives an emphatic form of that other gesture, removing all doubt that the positive of it is what is intended, a sort of emphasis or encouragement. For example, we can *Finger point* to someone and nod yes. We can indicate *Just a bit* and nod yes.

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* Yes-eyes only

*Antonyms* Shaking the head no Thumbs down No-hand wave

*Related in meaning* Thumbs up More or less-hand More or less-head

*Nod of the head-approval*

All of the gestures in the section *Greetings, Farewells, and Introductions* that are used for acknowledgment. All of the gestures in the section *Approval*.

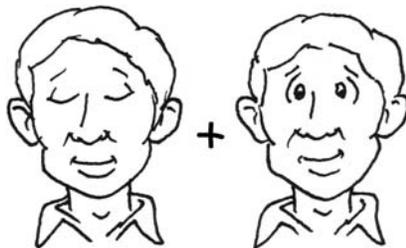
*Related in form* Yes-eyes only Nod of the head-acknowledgement

*Nod of the head-approval* Come here-head Howdy Yes, I understand

Yes, now I've got it OK?

\*\*\*\*\*

**Yes-eyes only**



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*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Yes. Agreement.

This is often done when you want to be discreet in signaling assent, particularly if you want only one person to notice.

*Description of movement* The eyes blink together once. This can be combined with a single nod down.

When used alone, it is a diminutive of *Yes*.

When used with a nod of the head, it is an emphatic of *Yes*.

It is *not a combinable gesture*.

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Yes-nodding* *Nod of the head-approval*

*Antonyms* *Shaking the head no* *Thumbs down* *No-hand wave*

*Related in meaning* *Thumbs up* *More or less-hand* *More or less-head*

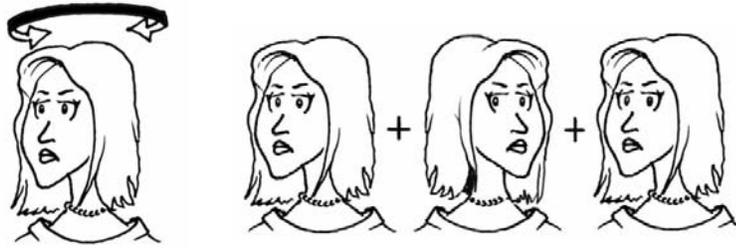
All of the gestures in the section *Greetings, Farewells, and Introductions* that are used for acknowledgment.

*Related in form* *Yes-eyes only* *Nod of the head-acknowledgement*

*Howdy* *Yes, I understand* *Yes, now I've got it* *OK?*

*Wink* *Wink-sexual*

## No-shaking your head



*Words spoken* None. “No.”

*Name* Shaking your head. Shaking your head no.

*Meaning* No. Disagreement.

*Description of movement* The head is rotated to the left and then to the right several times. The number of times and the distance the head is moved indicate emphasis. The mouth is turned down slightly or pursed.

*Emphatics* Closing the eyes while shaking the head is more emphatic.

Turning the mouth down and stretching it down is more emphatic, often sarcasm.

*Role in combining* When combined with another gesture, this creates something like a negative of that gesture. For example, *Finger point* directed to someone indicates that person, perhaps choosing him or her from a group, while adding *No* indicates not that person. The gesture of rubbing your thumb and fingers together to indicate *Money* can be combined with *No* to mean “No money” or “I don’t have any money.”

However, if the gesture is inherently negative like *Thumbs down* the addition of *No* simply makes it more emphatic.

### *Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Thumbs down* *No-hand wave*

*Antonyms* *Yes-nodding* *Yes-eyes only* *Nod of the head-approval*

*Yes, I understand* *Yes, now I’ve got it* *Bemused appreciation*

*Related in meaning* *Shaking your finger no*

Most of the gestures in *Disapproval*

*Related in form* *Emphatic threat* *Really, no?* *Bemused appreciation*

*Bwww Bwww Bwww*

## ***Facial Expressions***

### **Intense look**

**HEAD SHOT** Head slightly down, brow furrowed. No movement.

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* A furrowed brow.

*Meaning* I'm thinking because this doesn't make sense. Concentration. Inward focus.

*Description of movement* The head is bent slightly down, the brow is furrowed, and there is no movement.

*Role in combining* This gesture can be combined with any gesture that does not require a specific facial posture, indicating thoughtfulness about the subject of the gesture.

#### *Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Let me think*—all variations *Hmmm* *Thinking—fingers in tent*

*Related in meaning* *Hmmm* *Thinking—fingers in tent* *Thinking—hand to chin*  
*Thinking—head against hand* *Arms akimbo—thinking* *That's odd*

*Related in form* *Let me think*—all variations *Hmmm* *Thinking—fingers in tent*  
*Arms akimbo—thinking* *Thinking—head against hand*

## Biting your lip



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Biting your lip.

*Meaning and context of use* By itself this means either serious concentration or anxiety.

*Description of movement* Slight frown, upper teeth biting down on lower lip.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** -- concentration

## Anxious anticipation



*Variation* Bite on just the first knuckle of one of your index fingers instead of biting on your lip.

## HEAD SHOT

### Biting your tongue

Putting your tongue between your lips and biting that may be done instead of biting your lip.

*Role in combining* Added to another gesture this makes the meaning of that gesture more intense—not emphatic, but more intense, as when added to *Fingers crossed—good luck* or *The finger*.

*Variations*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form All gestures listed under “Tongue” in the index by body parts.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Need to urinate or defecate**

When used to indicate anxiety about having to urinate or defecate the head is nodded repeatedly, the eyes wide open and brow raised, and sometimes the legs are crossed. Not combinable.

## **Smile**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Smile.

*Meaning* Pleasure. Enjoyment. Happiness. Satisfaction.

This is used to indicate a pleasurable reaction to something done or said or thought of.

It is also used as a friendly greeting, or as an encouragement to continue with what they're doing, or as an invitation.

It can also be used as a mild way to show sexual interest in the person you're smiling at.

*Description of movement* The face is directed towards the other person if it is meant as a greeting or recognition of the person or if it is meant as an invitation.

### **CONTEXT CARTOONS**

One by yourself after enjoying something, a meal?

One on seeing someone.

*Role in combining* Many gestures can be modified to be a joke or not to be taken seriously or literally by adding a smile, like the use of scare quotes in written language. For example, *The Finger* normally elicits strong negative feelings from the person to whom it is directed, possibly leading to a fight; but if two people are good friends and one of them says something disagreeable, perhaps jokingly, the other can respond with *The Finger* accompanied by a smile as a playful version of "Fuck you." When used in this way the smile is exaggerated and the teeth are clearly shown. It is only in this sense that we have noted it as being combinable with other gestures, since a smile is often an integral part of a gesture.

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *Angry look*

Related in form *Laughing*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Smile of commiseration**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Meaning* I'm commiserating with you. I'm sympathetic.

Not combinable.

*Description of movement* A tight-lipped smile that is not fully turned up is combined with nodding the head up and down. Alternatively, the smile can be done with shaking the head back and forth.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Forced smile**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Meaning* I'm supposed to be enjoying this or happy, so I'll smile, but I don't really feel that way.

It can also mean disapproval.

*Description of movement* The smile is tighter and does not involve the eyes completely.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Nervous smile**

**HEAD SHOT** eyebrows toward the center

*Meaning* Anxiety, fear, uneasiness.

*Description of movement* This is like the forced smile only the head is nodded up and down with an anxious look as in *Biting your lip*. A nervous laugh may accompany it.

\*\*\*\*\*

**C'mon, smile**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Cheer up—done for someone who is sad or unhappy.

*Description of movement* The thumb and forefinger of one hand stretch your mouth into a smile.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

**Laughing with****HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. Sound of laughing.

*Name* Laughing (with).

*Meaning and context of use* This indicates appreciation or amusement, an emphatic of *Smile*. It is called *Laughing with* because the gesture is meant to indicate that you're sharing your enjoyment with another, at least when you're not alone.

This borders on being a stylized emotion, especially when it is done without thought. But since we can often control our laughing and adjust it to the circumstances to convey various nuances of enjoyment, it qualifies as a conventional gesture.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Description of movement* This can be done principally with the head or with the entire upper torso; the more of the body that is involved, the more emphatic the gesture.

*Role in combining* When added to another gesture it indicates our appreciation or pleasure of what that other gesture indicates.

We don't normally note its use as combining in the entries for other gestures.

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *Angry look Laughing at*

Related in form *Smile Nervous smile*

Related in meaning *Nervous smile*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Laughing at****HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. Sound of laughing.

*Name* Laughing (at).

*Meaning and context of use* Sarcasm, derision, aggression, belittling. We call this *Laughing at* because it is used to pick out someone or something as "the butt of the joke," "to make fun of them" = making them or it a subject of derision.

*Description of movement* This is a stylized version of *Laughing with*: the lips are pulled much further back and the laugh is not natural, but rather "forced," like an imitation of *Laughing with*. The head is tilted back, indeed, often thrown back. Often it is combined with *Finger point* to pick out the object of derision.

**CONTEXT CARTOON -- head only****CONTEXT CARTOON--plus finger point**

*Role in combining* This usually creates sarcasm when added to another gesture. For example, if someone does *Just a bit* + *Laughing at*, we understand it either as a sarcastic comment on the other

person's claim that it is or was only a little bit.

We don't normally note it's use as combining in the entries for other gestures.

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *Smile Laughing with*

Related in form *Smile*

## Angry look



revise, head tilted forward slightly

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Anger. Disapproval.

Normally this is done only to an inferior or equal.

*Description of movement* No movement. Intense staring.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Role in combining* Used by itself or with *Shaking your fist* this is on the border of conventional gesture and stylized emotion. But used in combination with another gesture to indicate that anger or a warning is added, it is conventional. For example, we can *Finger point* to someone and add the angry gesture to mean “You better not!” or “It’s you I’m angry at.” With *Time + Angry look* we get “I’m angry about the time you’re taking.”

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Shaking your finger at someone*

Antonyms *Smile*

Related in meaning Most of the gestures in the section *Disapproval*.

## **Irony—the long face**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Sure” (with the vowel drawn out). “Right” (with the vowel drawn out).

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Irony.

This is the embodiment of sarcasm and is impolite unless you know the other person well. It is not used to a superior.

This is related to but distinct in meaning from *Are you putting me on?*

“Are you putting me on?” = Are you trying to deceive me?

Irony = “I know you’re putting me on.”

*Description of movement* Usually the head is nodded up and down, slightly tilted.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes* An emphatic of irony.

+ *No* An emphatic of irony.

+ *Pointing with the finger*

*Role in combining* Added to another gesture this indicates that the meaning of that other gesture is intended sarcastically rather than literally. We only note irony as being combinable in that case since an ironic face is often an integral part of a gesture. For example, *A little bit* + *Irony* is roughly equivalent to saying sarcastically “Oh, sure, it was a little bit.”

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *Smile*

Related in meaning *He’s jerking you around* *Disbelief* *Are you putting me on?* *He’s crazy*

*Raising an eyebrow* *Scorn*

Related in form *He’s jerking you around* *Quizzical look*

“How did I get stuck with such an idiot?”

## Quizzical look

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* “Huh?”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Questioning. Doubt. Are you sure? Is that right? Huh?

Like *Intense look*, this indicates inward focus.

*Description of movement* The head is tilted to the side to initiate the gesture.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Role in combining* When added to another gesture which does not already have a set facial expression or added after another gesture that does have one, this indicates doubt about what is meant by that other gesture or turns the other gesture into a question. For example, *Time + Quizzical look* means “What’s the time?” or (depending on context) “Do we have time?”

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *Yes, I understand*

Related in meaning *That’s odd Disbelief*

Many of the gestures in the section *Surprise, Disbelief*.

Related in form *That’s odd*

## ***Combinations of Combinable Gestures***

Though each of the following is a combination of two combinable gestures, the entire movement has a meaning distinct from just the combination of the meaning of its parts.

### **OK? Please?**

*Yes-nodding + Quizzical look*



### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* The combination of the meaning of these gestures is “Do you really mean yes?”, and it can be used that way. But more generally it means “Please” or “OK?”, a request for an affirmation, and in emphatic form it amounts to a plea or begging.

This is *reciprocal* in that the other person is expected to acknowledge it, either by agreeing, usually with *Yes-nodding* or disagreeing, usually with *No-shaking your head*.

*Description of movement* The head is nodded up and down rapidly in a very small arc.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Role in combining* We can add this to many gestures to turn them into requests. For example, *Finger point* directed to someone + *OK?* means “Will you please (do whatever we’ve been considering)”? While sitting on a sofa we can do *Sit here* + *OK?*, which is an encouragement to sit next to us, “Please do sit here next to me.” *Hitchhiking* + *OK?* is a strong request, pleading for a ride.

## **Yes, I understand**

*Yes–nodding + Smile*

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Yes, yes.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This means “Yes, I understand” or “I get it,” in the sense that you are bemused, less than laughing but amused nonetheless, or else just pleased that you understand the import of what has been said or done.

*Description of movement* The head is titled back first then lowered slowly, with a slight smile, and not repeated or repeated only very slightly. It seems as if you are leading with your chin. Often the upper teeth are extended almost over the lower lip.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Role in combining* This is typically not combined with other gestures.

**Bemused appreciation**

*No—shaking your head + Smile*

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This indicates a slightly surprised or amused appreciation of something someone has done or said which is better than you might have expected; in that way it differs from *Yes, I understand*. It has the opposite meaning of *No—shaking your head* by itself.

*Description of movement* The head is turned to the left and right several times very slowly and the smile is usually large but the lips are not parted wide.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Role in combining* This is typically not combined with other gestures.

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *No*

Related in meaning *Yes, I understand*

Related in form *No Smile*

**Yes, now I've got it**

*Yes + Intense look*

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* These gestures combined mean agreement that now you understand.

*Description of movement* Often *Biting your lip* is added.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Role in combining* This is typically not combined with other gestures.

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *I don't think so*

Related in meaning *That's it!-finger snap* *That's it-finger in air*

**“I don’t think so”**

*No + Quizzical look*



*Words spoken* None. “Huh?” “What?” “I don’t think so.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This can have several meanings which are so closely related that we do not list them as different gestures.

- It can mean just the combination of the two meanings: “Do you really mean no?”
- It can indicate uncertain disagreement.
- It can mean “I don’t believe you really mean no.”
- It can mean “Huh?, I don’t understand.”

When “I don’t think so” is said in a sing-song voice the gesture is meant as ironic.

**Insert music.**

**CONTEXT CARTOONS**

*Role in combining* This can be used to add irony or doubt to another gesture performed with it, for example with *Finger pointing*.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Irony—the long face*

## **Threat**

*Yes-nodding + Angry look*

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used as a threat: “Don’t you dare!” or “Stop that!” It is also used to indicate “I’m on to you” = “I know what you’re up to and I don’t like it one little bit.”

*Description of movement* The combination is done very slowly and with little head movement.

*Role in combining* This adds a threat to other gestures.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning Most of the gestures in *Challenges and Threats*

Related in form *Angry look* Yes

### **Emphatic Threat**

*No—shaking your head + Angry look*

#### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a very emphatic threat.

*Description of movement* The combination is done very slowly. For example, we point to someone and do *No + Angry look* to mean “Don’t you dare do that!”

*Role in combining* This adds a threat to other gestures.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning Most of the gestures in *Challenges and Threats*

Related in form *Angry look* Yes

**Disbelief–negative–yes**

*Irony + Yes–nodding*

**HEAD SHOT** Face slight smile, nod head up and down slightly a few times, saying “mmm hmmm”.

*Words spoken* None. The sound “Mmm hmmm”.

*Meaning* Disbelief. This is usually sarcastic or at least a pointed remark about what the other has said or done.

*Name* None.

*Description of movement* This can be done with head nodded up and down or with head shaken from side to side. The latter is more emphatic.

Distinguished from *Shaking the head in disbelief* by that one being more wonderment and this one more sarcasm.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Disbelief* *Are you putting me on?* *He’s crazy*

*Raising an eyebrow* *Scorn*

Related in form *Irony + Yes* *Irony + No* *Disbelief* *Quizzical look*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Disbelief–negative–no**

*Irony + No–shaking your head*

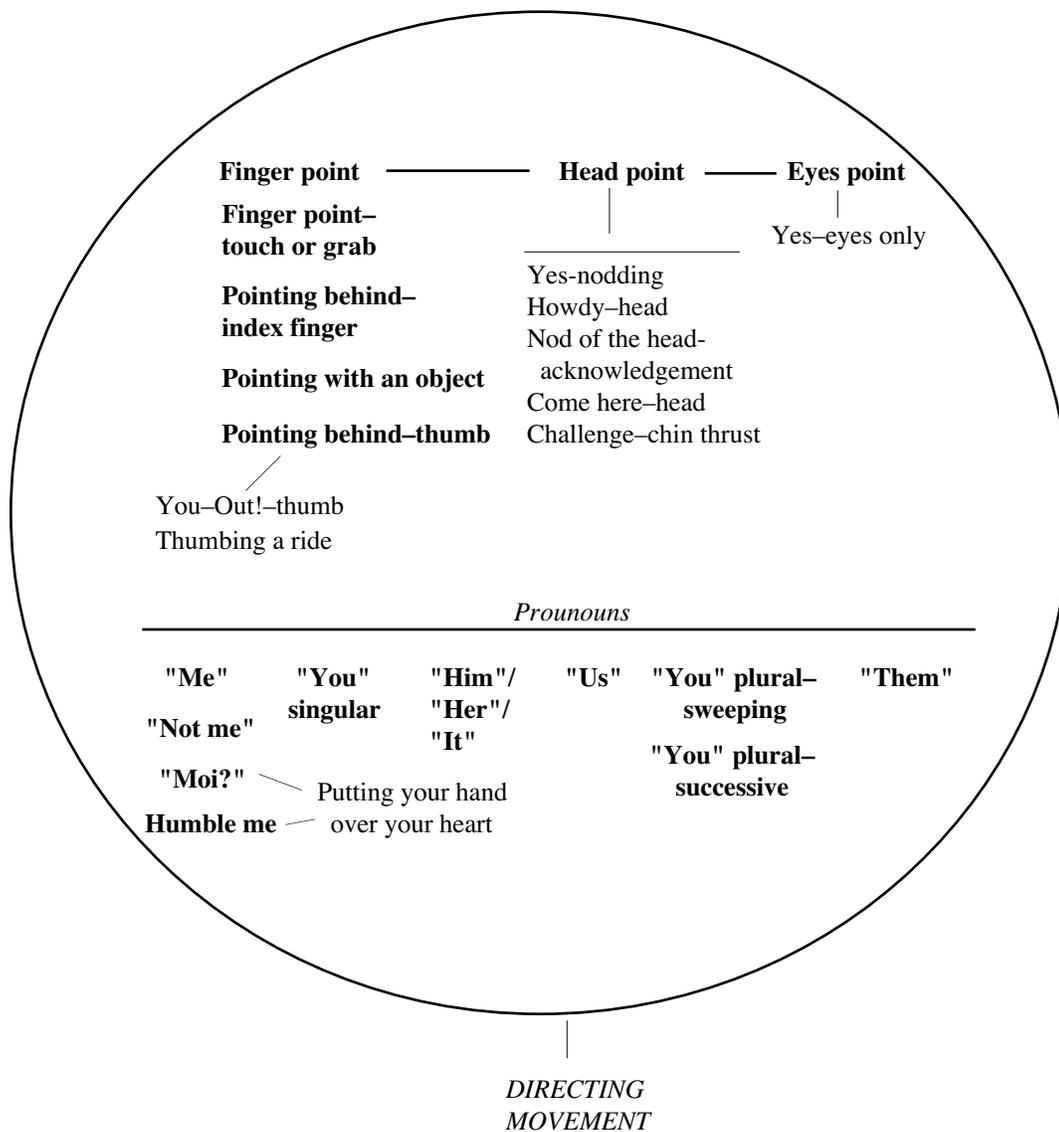
**HEAD SHOT** Face slight smile, shake head slightly back and forth a few times, saying “mmm hmmm”.

This is a synonym of *Disbelief–negative–yes*

# Pointing

We point with a finger, with our gaze, with our head, or with an object. The direction of the movement indicates the direction to which we wish to direct the other person's attention. For each of these, but particularly with pointing with the finger, the larger the movement the farther the distance to the object or place.

Comments on these are expanded in the essay.



## Finger point



revise thumb over other fingers, head & torso leaning toward direction of the pointing  
--2nd headshot, just the hand with thumb over the other fingers  
--3rd HEAD SHOT, someone seated with elbow on arm rest, pointing with forearm lifted but arm not extended

*Words spoken* None. "You" or a word describing the person or object pointed to, or "There" for picking out a direction.

*Name* Pointing.

*Meaning* The index finger is used to pick out the direction in which a person's attention is meant to be directed, namely, in a direct line in front of the body extending the index finger. This is the way we draw someone's attention to someone, something, or someplace. It can also be used to indicate relative places of objects that are not present.

*Description of movement* The gaze is in the direction in which the finger is pointed, and the head is tilted in that direction, too. The arm need not be fully extended. The finger is pointed in the direction of the thing or place that is meant to be picked out. The farther the arm is extended, the more emphatic the gesture. Most emphatic is with the arm raised all the way to shoulder level. The movement of the hand and finger may be repeated for emphasis.

The arm is always extended when picking out a direction.

When two or more people are together, it is impolite to point to another person who is not part of the group.

It is impolite to point to a dish of food at a dinner table.



revise: hand is too high relative to head

CONTEXT CARTOON picking someone out in a crowd.

CONTEXT CARTOON picking out a piece of meat at the deli stand in a grocery with the clerk behind the counter. (or some other way of picking out an object)

CONTEXT CARTOON pointing to a bird on a branch at some distance

**CONTEXT CARTOON** Tourist. Pointing to a direction.  
“That way”, “Over there”.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** dialogue “So Jane was standing near the door, and Ralph was over by the cashier, and a guy walked in” “Huh” then a cartoon where the speaker points out the relative positions of the people

Picking out relative positions or whatever is not present is usually done in conjunction with speech, and often involves the whole hand.

“Look out!”



Add movement arrow to show repeated.

This is pointing to a danger. The gaze is not toward the object. Note that the eyebrows are raised and the mouth stretched as a small version of a fearful look.

It is impolite to point out a defect or disability.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** child pointing to a really fat woman (or disfigured person)

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Quizzical look + Yes*

An emphatic form of pointing plus uncertainty.

+ *Quizzical look + No*

An emphatic form of pointing, but indicating dissent.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

“You don’t really mean that (way), do you?”

+ *Smile*

+ *Irony*

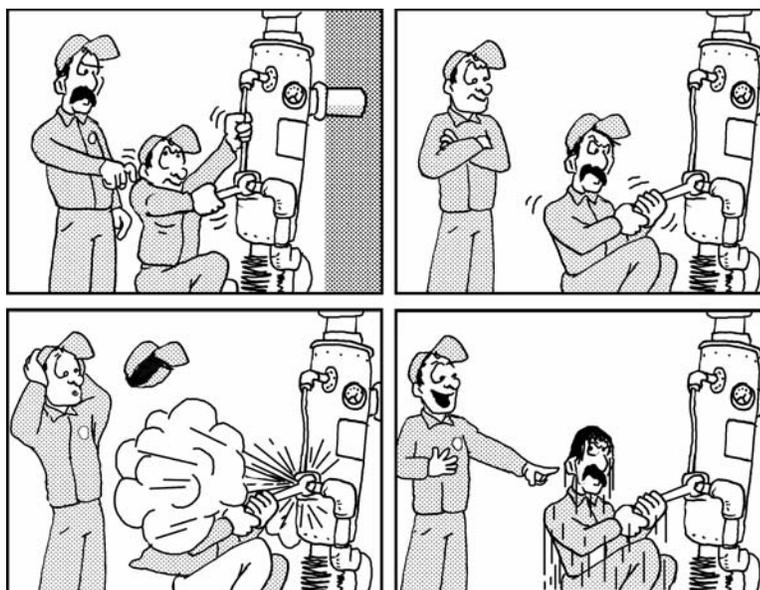
“Oh, sure, you mean that.”—sarcastic.

+ *No*

Not that person or thing.

+ *Laughing at*

This picks out someone as the butt of a joke. It is very impolite.



+ *Angry look*

Stop doing what you're doing.



See also *Get out of here*, *Go to your room*.

*Role in combining* When added to another gesture it indicates the person, thing, or place about which the other gesture is meant to apply. That is more often done sequentially, for example, *What a babe!* followed by *Pointing*.

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Head point* *Eye point*

Related in meaning *Directing Movement* gestures with hand, head, or finger.

Related in form *Get out of here* *Go to your room*

*Go that way* *You, out!* *They went that a way*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Finger point–touch or grab**

For emphasis or to try to eliminate confusion we sometimes point by touching what is meant to be picked out, even grabbing the item. This gesture is often supplemented by saying “This!”

[CONTEXT CARTOON--touching the item](#)

CONTEXT CARTOON--grabbing the item

\*\*\*\*\*

**Pointing behind--index finger**

We point with an index finger over the opposite shoulder to indicate a direction or place behind us.

CONTEXT CARTOON finger points over the opposite shoulder.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Pointing behind-thumb**

We point with a thumb over the same shoulder to indicate a direction of place behind us.

CONTEXT CARTOON thumb point must show difference from *Hitchhiking*:  
hand held closer to shoulder and in front of body

*Related gestures*

See those listed with *Finger point* plus:

Related in form *Thumbing a ride* *You-Out!-thumb*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Pointing with an object**

An object, normally long and straight, held in a hand with the arm extended is used to pick out the direction in which a person's attention is meant to be directed, namely, in a straight line extending the line of the arm and object.

CONTEXT CARTOONS

one with a hoe, one with a pencil

*Combinable gestures with it* As with *Finger point*.

## Head point

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* This is a synonym of *Finger point*. It is used when the hands are occupied or as a discrete way to point when you don't want anyone other than those you're involved with to notice the pointing.

*Description of movement* We direct attention with our eyes and a slight movement of the head, particularly the chin and nose in the direction of what is meant to be picked out.

*NOTE* We do not point with the lips: that would be understood as a kiss.

CONTEXT CARTOON giving directions with hands occupied with groceries (“Get the door for me”).

CONTEXT CARTOON command to a child

CONTEXT CARTOON when want to be discrete

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Smile*

+ *Angry look*

*Role in combining* When added to another gesture this indicates the person, thing, or place about which the other gesture is meant to apply. This is more often done sequentially.

*Related gestures*

*Homonyms* *Come here-head* *Howdy-head*

*Synonyms* *Finger point* *Eye point*

*Related in meaning* *Directing Movement* gestures with hand, head, or finger.

*Related in form* *Howdy-head* *Come here-head* *Nod of the head-acknowledgement*

*Challenge-chin thrust* *Yes-nodding*

## **Eyes point**

### **HEAD SHOT**

This is a diminutive of *Finger point* or *Head point*. We direct attention by moving only our eyes in the direction of what is meant to be picked out. It is used when the hands are otherwise occupied or as a very discrete way to point.

*Role in combining* This normally is not combined with other gestures.

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Head point Finger point*

Related in meaning *Directing Movement* gestures with hand, head, or finger.

Related in form *Looking into someone's eyes Yes-eyes only*

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

## ***PRONOUNS***

### **“Me”**

**CONTEXT CARTOON** pointing to oneself, facial expression neutral.

*Description of movement* Note that the index finger touches the center of the breastbone.

We do not indicate “Me” by pointing to any other part of our body.

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Putting your hand over your heart*

\*\*\*\*

### **“Me?” “Moi?”**

*Me + Quizzical look*

**CONTEXT CARTOON** (The first context cartoon on p. 71 of original *American Gestures in kitchen doesn't work*. That looks like “Not me” because it looks like the manager is assigning blame. Need more clearly that the person is being picked out to do something. Perhaps people at a party--do you want to dance? who me?)

This is generally considered a separate gesture, with the name “Moi?” (= French “me”). The words are usually spoken or mouthed.

An emphatic is to put your open palm over your heart/chest. This is used especially when offered something like a gift.

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Putting your hand over your heart*

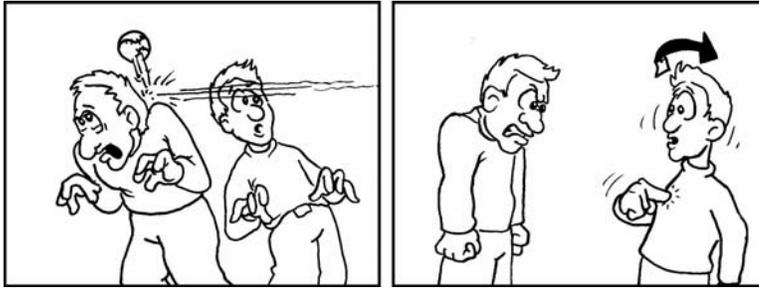
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### **“Not me”**

*Me + No-shaking your head*



The eyebrows are usually raised and the eyes are wide open, as if in surprise.



\*\*\*\*\*

### **Humble me**

This is the hand over the heart with a slight bow from the upper chest only with the eyes closed and then opened. It is used to indicate humble acceptance of some praise, honor, or offer.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in form *Putting your hand over your heart*

**“You”–singular**

In picking out a single person from a group we typically raise our arm and point with the hand and finger downward as in the first illustration of *Pointing*.

We do not point directly to a superior in this way.

**“Him” / ”Her” / ”It”**

This is distinguished from *You–singular* as the gesture is made for the benefit of a person other than the one to whom you are pointing.

**“You”–plural, sweeping**

The arm is swept from pointing to one boundary of the group to the other.

CONTEXT CARTOON [pointing to all of them by moving the arm to include them.](#)

**“You”–plural, successive**

The pointing is done successively for a small number of people or objects.

CONTEXT CARTOON

**“Them”**

The arm is swept from pointing to one boundary to the other boundary of a group distinct from those with whom we are communicating.

CONTEXT CARTOON

**“Us”**

CONTEXT CARTOON -- [perhaps at a bar, signalling for another drink \(index finger up\) then followed by a circular motion to include all the people at the table \(compare p. 61 \*Sin Palabras\*\)](#)

The arm is swept circularly starting with yourself and ending with yourself, as if drawing a circle around all of you. Alternatively, an open palm rather than just the index finger can be used.

*Role in combining* These pronoun gestures are combined with other gestures normally only sequentially.

## *Directing Movement*

Two ways we point are also used to direct someone or something to move in a particular direction:

*Go that way* point with the index finger.

*Go that way* point with the head.

In each case the pointing begins in the direction of the person or thing we are directing and ends pointing in the direction to which the person or thing should go. These are used only for directions away from you, not towards you. We rarely use the eye point in directing movement.

We also direct someone *with an open hand*. The palm is perpendicular to the floor with the fingers pointed toward the person or thing we are directing to move, then the hand is moved to have the fingers pointing in the direction to which the person or thing should go. However, in directing someone to leave we often indicate the direction in which they should go with the back of the hand.

For pointing with the index finger or with the hand we make the gesture more emphatic by extending the arm farther and/or shaking the hand which indicates that the person should continue moving farther in that direction. We make it less emphatic with a smaller movement in the indicated direction. Repeating the movement quickly indicates that the movement should be done quickly.

The gaze goes with the finger or hand, starting with the person(s) to whom the gesture is directed and ending with the gaze in the direction you want him, her, them, or it (for example, a dog) to go.

To point behind us or to indicate that a person should leave we *point with a thumb*.

Generally nothing is said.

Since most of the gestures in this section are commands, they're typically not done with a superior.

**Directing Movement** = **POINTING**

FINGER	PALM	HEAD
Got'cha — <b>Go that way—finger</b>	<b>Go that way—palm</b>	<b>Go that way—head</b>
"Here! "	"Come here"	<b>Come here—head</b>
"You-Out!"—finger	Up / Down ————  More Less	Yes—nodding
"Closer, closer"	<b>Get up</b>	Nod—acknowledgement
<b>Come here—finger crook</b>	"Be seated"	Howdy—head
"You out"—thumb	<b>Move in a circle</b>	Challenge—chin thrust
 Thumbing a ride	"After you"— Voila!	
	Get out of here ————  Poo-pooing	
	Get out of here—threat	Get out of here— embarrassment
	"Come on, come on"—circular	
	"Come on, come on"—circular, impatience	— "Us"
	"Come on!"—hand clap	
	"Come on, come on"—hand clap, — Applause impatience	
	<b>Whistling like for a dog</b>	
Five   — "Stop!" ——— Excuse me—index finger		
Ten   — "Whoa!"		
Time out — "Whoa!"— calm down — Sorry		
	<b>Come on, come on—finger snap</b>	
	"That's it!"—finger snap	
	Thinking—finger snap	
	Snapping your fingers in front of someone's eyes	
	"Blast!"—finger snap	
	<b>Double pat—Go</b>	

## **Go that way–finger**

**HEAD SHOT** – go to the left--finger (two with +)

**HEAD SHOT** – go to the right--finger (two with +)

variations with position of hand perpendicular to floor or not

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is *Finger point* with movement. It indicates a direction we want someone or something to move. It is not used to indicate up or down and only rarely to indicate that the person should move directly away, that is, in the direction in front of you.

*Description of movement* The index finger points to where the person is and ends by pointing to where the person should go. Alternatively, the gaze can first be directed to the person who is to move and then the finger points to the direction the person should go along with the head moving in that direction.

The movement is made with the dominant hand: to indicate the direction opposite to that side the arm is crossed in front of the body.

## **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes* This can indicate to continue the movement.

+ *Yes+ Quizzical look* This indicates a request to continue moving.

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look* This turns the gesture from a command to an invitation.

+ *Angry look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Go that way–head* *Go that way–palm*

*Related in meaning* *Finger point* *Pointing behind* *Head point* *Eyes point*

Other gestures in this section.

*Related in form* *Finger point* *PRONOUNS* *You–Out!*

*Go to the left/right–finger* *They went that-a-way*

\*\*\*\*\*

**“Here!”**

## **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Here.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Right here and right now. Come here this instant.

Used only to an inferior or to a dog. If done to an equal it is not only rude but a challenge.

*Description of movement* This is *Intense look* or *Angry look* along with pointing directly down in front of you with the index finger while looking at the other person.

CONTEXT CARTOON

## **Go that way–palm**

### **HEAD SHOT – to the left--palm (two with +)**

Move to the left.

### **HEAD SHOT – to the right--palm (two with +)**

Move to the right.

*Words spoken* None. For movement towards you: “Come here.” “C’ mere.” “Come on.”

*Name* None. “Over there.” “That way.”

*Meaning and context of use* This indicates a direction we want someone or something to move.

This is a synonym of *Go that way–finger* except that this can be used for up and down and for indicating that someone should move away from you.

*Description of movement* The arm is extended with an open palm facing perpendicular to the ground starting by the palm in line with where the person or people are and is moved, often repeatedly, with the palm in the direction where they should go.

The movement is made with the dominant hand: to indicate the direction opposite to that side the arm is crossed in front of the body. To indicate movement to the right with the right hand the hand is flipped over to have the palm facing the direction of movement, and similarly for directing movement to the left with the left hand.

When the direction the person should move is directly in front of you, the hand is in front of the body with the palm perpendicular to the floor and the fingers pointed up. The movement is usually gentle, with the base of the palm more or less fixed and the rest of the hand tilted, and it is repeated, which distinguishes it from *Stop!*

### **CONTEXT CARTOON--movement in some direction other than left or right**

#### *Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes* This indicates to continue the movement.
- + *Yes+ Quizzical look* This indicates a request to continue moving.
- + *Intense look*
- + *Quizzical look* This turns the gesture from a command to an invitation.
- + *Angry look*
- + *Smile*

#### *Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Go that way–head* *Go that way–finger*

*Related in meaning* *Pointing behind* *Finger point* *Head point* *Eyes point*

Other gestures in this section.

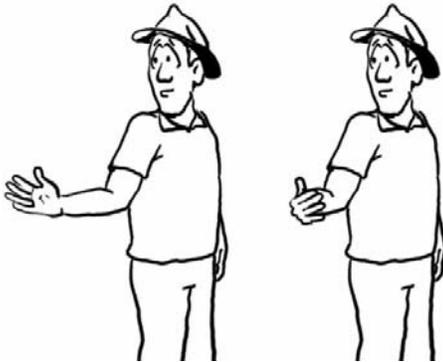
*Related in form* *Up* *Down* *After you* *Have a seat* *Voila!* *Be seated*

*Related in form (movement away)* *Stop!* *Whoa!* *Calm down* *Sorry* *Scorn*

*Get out of here–embarrassment* *Five* *Ten*

\*\*\*\*\*

### “Come here”



Revise with the person facing forward

This is one of the forms of *Go that way–palm*, but because it is related to a number of other gestures we list it separately.

#### *Related gestures*

Homonyms *More, more*

Synonyms *Come here–head Closer, closer Come here–finger crook*

Antonyms *Get out of here You–Out! You–Out!–thumb*

Related in meaning Most gestures in this section.

Related in form *Go that way–palm*

\*\*\*\*\*

### Up / Down

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is how we indicate that the person should go upwards (or downwards) or move something higher (lower). If the movement is repeated it can be accompanied by saying “Higher, higher.” Metaphorical uses of this are listed separately as *More* and *Less*.

### CONTEXT CARTOONS up -- lifting something with a crane?

#### *Related gestures*

Homonyms *More Less*

Related in meaning *Get up Be seated Sit down here*

Related in form *Get up Be seated Sit down here*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Get up**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a request that the person or people arise from a sitting or prone posture.

*Description of movement* Both hands are used, with palms at about a 60 degree angle up and moved repeatedly.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *Be seated*

Related in meaning *Up*

Related in form *Up Be seated Sit down here*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **“Be seated”**

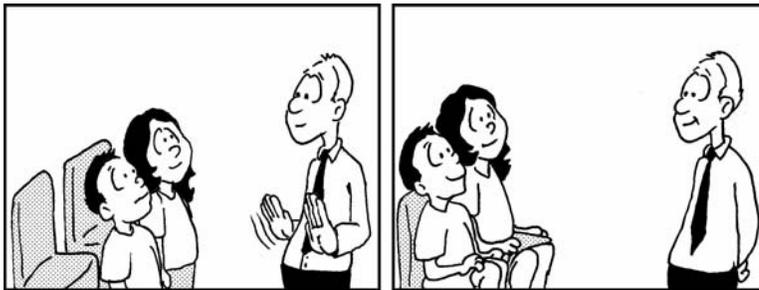
### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “You may be seated.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a request that a person or people to be seated.

*Description of movement* Both hands are used, with palms facing the other person or people and fingers upwards, then the whole palm is moved downwards slightly, repeating it several times.



*Related gestures*

Antonyms *Get up Up*

Related in meaning *Sit down here Be seated*

Related in form *Sit down here*

## Move in a circle

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is the basic motion for directing someone to proceed in a circle or to indicate that something is going in a circle.

*Description of movement* The index finger of the dominant hand points slightly downwards and the hand leading with the index finger is moved in a circle.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes* This indicates to continue the movement.

+ *Yes+ Quizzical look* This indicates a request to continue moving.

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look* This turns the gesture from a command to an invitation.

*Related gestures* As for *Go that way-finger* and *Go that way-palm*.

## **Directing movement of people who are behind you**

[HEAD SHOT--continue forward](#)

[HEAD SHOT--stop](#)

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used by a person to direct the movement of a group of people who are all behind him or her.

*Description of movement* The hand is held at head-level, palm forward, palm perpendicular to the ground; the person continues to look forward, so all the people are at his or her back. If the hand is moved forward several times it indicates that the people behind should continue walking forward. If the hand is raised and abruptly stopped, it means the people behind should all stop.

[CONTEXT CARTOON--2, one for continuing, one for stopping](#)

*Combinable gestures with it* None because the face is away from those to whom the gesture is directed.

This is the only gesture we know in which the person's back is to those to whom he or she is gesturing.

### *Related gestures*

[Homonyms](#) *x*

[Synonyms](#) *x*

[Antonyms](#) *x*

[Related in meaning](#) *x*

[Related in form](#) *x*

### *Variations*

## “After you”



*Words spoken* None. “After you.”

*Name* None, but saying “After you” elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning and context of use* This is an invitation for the other person to go first.

This is often used by the host or hostess at a restaurant when leading people to their table.

This can be a joke in an informal situation, since it is very polite.

*Description of movement* *Smile* is normally part of the gesture.



*Gender* Previously this was done by only men except for a hostess at a restaurant, but now it can be done by women. Some women take umbrage at the gesture being done towards them.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *The intense look*

+ *The quizzical look*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Voila!*

## **Come here—dog pat**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None, but a couple whistles are common. Sometimes “Come on” or “C’mere”.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is how we call a dog to us. It can also be used in a joking manner to coax a friend to come to you.

*Description of movement* Slap the palm of your hand against the front or side of your thigh two times and shake your head up and down in rhythm with that.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

## Get out of here

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None. "Get outta here."

*Meaning and context of use* This is a command to a person or animal to leave, not just to move away. The direction pointed is either towards a door of the room or some other way out. It amounts to dismissing the person or dog from your presence.

The quicker the movement and the more it is just the wrist, the more dismissive the meaning.

The metaphorical use of this is *Poo-pooing*, which is dismissive of an idea or subject.

*Description of movement* The open hand is flicked away with the back of the hand facing the direction in which the person should go. The face is in a sort of grimace. The movement is often begun by first pointing with the index finger to the person and then moving the entire hand.

The gaze is directed at the other person throughout the movement.

An emphatic is to finish by turning away from the other person, which is distinguished from *Get out of here—embarrassment* by the facial expression and being a more forceful.

CONTEXT CARTOON with person in a room, pointing to door

CONTEXT CARTOON outdoors but still meaning "Leave!"

CONTEXT CARTOON with animal

CONTEXT CARTOON mother to small child

CONTEXT CARTOON turning away--compare *Get out of here—embarrassment*

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Smile* This means disbelief: "Get out of here" = I don't believe you.

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *You-Out!—finger*

Antonyms *Come here—finger crook* *Come here—head* *Come here—palm*

Related in meaning *Go that way—all variations* *You, out!—thumb*

Related in form *You-Out!—finger* *Go that way—finger* *Scorn*

*Get out of here—embarrassment* *Poo-pooing*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Get out of here—threat

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. "Get out of here."

*Name* None. Showing someone the back of your hand.

*Meaning and context of use* Get out of here before I take my hand to you = slap you, beat you.  
An emphatic of *Get out of here*.

*Description of movement* *Angry look* + the dominant hand is raised to the opposite shoulder, palm open towards the body, as if you were about to slap the other person, then moved slightly away from the body. No attempt need be made to show the direction for leaving.

## CONTEXT CARTOON

### *Related gestures*

Antonyms *Come here*

Related in meaning *Threat Get out of here*

Most of the gestures in the section *Disapproval, Anger, Challenges, Threats*

Related in form *Shaking your fist at someone*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **“You–Out!”–finger**

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. “You–Out!”

*Name* None, but saying “You–Out!” elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning and context of use* Get out of here. Very emphatic.

When used with a child and pointing in the direction of the child’s room it means that the child is being disciplined to go to his or her room: the *Intense look* or *Angry look* is added. It is used similarly for animals to direct, say, a dog to its doghouse or to go home.

*Description of movement* First one points to the person with the index finger, then the hand and finger are moved very vigorously with a sudden stop pointing to the direction to leave. The gaze is directed at the other person throughout the movement.

## CONTEXT CARTOON

### *Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Angry look*

### *Related gestures*

Synonyms *Get out of here You, out!–thumb*

Antonyms *Come here–finger crook Come here–head Come here–palm*

Related in meaning *Go that way–all variations*

Related in form *Go that way–finger*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **“You–Out!”– thumb**

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* “You–Out!”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Get out of here. Very emphatic.

This is the common movement done in baseball by an umpire to mean “You’re out!” = the person has been eliminated from the play and should leave the playing field.

*Description of movement* First point to the person with index finger, then the thumb with fist is closed vehemently and thrown back over the shoulder, or more rarely in the direction you want the person to leave. The gaze is directed at the other person throughout the movement.

## CONTEXT CARTOON

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Angry look*

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Get out of here*–all variations

*Antonyms* *Come here*–*finger crook* *Come here*–*head* *Come here*–*palm*

*Related in meaning* *Go that way*–all variations

*Related in form* *Thumbing a ride*

## **Slapping your leg to get someone to come to you**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Here, boy.” “Here, girl.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a standard way to call a dog to you. When used to get a person to come to you it is a joke or sarcasm.

*Description of movement* An open palm is slapped against the thigh, often accompanied by a clicking or your tongue, or kissing sound, or a whistle.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

*Variations* **Clapping hands for a dog** Instead of slapping the thigh, the hands are clapped in front of the waist or lower and the body is tilted forward, which differentiates it from “*Come on!*”–*hand clap*.

**Go that way–head****HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This indicates a direction we want someone or something to move.

It is a synonym of *Go that way–finger*.

*Description of movement* This is the *Head point* with a quick, jerked movement, leading with the chin, which distinguishes it from *Come here–head* that leads with the back of the head.

The head and gaze are directed at the person or thing we want to move and then the head and gaze are moved to end directed to the place where we want them to go.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Go that way–finger* *Go that way–palm*

Related in meaning *Come here–all variations*

Related in form *Head point* *Challenge–chin thrust* *Yes–nodding* *Yes–acknowledgement*

*Howdy–head*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Come here–head**

This is just one of the forms of *Go that way–head*, but because it is related to a number of other gestures it is listed separately.

*Words spoken* None. “Come on” is often mouthed but not spoken.

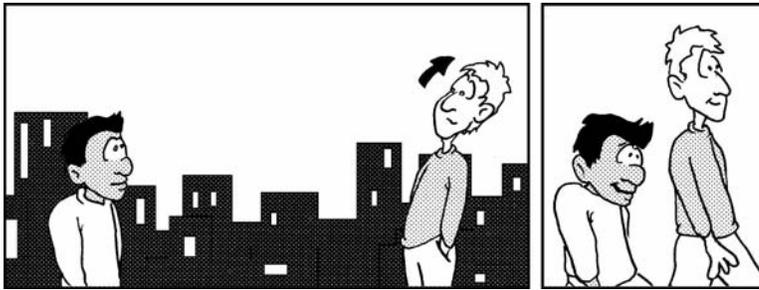
*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a synonym of *Come here–palm* but more discreet and more intimate.

*Description of movement* The head is tilted back, as if the back of the head is leading. The movement is rapid, almost jerky.

*Homonyms* *Head point* *Howdy–head*

Related in form *Challenge–chin thrust* *Yes–nodding* *Yes–acknowledgement*



*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Intense look*
- + *Quizzical look*
- + *Angry look*
- + *Smile*

*Related gestures*

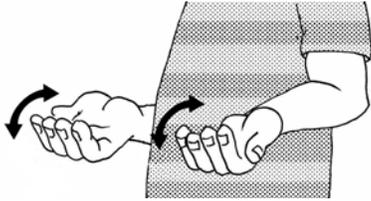
Synonyms *Come here–palm Closer, closer Come here–finger crook*

Antonyms *Get out of here You–Out! You–Out!–thumb*

Related in meaning *Most gestures in this section.*

Related in form *Howdy*

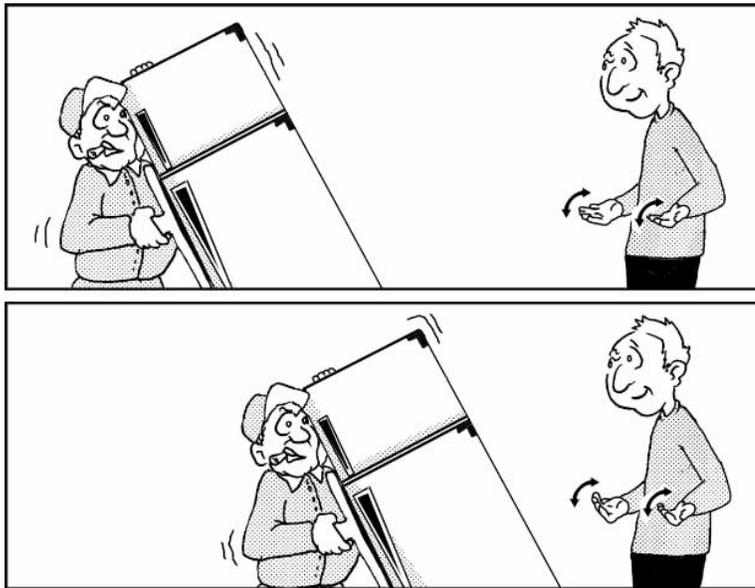
**“Closer, closer”**



*Words spoken* None. “Come on.” “Closer, closer.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to coax someone to come a bit closer.



*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes*
- + *Intense look*
- + *Quizzical look*
- + *Smile*

*Related gestures*

- Homonyms: *More, more*
- Related in meaning *Come here*
- Related in form *Come here–finger crook*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Come here–finger crook**



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Crooking your finger

*Meaning and context of use* This is a diminutive of *Closer, closer*. It is an enticement to come towards you rather than a command or even request. It is very informal and not used with a superior.

*Description of movement* The arm is extended a little bit and only the index finger is moved.



*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes*
- + *Quizzical look*
- + *Smile*

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Come on, come on–hand clap*

*Homonyms* *Hurry up–circular hand*

*Antonyms* All gestures for going away or leaving.

*Related in meaning* *Come here–hand* *Come here–head* *Come on, come on–finger snap*

## **“Come on, come on”–circular**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Come on, come on.” “Hurry up.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is an emphatic version of *Come here*. It means the person should come to you quickly.

*Description of movement* The movement is the same as *Come here* except that it is repeated in a circular motion.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

*Homonyms* *Come on, come on–finger snap* *Come on, come on–hand clap*

*Antonyms* All gestures for going away or leaving *Time out* *Stop*

*Related in meaning* *Come here–hand* *Come here–head*

*Come on, come on–finger snap*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **“Come on!”–hand clap**

### **HEAD SHOT** clapping hands

*Words spoken* “Come on, come on.” “Hurry up.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* The other person should finish quickly what he or she is doing and come to you. Hurry up. Impatience, but encouraging.

*Description of movement* The hands are clapped in front of the body lightly, and the facial expression is encouraging.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON--for movement**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Come on, come on–circular* *Come on, come on–finger snap*

Antonyms All gestures for going away or leaving *Time out* *Stop*

Related in meaning *Come here–hand* *Come here–head*

Related in form *Applause*

\*\*\*\*\*

**“Come on, come on”–circular, impatience**

*Words spoken* None. “Come on, come on.” “Hurry up.”

This is a metaphorical use of *Come on, come on–circular, movement* to mean that the other person should finish quickly what he or she is doing, as when someone is talking and you want them to get to the point. Hurry up. Impatience.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

\*\*\*\*\*

**“Come on, come on”–finger snap**

This is an emphatic form of *Come on, come on–circular, impatience*.

The snap is done at waist level if standing and is repeated at least three times in a circular motion, which differentiates it from *Blast!–finger snap* and *That’s it!–finger snap*.

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Come on, come on–circular* *Come on, come on–finger snap*

Antonyms All gestures for going away or leaving *Time out* *Stop*

Related in meaning *Come here–hand* *Come here–head*

Related in form *Blast!–finger snap* *That’s it!–finger snap* *Thinking–finger snap*  
*Snapping your fingers in front of someone’s eyes*

\*\*\*\*\*

**“Come on!”–hand clap, impatience**

**HEAD SHOT clapping hands**

*Words spoken* “Come on, come on.” “Hurry up.”

Sometimes “Chop, chop” is said, which is what Americans used to think you should say to Chinese immigrant laborers who do not speak English to get them to hurry up. It would be degrading to do that to a Chinese person, but it is considered an amusing variant when done for others.

This is a metaphorical use of *Come on!–hand clap* to mean that the other person should hurry up and finish what he or she is doing. Impatience, but encouraging.

## Whistling like for a dog

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* Whistling as if calling a dog.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to call someone, to coax them to you. This would be belittling except that it is almost always used as a joke or obvious sarcasm.

*NOTE* There is no comparable gesture for calling a cat.

*Description of movement* Act as if you're calling a dog, clapping your hands and waving as in *Come on—hand clap* and/or *Come here*. The facial expression is smiling and encouraging. A kissing or clicking sound (“tsk, tsk”) can follow it.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Gender* Principally by men. (??)

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Come here—finger crook*

*Related in meaning* *Come here—all variations*

*Related in form* *Kiss, kiss*

## “Stop!”

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. “Stop!”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a command that the person should stop completely either moving or doing whatever he or she is doing.

It is impolite to use this when close to someone where they could hear you say “Stop, please” unless it is an emergency.

*Description of movement* The arm is quickly extended in the direction of the other person, with the palm facing the other person, fingers up, and the fingers splayed, and then stopped abruptly. It can be repeated once. The face is upright and the eyebrows raised, mouth open. The head is moved slightly backward in unison with the hand being abruptly pushed forward.

### CONTEXT CARTOONS--one for talking

one for moving a car

one for an emergency

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

*Related gestures*

*Homonyms* *Stop--metaphorical*

*Synonyms*

*Antonyms* *Come on--circular* *Come one, come on--finger snap*

*Come on, come on--hand clap*

*Related in meaning* *Stop--metaphorical* *Whoa!*

*Related in form* *Whoa!* *Excuse me--index finger* *Five* *Ten*

**“Whoa!”**



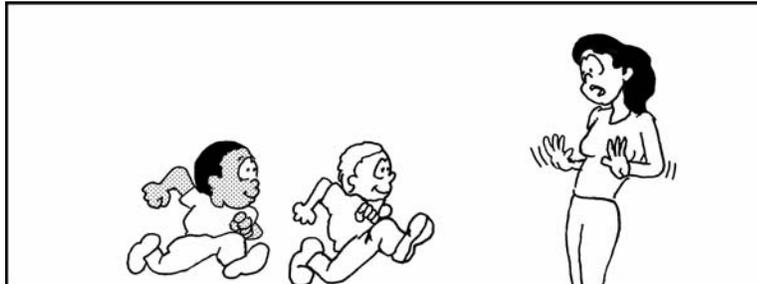
*Words spoken* None. “Whoa.” “Slow down”.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* The person to whom it is directed should slow down or back off.

*Description of movement* The movement repeated. The head is often moved slightly backward in unison with the hand being moved forward. The movement and tilt of the hand distinguishes it from *Stop*.

Slow down.



*Related gestures*

*Antonyms* *Come on*–circular *Come one, come on*–finger snap  
*Come on, come on*–hand clap

*Related in meaning* *Stop* *Time out* *Sorry*

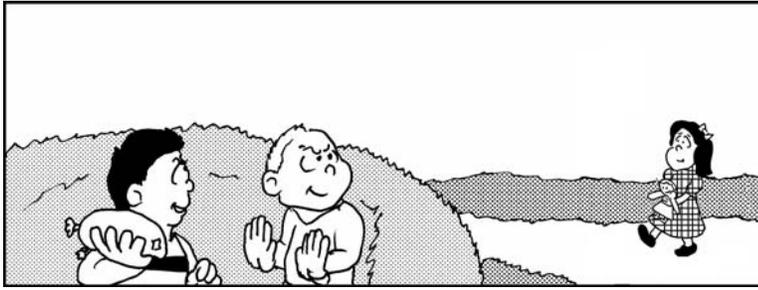
*Related in form* *Stop* *Sorry* *Five* *Ten*

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**“Whoa!”–calm down**

This is a metaphorical use of “Whoa!” to mean that the other person should calm down or stop what they’re doing. Or it can mean that you wish to protect yourself from someone or something, perhaps even metaphorically.





## **Double pat–Go**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* It's OK to go now.

This can be done to a person or animal by patting him or her twice on the back or on the buttocks.

This can be done for the driver of a car or a person pulling a cart or other vehicle who can't see when the load is ready as a signal that it's now OK to go.

*Description of movement* One hand is patted/slapped twice in rapid succession against the person, animal, vehicle or some other object in or on the vehicle to make a sound that can be heard by the driver.

**CONTEXT CARTOON--one person hitchhiking, driver of a pickup stops, person gets in the back of the pickup, driver looks around, then the passenger slaps the side of the pickup twice, and the car drives away**

**CONTEXT CARTOON-- “Go” for someone to move forward.**

## *Greetings, Farewells, Introductions*

Many gestures in this section are also used to express *thanks* or *approval*. Other gestures used principally for thanks or approval are in the next section. The variety of meanings corresponds roughly to those for the word “acknowledgement.”

		<i>Hello–Goodbye</i>	
		<b>Waving hello</b>	
Here I am	—	<b>Straight-arm hello</b>	
Stop		<b>Waving goodbye</b>	
		<b>Baby wave</b>	Responsive reciprocal
		<b>Howdy–finger</b>	
Come here–head		<b>Howdy–head</b>	
Yes–nodding	—	<b>Nod of the head– acknowledgement</b>	
Nod–acknowledgement		<b>Tip of the hat</b>	
Challenge–chin thrust			

### **Refusal to acknowledge a greeting**

		<b>Getting ready to leave</b>	—	Blast!–leg slap That's a good one Knee slap–approval
		<b>Welcome</b>		
		<b>Salute</b>		
Nazi salute	—	<b>Salute–mocking</b>		
Standing to attention		<b>Clenched-fist salute</b>	—	All right!–all variations One-handed chest beat "Hoo, hoo, hoo"–fist pump
Victory	—	<b>Peace sign</b>		
		<b>Blowing a kiss</b>		

### *Formal responses to an introduction*

<b>Bowing– introduction</b>	<b>Bowing– acknowledging applause</b>
<b>Curtseying– introduction</b>	<b>Curtseying– acknowledging applause</b>
<b>Swami</b>	
<b>Standing on being introduced</b>	

*continued on next page . . .*

*Shaking hands*  
Active reciprocal

**Handshake–  
acknowledgement**

**Introduction**

**Shake hands–  
reconciliation**

**To shake on it**

**Offering your hand  
in friendship**

**Refusing to shake hands**

||  
||  
*Refusals*

*Jocular greetings*  
Active reciprocal

**"Give me five!"** —

**The fist bump**

**Tap on the jaw greeting**

**Stomach pat greeting**

All right!–  
all variations  
High five  
Hand slap  
celebration

*Variations and alternatives  
to the handshake as greeting or farewell*

Active reciprocal

**Patting the back–greeting** — Pat on the back–  
approval

**Glad-handing**

**Handshake with  
one hand on shoulder or arm**

**Embrace–hug**

**Two-handed handshake**

**Embrace and kissing the air**

**Kiss on the cheek**

**Embrace and kiss  
each other's cheek**

**Kiss a woman's hand**

**Kiss on the mouth**

— Kiss, kiss

## ***Hello–Goodbye***

Unless noted otherwise, the gestures in this section are *reciprocal*, requiring some acknowledgement of the greeting, usually with one of the gestures in this section or with *Smile*.

### **Waving hello**



*Words spoken* None. “Hi.” “Hello.” “Howdy.”

*Name* Waving your hand. Waving hello.

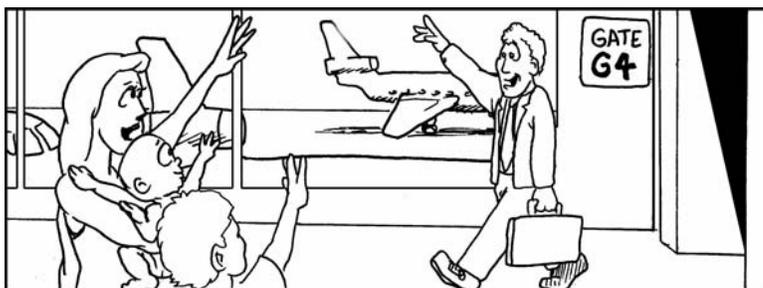
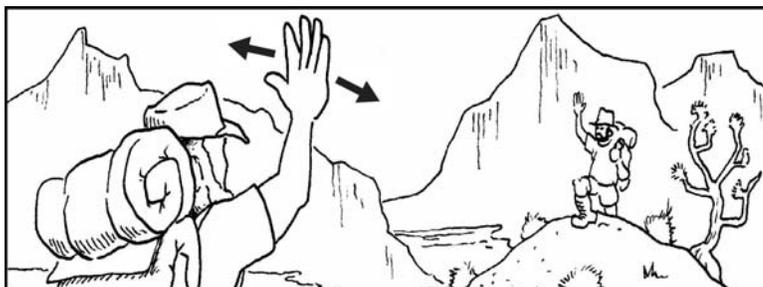
*Meaning* Greeting. Friendly acknowledgement of another.

This is responsive reciprocal.

*Description of movement* The hand is moved to the left and right several times. As a variation the hand need not be waved but only the arm is extended with the hand open.

Often the head is tilted back and then forward.

This is always done at a distance.



*Gestures combinable with it*

+ *Yes* emphatic

+ *Smile* emphatic

+ *Quizzical look* “Do you recognize me?” “Do I know you?”

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Here I am*

Synonyms *Howdy-finger Howdy-head Straight-arm hello*

Related in form *Waving goodbye*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Straight-arm hello**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used for a short greeting at a distance: I see you and you see me. A kind of acknowledgement of someone you know.

This is responsive reciprocal.

*Description of movement* The arm is extended and the hand is held with the palm outward and no motion, with the head tilted slightly to one side.

Sometimes the index finger is lifted rather than showing the whole palm.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

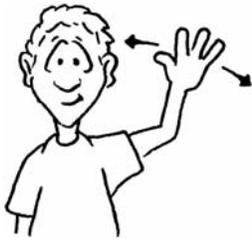
Homonyms *Stop*

Synonyms *Waving hello Nod of the head-acknowledgement*

*Howdy-finger*

Related in form *Stop Howdy-finger*

### Waving goodbye



*Words spoken* None. "Bye." "Goodbye."

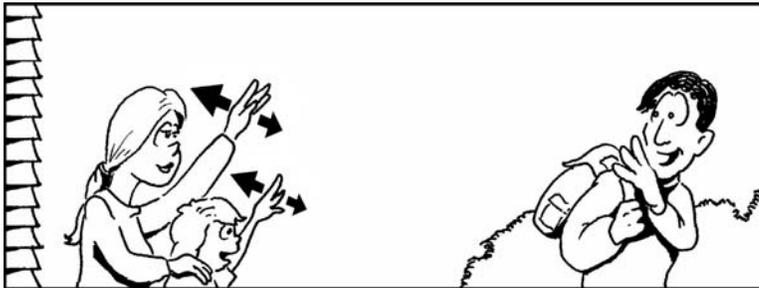
*Name* Waving goodbye.

*Meaning* Bidding farewell.

This is responsive reciprocal.

*Description of movement* This is a homonym of *Waving hello*: the movement is exactly the same.

It is always done at a distance.



*Gestures combinable with it*

+ *Yes* emphatic

+ *Smile* emphatic

+ *Quizzical look* "Do you recognize me?" "Do I know you?"

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Here I am*

Synonyms *Howdy-finger* *Howdy-head* *Straight-arm hello*

\*\*\*\*\*

### Baby wave





*Words spoken* None. "Bye bye."

*Name* Baby wave.

*Meaning* This is a diminutive of *Waving goodbye*. It is used by small children who cannot manage the full gesture. It can be done by a woman. When done by a man it is meant to mimic a child and is a jokey kind of intimacy.

*Description of movement* The arm is extended slightly with the forearm raised, moving only the fingers.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Gender* (??Done by woman to woman not as joke? If so, then it's one that's never done by men.)

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Waving goodbye*

Related in form *Waving goodbye*

## **Howdy–finger**

**CONTEXT CARTOON** two cars passing and people raising their index fingers

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a small way to acknowledge someone, usually from a distance, either as a hello, an introduction, or a thank you. It is used principally when driving a car.

This is responsive reciprocal.

*Description of movement* When driving a car, raise just the index finger of the hand that's on the steering wheel.

*Related gestures*

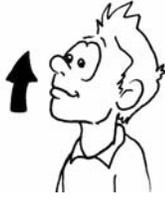
*Homonyms* *Stop*

*Synonyms* *Waving hello* *Nod of the head–acknowledgement*

*Related in form* *Howdy–finger*

*Related in meaning* *The peace sign*

## Howdy-head



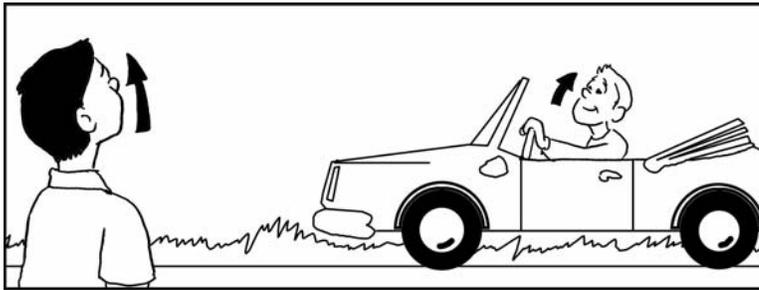
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a small way to acknowledge someone, usually from a distance, either as a hello, an introduction, or a thank you.

This is responsive reciprocal.

*Description of movement* The head is tilted back and returned to the normal position. The eyebrows are raised.



**CONTEXT CARTOON** for thank you

**CONTEXT CARTOON** for introduction at distance

*Homonyms* *Come here-head*

*Synonyms* *Waving hello* *Nod of the head-acknowledgement*

*Howdy-finger*

*Related in meaning* *Howdy-finger* *Waving hello, goodbye*

*Peace sign*

*Related in form* *Yes-nodding* *Come here-head* *Challenge-chin thrust*

*Nod-acknowledgement*

## **Nod of the head—acknowledgement, approval, thanks**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* A nod of the head. Nodding to someone.

*Meaning and context of use* This is an acknowledgement of the other person, either at a distance as a greeting or close by in an introduction. When we describe someone as a “nodding acquaintance” it means the person is someone you know but only enough to nod to on the street.

It can also mean appreciation or approval of what was done, acknowledgement of the other person’s accomplishment, or perhaps a thank you.

Or it can be a simple diminutive of *Yes–nodding*, in which case it can signal approval.

It is less emphatic than *Howdy–head*.

This is responsive reciprocal.

*Description of movement* The head is slowly lowered and then raised back to the original position just once. It differs from *Howdy–head* in that the movement is in the opposite direction. It is a very subdued gesture. It need not be done at a distance. It can be viewed as an extreme diminutive of *Bowing*.

**CONTEXT CARTOON -- Greeting at a distance**

**CONTEXT CARTOON introduction**

**CONTEXT CARTOON -- Thanks**

#### *Related gestures*

*Homonyms* *Nod of the head—approval*

*Related in meaning* *Got’cha* *Peace sign* *Howdy–head*

*Tip of the hat* *Salute*

*Related in form* *Yes–nodding* *Bowing*

#### *Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Yes–eyes only* *Yes–nodding*

*Antonyms* *Shaking the head no* *Thumbs down* *No–hand wave*

*Related in meaning* *Thumbs up* *More or less–hand* *More or less–head*

All of the gestures in the section *Greetings, Farewells, and Introductions* that are used for acknowledgment.

*Related in form* *Yes–eyes only* *Nod of the head—acknowledgement*

*Howdy* *Yes, I understand* *Yes, now I’ve got it* *OK?*

*Acknowledging applause*

**Tip of the hat—acknowledgement**

HEAD SHOT with hat

HEAD SHOT without hat -- hand curled, not straight as in salute

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* A tip of the hat.

*Meaning* This is an acknowledgement of the other person, either at a distance as a greeting, or close by in an introduction, or as a way to say “Thank you.”

This is responsive reciprocal.

*Description of movement* The hat is raised and tilted toward the other person or people.

It was previously done only by men. But few men now wear a fedora or formal hat, yet the gesture remains, with a motion that looks very much like taking off a hat, though there is no hat. In that case the gesture is similar to *Salute* except that the hand is slightly curled.

It is always done at a distance.

CONTEXT CARTOON(S) as for previous except hat instead of nod

*Gender* With an actual hat it is done only by a man and is nearly archaic.

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Tip of the hat—admiration*

Related in meaning *Got’cha Peace sign Howdy—head*

*Nod of the head—acknowledgement Salute*

Related in form *Salute*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Tip of the hat—admiration**

HEAD SHOT with hat

HEAD SHOT without hat -- hand curled, not straight as in salute, more sudden and head tilted

This differs from *Tip of the hat—acknowledgement* by the movement being quicker and the head bowed toward the other person. It is used to indicate admiration for what the other person has done. “A tip of the hat” or “I tip my hat off to you” means an acknowledgement of something well done.

### **Refusal to acknowledge a greeting**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Giving someone the cold shoulder. Ignoring someone.

*Meaning and context of use* If someone does not respond to one of the greetings in this section, most particularly to *Nod of the head–acknowledgement* when it is clear that he or she has seen the gesture, then he or she is refusing your offer of a friendly greeting. It is a snub: the other person does not want to know you.

If followed by *Turning your back on someone* it is a very major insult.

*Description of movement* Someone nods or waves to you, and it is clear to that person and to you that you have seen the gesture, and you do nothing or simply continue carrying on doing what you were doing before, very often just walking.

Not making eye contact when refusing a greeting is a snub. Making eye contact while refusing a contact is a major insult.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

## Salute

HEAD SHOT with hat in military, 2 people

HEAD SHOT without hat, not in military

HEADSHOT acknowledgement, with finger flip

*Words spoken* None

*Name* A salute. A salute to you.

*Meaning* In the military this is a standard way to acknowledge a superior-inferior relation.

In ordinary life it is meant as an acknowledgement, an emphatic of *Nod of the head–acknowledgement* or a variation of *Tip of the hat*. Like those, it can also mean in context “You did well,” acknowledgement of something done well, or a thank you.

*Description of movement* If meant as sarcasm, it is done as in the military: the head is tilted slightly downward and the fingers and hand are held together in a straight line. If wearing a hat, the brim of the hat is touched, otherwise the hand goes close to where there would be a brim of a hat.

If meant as an acknowledgement, then the fingers are held in slightly curved as they touch the head and then the index and middle fingers are flicked out straight.

## CONTEXT CARTOON(S)

*Gender* Except in the military, this used to be done only by men to men, but now women use it to men, too.

When done by a man to a woman it is a sarcastic acknowledgement of the superiority of the woman.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *The intense look*

+ *Irony*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Got’cha* *Peace sign* *Howdy–head*

*Nod of the head–acknowledgement* *Tip of the hat* *Nazi salute*

*Standing to attention*

Related in form *Tip of the hat*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Salute–mocking

*Salute* can often done mockingly to an equal when the other person is sounding very officious or commanding, and then “Aye, aye, Sir” or “Yes Sir, Cap’n” is said, in which case it is impolite.

## **Clenched fist salute**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is somewhat like a greeting but is used more often as a salute to a person or group, indicating power and solidarity with them. It does not mean victory.

*Description of movement* A single arm is raised with the fist clenched, palm-side facing toward the others.

This differs from *All right!–fist up* in that the hand is not thrust out rapidly, the motion is not repeated, and the arm is at about a 45 degree angle from the ground rather than straight up.

Though it may be acknowledged by the other person or people, it is not reciprocal.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Emphatic* An emphatic is to reach across your chest with your hand and hit your chest with your fist just once and then stick your arm straight out.

It is distinguished from *Gorilla chest beat* which uses two hands and the beating is done repeatedly with sound.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Intense look*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Straight arm hello Salute Peace sign*

*One-handed chest beat*

Related in form *Hello Here I am Straight arm hello Nazi salute*

*Straight arm hello All right!– all variations*

## Peace sign

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. “Peace.”

*Name* The peace sign.

*Meaning* A friendly hello or acknowledgement of the other: Peace.  
Sometimes it is used as a farewell.

During WWII this movement was made popular by Winston Churchill as meaning “Victory” and was called “V for victory”—compare *Victory*. In the 1960s it was used without waving as a political gesture meaning “Peace,” in contrast to support for a/the war, and hence it’s name. Since the 1990s it has become a more general way of indicating hello in a friendly manner, though it has retained its meaning as “Peace.”

*Description of movement* The palm is outward. The hand can be rotated slightly sideways. Usually done at a distance.

Normally this is not done to a superior



### CONTEXT CARTOON greeting

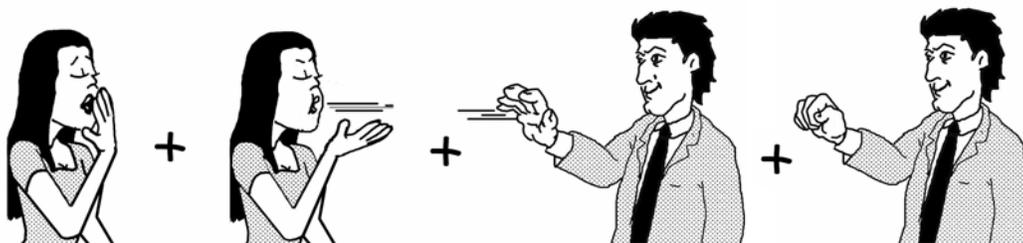
*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Howdy-head Tip of the hat*

*Nod of the head—acknowledgement*

Related in form *Victory*

## Blowing a kiss



*Words spoken* A kissing sound.

*Name* Blowing a kiss.

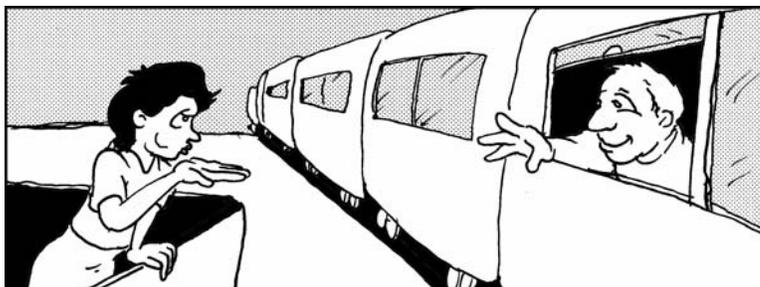
*Meaning* An affectionate goodbye between lovers or between a parent and a child.

This can be used by a woman performer to acknowledge applause after a performance, directing the blowing to the audience.

*Description of movement* The hand is kissed first.

This is normally done at a distance.

This need not be reciprocal, but the other person can pretend to catch the kiss.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Baby wave*

## Getting ready to leave



revise, both palms on knees

*Words spoken* Exhalation of breath. “Well, . . .”

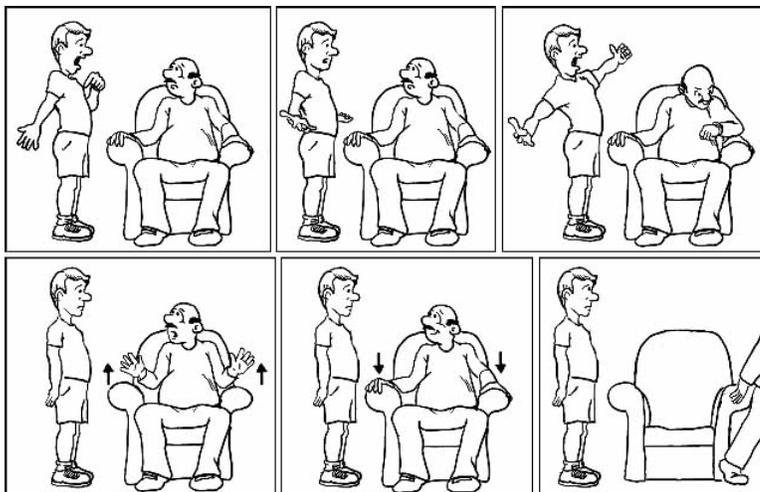
*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This gesture is used in small, informal gatherings to signal that you think it’s time to end the gathering. It’s not usually followed by standing up, but is meant only to collaborate with the others in bringing to a close the evening or time together. It is not reciprocal, though it will usually draw some response.

*Description of movement* Seated in conversation, slap your knee or knees with your palm or palms as if getting ready to get up to go, but you don’t actually get up.

A variation is to slap the arm of a chair instead of a knee.

### CONTEXT CARTOON -- slap knee



*Gender* Men only.

*Related gestures*

Related in form *That’s a good one* *Blast–leg slap*

*Knee slap approval*

**“Welcome”**

**HEAD SHOT**--someone at door and people are coming up to the door from a short distance and holds arms out as if to embrace but they're too far away to actually embrace

*Words spoken* None. “Welcome.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Welcome.

The reciprocation to this is often just *Smile*.

*Description of movement* When you see someone arriving at your home and they're too far away to actually embrace, you hold your arms out widely as if waiting to embrace.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

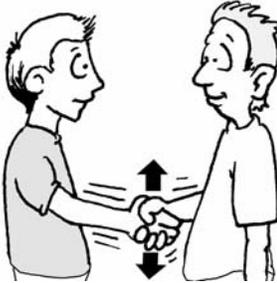
Related in meaning *Embrace*

Related in form *Embrace*

## ***Shaking Hands***

All the gestures in this section are *reciprocal*.

### **Handshake—acknowledgement**



*Words spoken* For a greeting, none.

For an introduction or meeting someone for the first time, when no one has told you each other's names, you say your own name. If your names are offered to each other by someone else, it's customary to say "Pleased to meet you."

When someone has done something very good we say "Let me shake your hand" as a prelude to a congratulation.

*Name* To shake hands.

*Meaning* A greeting or parting.

Acknowledgement of an introduction.

Thank you. Congratulations.

An emphatic is when the handshake is done with both hands and the hand of the other person is "pumped" up and down. That is not intimate like *Handshake—two hands*.

*Description of movement* The right hand is used, unless it is disabled or occupied, in which case the left hand can be extended to be taken lightly.

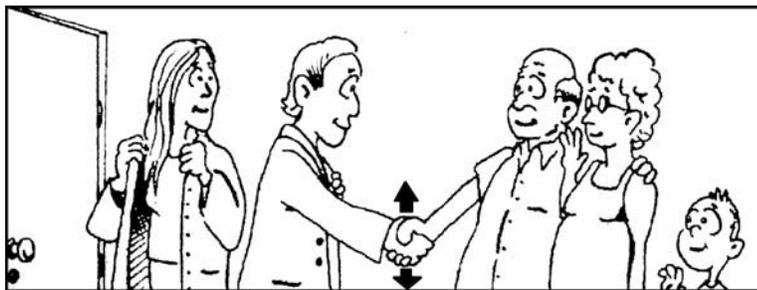
The two people are supposed to be look each other in the face.

A strong grasp is expected from men; a weak grasp is considered effeminate.

A firm but not strong grasp is expected from women.

Among some groups, particularly Hispanics, a gentle holding rather than a firm grasp is normal.

A greeting—hello or goodbye.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ Yes

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Shake hands–reconciliation* *Shake on it*

Synonyms *Nod of the head–acknowledgement*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Introduction



In introducing one person to another or to several others, the person in the middle turns as he or she points to one person then the other with an open palm and says, “This is (name of person).” The people being introduced usually say “Pleased to meet you.” Though words always accompany this, we still view it as a conventional gesture.

If the people are close to each other, then either after the introduction is made or while it’s being made the ones being introduced do *Handshake–acknowledgement*. If the people being introduced are farther apart, when pointed to, each does *Nod of the head–acknowledgement*.

If you do not smile when being introduced it is taken as reluctance to know the other person.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Shake hands–reconciliation

*Words spoken* None. “Let’s be friends.” “Sorry.” “OK.”

*Name* To shake hands and make up.

*Meaning and context of use* When there has been a disagreement between two people, this is used to signal a reconciliation.

*Description of movement* Only the right hand is used. Often the movement is initiated or encouraged by a third person trying to get the two people to “make up” = reconcile, and ““Shake hands and make up” is said.

## CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Handshake–acknowledgement* *Shake on it*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Offering your hand in friendship**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Offering your hand in friendship. To extend your hand in friendship.

*Meaning and context of use* To extend your hand, offering it to be shaken, is an invitation to be closer, friendly. When there has been a disagreement between the two people, it is an invitation to a reconciliation, meant to be followed by *Shake hands–reconciliation*.

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Give me your hand*

Related in form *Offering something–hand* *Offering your hand to walk hand-in-hand*

*Offering your hand to walk arm-in-arm* *Offering your hand in assistance*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Refusing to shake hands**

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Refusing to shake hands.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a major insult, a rebuff of the other person's attempt to establish friendly relations or a reconciliation.

*Description of movement* Someone offers you his or her hand to shake and you purposely do not take it.

## **Shake on it**

*Words spoken* None. "It's a deal." "Agreed."

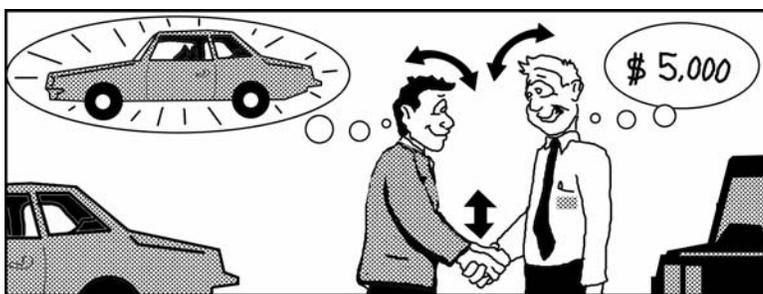
*Name* To shake hands on it. To shake on it.

*Meaning* Agreeing on a negotiation, making a deal.

This is an informal contract. If it comes at the end of a negotiation, it would be upheld in a court of law as a contract.

We say "He gave me his hand on it," which is equivalent to saying "He gave me his word." This is an oath, and to go back on a negotiation you shook hands on is considered an indication of a bad character.

*Description of movement* Very firm grasp of hands and vigorous movement plus *Nod of the head—approval* is done. The right hand is always used and the people look into each other's eyes.



*Related gestures*

*Homonyms* *Shake hands—acknowledgement* *Shake hands—reconciliation*

*Related in meaning* *I swear* *Swearing on a bible*

*Related in form* All handshake gestures.

## ***Variations and alternatives to the handshake as greeting or farewell***

All these are normally done with a smile except for the regular handshake (A), for which a smile is optional. All can be used for greeting, farewell, congratulations, or thank you.

All the gestures in this section are reciprocal.

The next subsection *Jocular Greetings* also has variations on the handshake.

### **A. Regular handshake.**

### **B. Patting the back–greeting**

*Words spoken* “Hello.” “Howdy.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is more intimate than (A) and is used only with a friend.

When used as a farewell, you face the other person and squeeze his or her shoulder, which is usually not done on greeting. It can be done as you’re walking away.

Compare *Pat on the back* for approval rather than greeting.

*Description of movement* The back of the person is patted a few times gently, usually when approaching from behind or the side.

**CONTEXT CARTOON - hello --someone comes from behind and puts his or her hand on the other person’s shoulder**

**CONTEXT CARTOON - goodbye**

*Gender* This is done principally by men. (??)

### **C. Glad-handing**

This is the same as (B) except that you slap the other person’s back rather vigorously several times rather than just patting it, possibly following up with taking the person’s hand for a handshake. It indicates pleasure and some intimacy, but less than (B) or (D). When someone does this indiscriminately to people with whom he is not already friends it’s said he’s “glad-handing them,” and we characterize people who do that regularly as a “Hail fellow, well met” kind of person.

This can be used for approval but not for thank you.

This is done principally by men. (??)

### **D. Handshake with one hand on shoulder or arm**



### 2nd HEAD SHOT like this one except hand on shoulder

This is much more familiar and intimate than (A); the closer the bodies, the greater the intimacy. Compare *There, there* and *Good job*.

When both people do this it is more intimate still.

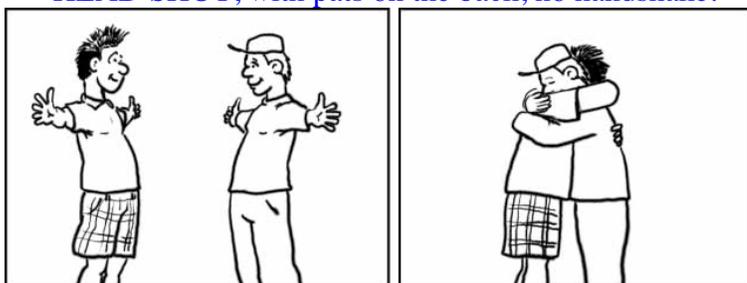
This can be used for thank you, but not approval.

It is principally done by men. (??) Women sometimes do it to a man.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

#### E. Embrace–Hug

HEAD SHOT, with pats on the back, no handshake.



The closer the embrace the more intimate the gesture. If very close, it is more intimate than (C), otherwise it is less intimate.

This can be used for approval or thank you.

Only when each face is forward over the shoulder of the other is it meant as a serious expression of emotion.

#### F. Two-handed handshake

HEAD SHOT

This is a handshake with one or both persons using the second hand on top of the other person's hand and gazing into each other's eyes, done slowly. It is extremely intimate, more intimate than any of the others above.

This can be used for thank you, but not approval.



**G. Embrace and kissing the air**

**HEAD SHOT**

If done by two women, they embrace and both kiss the air. If done by a woman to a man, only the woman kisses the air. It is not done by a man, either to a woman or to a man. (??) This is pseudo-intimacy, used when you think you should be intimate but aren't or don't want to be.

This is not used for approval or thank you.

**H. Kiss on the cheek**



*Words spoken* None. "You're a sweetheart" by a woman. "You're great" by a man.

*Name* A kiss on the cheek. A peck on the cheek

*Meaning and context of use* This can be used for a thank you, and sometimes the woman says "You're a sweetheart" or "Thanks," or a man says "Thanks." It can also be used for approval. With an embrace it is more intimate; the closer the embrace, the more intimate. It is not done by a man to a man.

*Description of movement* A light kiss on the **right (?)** cheek **BUT COMPARE CARTOON.**

**I. Embrace and kiss each other's cheek**

**HEAD SHOT**

This is more intimate than (H).

It is not used for approval or thanks.

Any of the more intimate variations on a handshake when used by a man with a woman with whom he is not already intimate have sexual overtones.

**J. Kiss a woman's hand**

**HEAD SHOT**

A man takes a woman's right hand in his right hand with the back of her hand upwards, raises it to his lips, and kisses the back of her hand. This is used in place of a handshake on an introduction, meeting, or farewell. It is very formal and rather intimate, and is nearly archaic.

A man might kiss another man's hand but only in certain rituals to indicate his subordinate status.

**K. Kiss on the mouth**

This is very intimate. It always has a sexual significance.

This can be used for thank you, but not for approval.

## ***Jocular Greetings***

### **“Give me five!”**



*Words spoken* None. “Give me five”

*Name* Give me five.

*Meaning* This is a friendly greeting in place of shaking hands. It is done only with an equal, usually a friend.

Originally it was done only by men.

*Description of movement* One person puts out his hand palm up and the other person slaps it, then they repeat it with roles reversed. It is always done with the right hand.

*Emphatics* Doing the hand slap at shoulder level as in *High 5* is a more enthusiastic greeting.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *High five* *Tap on the jaw greeting* *Stomach pat greeting*

Related in form *High five*

## **The fist bump**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a jocular way to greet someone you know well.

*Description of movement* The right hand of each person is made into a fist and bumped lightly against the fist of the other person. The facial expression is a smile bordering on *Intense look*. It can be followed by both people then interlocking thumbs and grasping each other's hand.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Used almost entirely by men.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Give me five Tap on the jaw greeting Stomach pat greeting*

### **Tap on the jaw greeting**



*Words spoken* “Hey, kid.”

*Name* A tap on the chin.

*Meaning* A friendly greeting in place of shaking hands.

*Description of movement* A slight tap on the jaw with a fist. A variation is to give someone a light sock on the arm.

Men only, and then only to an equal.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *High five Give me five Fist bump Stomach pat greeting*

### Stomach pat greeting



Revise, person on left should be smiling.

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None

*Meaning* A friendly greeting, done when the other person is rotund. It is an emphatic, jocular version of *Patting the back-greeting*.

*Description of movement* One hand is on the other person's shoulder and his stomach is patted a few times.

Men only, and then only to a friend.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *High five Give me five*

*Tap on the jaw greeting*

## ***Formal responses to an introduction***

### **Bowing–introduction**

#### **HEAD SHOT** man bows to a woman

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Making a bow. Bowing

*Meaning and context of use* Men only.

As a greeting this gesture is almost archaic. It is used by a man as a very formal response to an introduction in place of a handshake. It is never done to an inferior. The deeper the bow, that is the more the torso is inclined towards the floor, the greater the respect that is meant to be conveyed.

It is also used by a man when requesting a dance from a woman, though that, too, is nearly archaic.

It is sometimes used in a jokey manner in an informal occasion.

*Description of movement* In the past the body was inclined much farther towards the floor. Nowadays the movement is so slight it could be mistaken for *Nod of the head– acknowledgement*.

#### **CONTEXT CARTOON--bow acknowledging applause**

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Acknowledging applause Nod of the head–acknowledgement*

Related in meaning *Swami*

Related in form *Nod of the head– acknowledgement*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Bowing–acknowledging applause**

Bowing by a man (or possibly a woman) is commonly used to acknowledge applause, that is, as an appreciation of the applause.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Swami**

#### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a very polite way to acknowledge an introduction or to say thank you. It's how Americans imitate what they think swamis in India do.

*Description of movement* The palms are put together in front of the chest at the natural height of the bended arms with elbows tucked close to the body. Then the entire torso including the head is tilted forward.

#### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *The peace sign Voila!*

Related in form *Oh Lord, let it be Bowing*

### **Curtseying–introduction**

HEAD SHOT woman curtseys to man

HEAD SHOT woman curtseys to a woman

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Making a curtsey. Curtseying

*Meaning and context of use* Women only.

As a greeting this gesture is almost archaic. It is used by a woman as a very formal response to an introduction in place of a handshake. It is never done to an inferior. The deeper the curtsey, that is the closer to the floor the woman descends, the greater the respect intended.

It is also used by a woman when a man has requested a dance from her by bowing, though that is nearly archaic.

It is sometimes used in a jokey manner in an informal occasion.

*Description of movement* XXXXX

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Curtseying–acknowledging applause**

Curtseying by a woman is sometimes used to acknowledge applause, that is, as an appreciation of the applause.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Blowing a kiss*

**Standing on being introduced**

**HEAD SHOT/CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* To stand up out of respect.

*Meaning* This is a mark of respect. It is also meant to signal that the other person is being included in the group.

In middle- and upper-class society this is used as a standard courtesy when someone approaches a group, particularly at a dining table. To not stand is considered either an insult or an attempt not to include the new person in the group. In such society it is rude not to stand when an introduction is made. The person who is approaching the group will often say "Please, don't stand" to encourage informality. Sometimes a man will make only a slight movement as if to rise from his chair.

It is now considered rather formal and is not done in small groups of friends or in informal situations. It is not done with someone clearly inferior like a child.

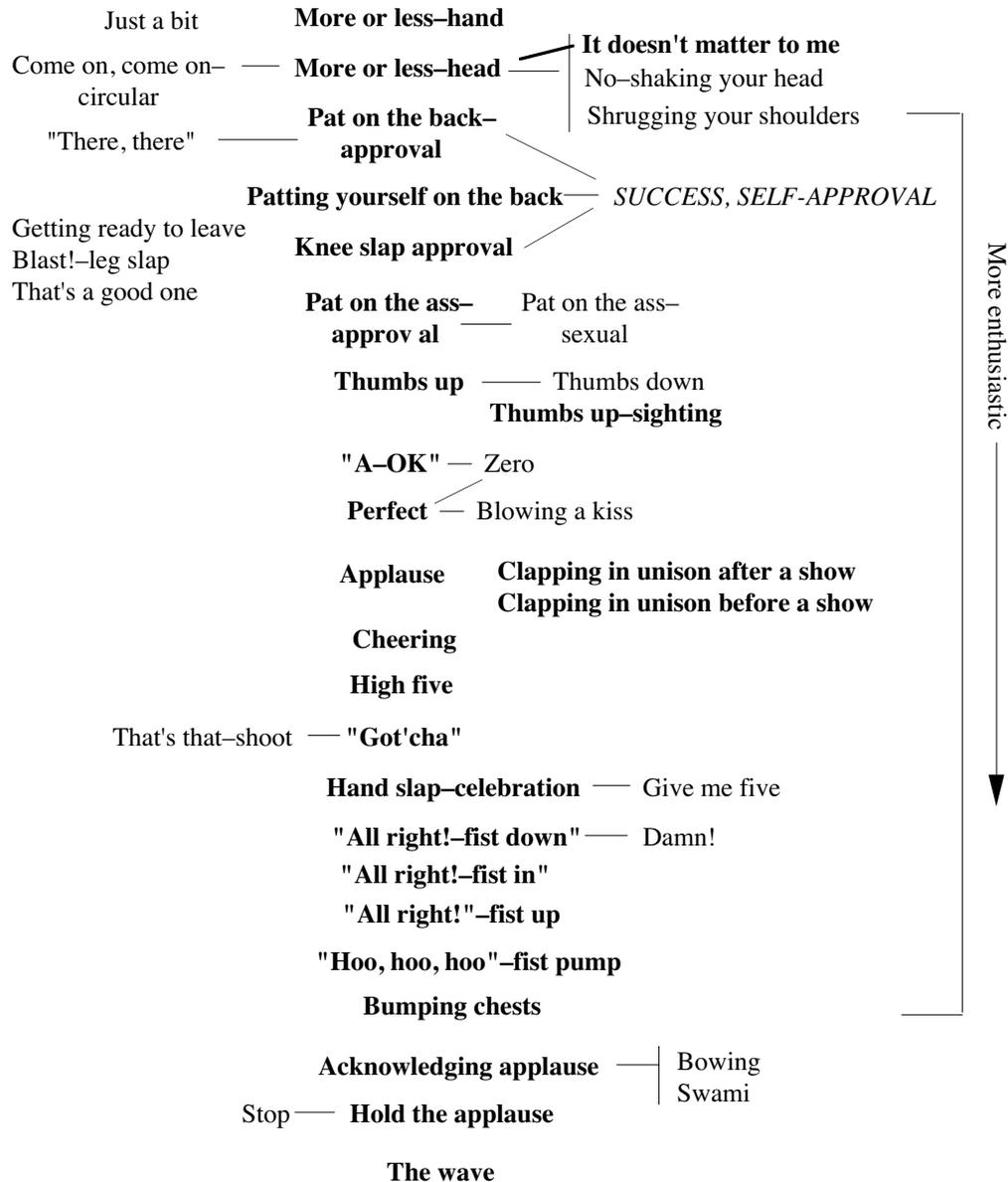
Previously this was done only by men.

*Description of movement* The one person stands to acknowledge the other while the head is nodded in acknowledgement: *Nod of the head—acknowledgement*.

*Gender* Previously men only, though now sometimes women do it (??).

# Approval

Many gestures in *Greetings, Farewells, Introductions* are also used for approval or thanks, and those uses are noted there. Closely related in meaning to the gestures in this section are those in the next section *Success, Self-Approval*.



## **“More or less”–hand**

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. “More or less.” “Maybe” (with the long vowel “a” extended).

*Name* None.

*Meaning* More or less agreement. Almost but not exactly. That’s not quite it.

This is a synonym of *More or less–head*, neither more nor less emphatic. However, combined with *More or less–head* it is more emphatic.

*Description of movement* One hand only is extended a bit from body at the waist, the palm faces out or more commonly down and is rotated from side to side.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

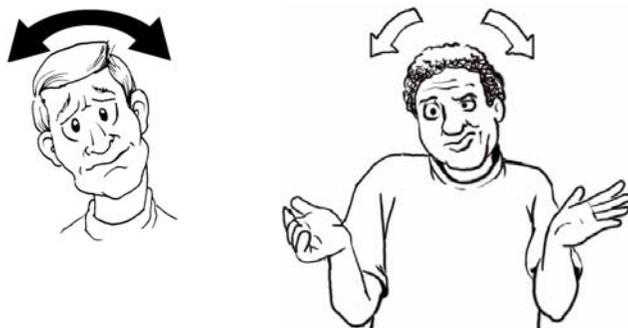
+ *Quizzical look*

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *More or less–head*

Related in meaning *Just a bit*

Related in form *Come on, come on–circular*

**“More or less”–head**

revise, arms down (can cut this one off at chest)  
shoulders not lifted

*Words spoken* None. “More or less.” “Maybe.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* More or less agreement. Almost but not exactly. That’s not quite it.

A synonym of *More or less–hand*, neither more nor less emphatic. However, combined with *More or less–hand* it is more emphatic.

*Description of movement* The head is moved left and right towards the shoulders. The hands may be lifted a bit and moved in unison with the head. The shoulders are not lifted. The lips are often pursed.

It differs from *No–shaking your head* by not rotating the head but only tilting it from side to side. It differs from *Shrugging your shoulders* in that there the head is not tilted left and right.

**CONTEXT CARTOON--more or less***Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *More or less–hand*

*Related in meaning* *Just a bit*

*Related in form* *No–shaking your head* *Shrugging your shoulders*

\*\*\*\*\*

**It doesn’t matter to me**

The movement of *More or less–hand* can also be used in context to mean that you don’t care which option is chosen: It doesn’t matter to me. However, the shoulders are raised for this.



## Pat on the back



*Words spoken* “Good job.” “Good work.” “Way to go.”

*Name* To give someone a pat on the back.

*Meaning* Approval of what the other person did. Congratulations. You did OK and deserve a compliment.

*Description of movement* The back is patted several times rather vigorously.

This differs from *There, there* and *Patting the back-greeting* in that the movement is more vigorous, is often done only once, and can be followed by a hug.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Pointing*

+ *Irony*

*Related gestures*

*Homonyms* *Patting the back-greeting* *There, there*

*Synonyms* ???????

*Related in meaning* *Patting yourself on the back*

*Related in form* *Patting yourself on the back*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Patting yourself on the back

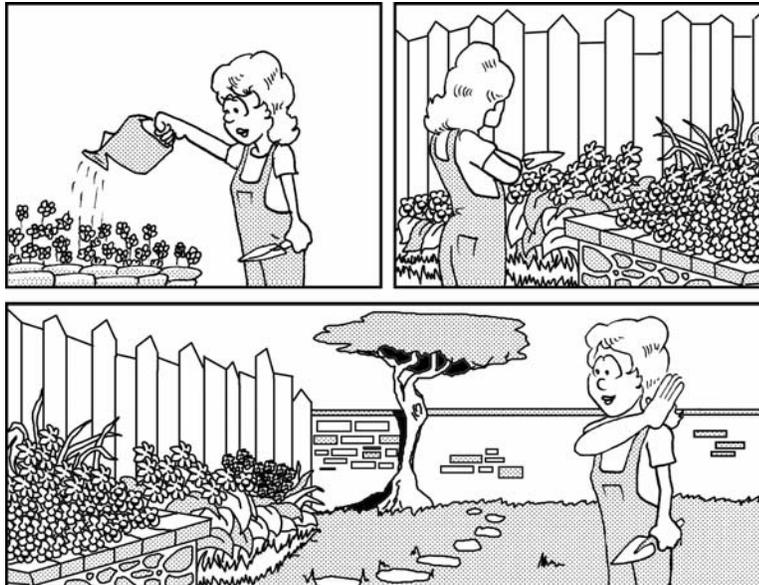


*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Patting yourself on the back.

*Meaning and context of use* This is *Pat on the back* used to congratulate yourself. We say she gave herself a pat on the back. Or we say “You should give yourself a pat on the back,” meaning that the person should be proud of what he or she did.

When done when someone else is around it is ironic, meaning you think you’re worthy of a pat on the back even though no one has given you one.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ Yes

+ Irony

*Related gestures*

*Homonyms* *There, there* *Patting the back–greeting*

*Synonyms* ???????

*Related in meaning* *Patting yourself on the back* *That’s one for me*

*I used my head* *Polishing nails* *Holding our your lapels*

*Related in form* *There, there* *Patting the back–greeting*

## **Pat on the ass—approval**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a synonym of *Pat on the back*.

*Description of movement* When two men are facing the same direction, one pats the other on the buttock closest to him, but not lightly. This is used principally in sports, particularly football, but it can be used by any two men who are friendly in order to show that you not only approve but that you're "on the same side," "part of the same team," that is, working together toward some goal.

Man to man only.

A man patting a woman on the ass, or a woman patting a man on the ass, or a man reaching across to pat the buttock farthest from his is *Pat on the ass—sexual*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Pat on the ass—sexual*

Synonyms *Pat on the back*

Related in form *Pat on the back There, there Pat on the ass—sexual*

## Knee slap approval HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* “Damn!” “That’s a good one.”

*Name* None.

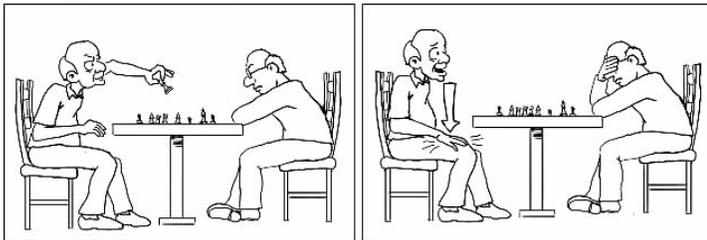
*Meaning* This is usually meant as approval of a joke. But it can be used more generally for approval, as in “Look at that. Isn’t it good?” or “Doggone, that’s good,” or indicating that someone got away with something.

This can also be used as a way to signal approval of yourself

*Description of movement* Slap your own knee or the other person’s knee with a big smile. The person whose knee is slapped has to be sitting down.

### CONTEXT CARTOON -- appreciate a joke

Self-approval—“All right!”



*Gender* Normally only men. (??)

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ Yes

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *All right!*—all variations

Related in form *Blast!*—*leg slap* *Knee slap approval* *Hand on knee—sexual*

*Hand on knee—reassuring* *Getting ready to leave*

## Thumbs up



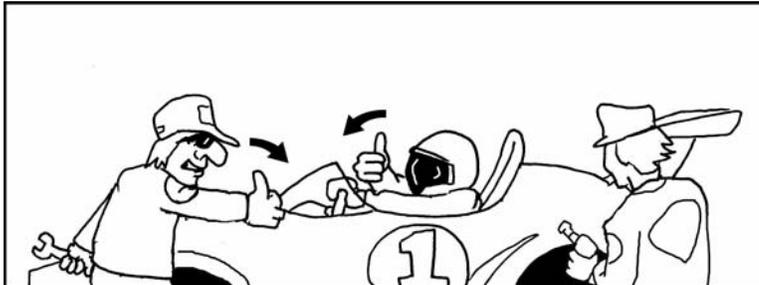
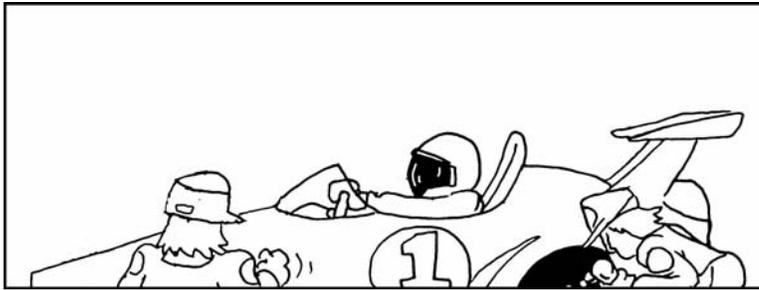
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Thumbs up. To give someone the thumbs up.

*Meaning* • You did well. Good job.

- Yes. I agree.
- Got it (I understand). That's right.
- Everything's OK and set to go now.

*Description of movement* Though the plural is used in the name, this is done with only one hand unless great emphasis is meant. The gaze is directed to the person to whom you mean to convey the evaluation.



[OTHER CONTEXT CARTOONS for the other meanings](#)

*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes*
- + *Intense look*
- + *Quizzical look*
- + *Irony*
- + *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Antonym *Thumbs down*

Related in meaning *Got'cha Nod of the head—acknowledgement*

*Tip of the hat Salute Pat on the back A-OK*

Related in form *Thumbs down*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Thumb up—sighting**

**HEAD SHOT**

A painter, at least in the popular imagination, will use a single thumb as a reference to sight a scene he or she wishes to paint. That, however, is not symbolic: it has no meaning beyond the act itself. However, if someone else does it, it's meant to signify that he or she is trying to get a good look, trying to sight well someone or something.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

### “Got’cha”



revise, add arrow for head tilted down and back

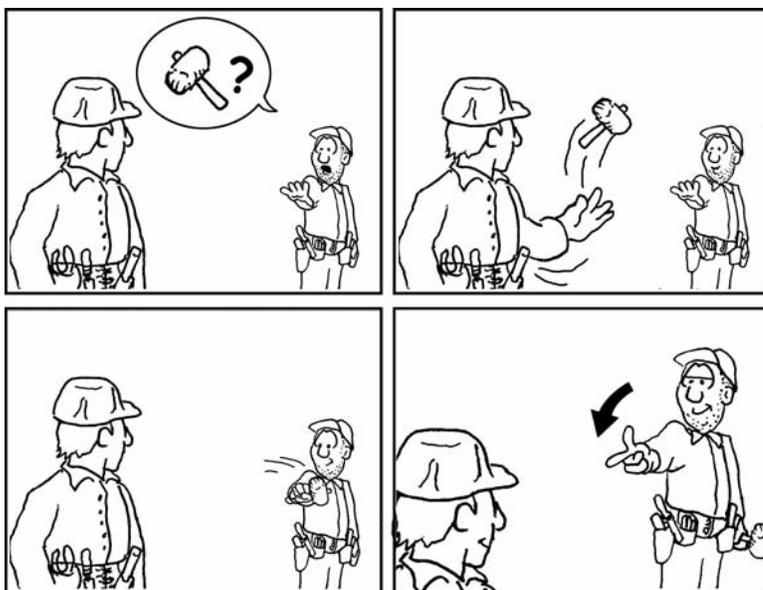
*Words spoken* Clicking noise with cheek. “Got’cha” (= “I’ve got you”).

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Acknowledging that someone has helped you. This is an emphatic variation of *Nod of the head—acknowledgement*. It is not done to a superior.

Previously this was done by men only. (??)

*Description of movement* The head is tilted down in the direction of the person to whom the gesture is directed in tandem with the hand going down and back. Done only once. Need not be done at a distance. The clicking noise is meant to imitate a gunshot.



revise: head down in last panel

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ Yes

+ Intense look

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Nod of the head—acknowledgement* *Tip of the hat*

*Salute* *Pat on the back* *A-OK* *Thumbs up* *That’s that—shoot*

Related in form *That’s that—shoot*

**“All right!”–fist down**



revise, body tilted slightly forwards

*Words spoken* Insert music for “All right!”

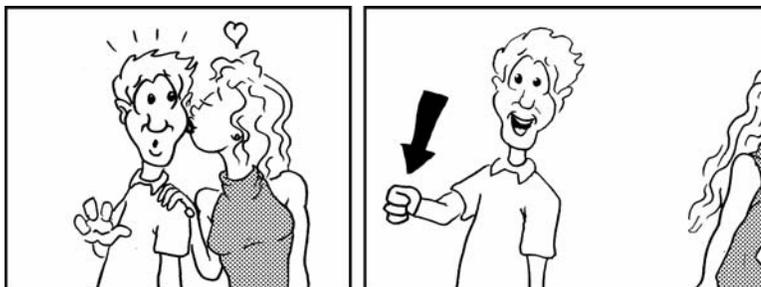
“Yes!” emphatically. “Yes” is mouthed and not said.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Yes, I (we, they) accomplished it. I, or we, or they did something good, or some good news has arrived. Celebration.

Previously this was done mostly by men. (??)

*Description of movement* The hand is in a fist. Body and head tilted slightly down and to the side as the hand is moved, the facial expression is between determined and a smile. Often done when alone.



**CONTEXT CARTOON -- with someone, good news (via bubble)**

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* All right!–fist inwards All right!–fist down Knee slap approval

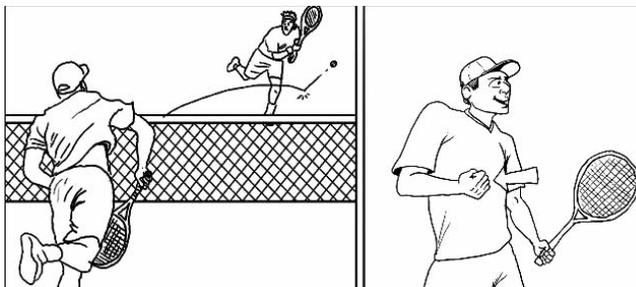
*Related in meaning* Most of the approval gestures in this section.

*Related in form* All right!–fist inwards All right!–fist down

“Hoo, hoo, hoo”–fist pump

\*\*\*\*\*

**“All right!”–fist in**



This is a variation on “*All right!–fist down*.”

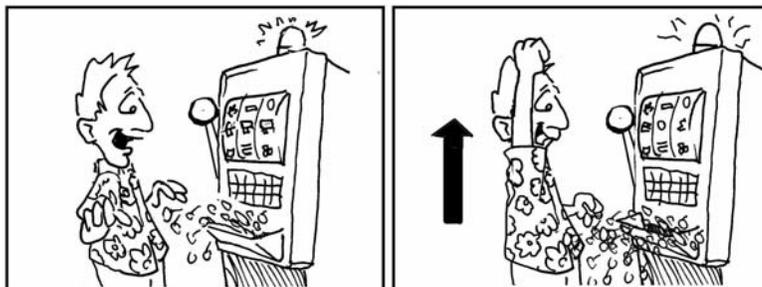
\*\*\*\*\*

### “All right!”–fist up



This is an emphatic form of the already emphatic *All right!–fist down*.

*Description of movement* One hand is in a fist and the arm is rapidly thrust three-quarters of the way up, brought back towards the body slightly, and then thrust up all the way.



\*\*\*\*\*

### “Hoo, hoo, hoo!”–fist pump

#### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* “Hoo, hoo, hoo!”

*Name* The fist pump.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a very emphatic form of *All right–fist up*.

*Description of movement* *All right–fist up* is repeated at least three times. It is usually done by several people, though not done necessarily in unison, all of whom are standing. With each thrust of the fist upward “Hoo” is said.

#### CONTEXT CARTOON

## Chest bump

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. “Hoo, hoo, hoo” can be said before or after.

*Name* None. Chest bump.

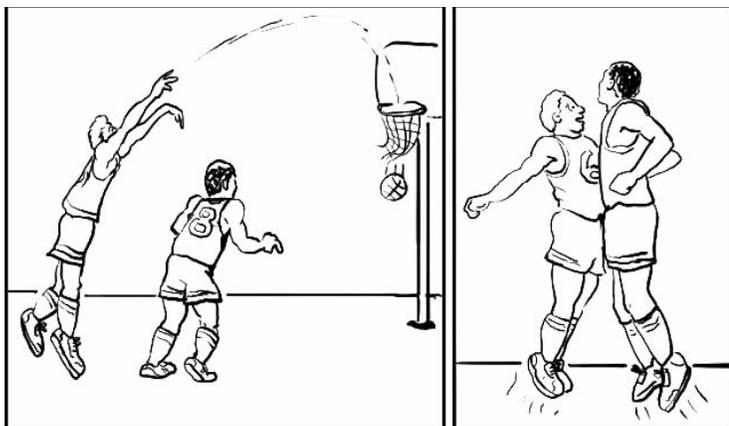
*Meaning and context of use* This is an even more emphatic, highly joyous form of *Hoo, hoo, hoo!*—*fist bump*.

We think this came originally from athletes doing it in American football in celebration of scoring a touchdown or making a great play.

This is done only in a playful mood with a very good friend.

Done only by men. (??)

*Description of movement* Both people jump a little into the air and bump their chests together.



possibly at bar playing pool partners do this? not just in sports??

## Hand slap—celebration

### HEAD SHOT

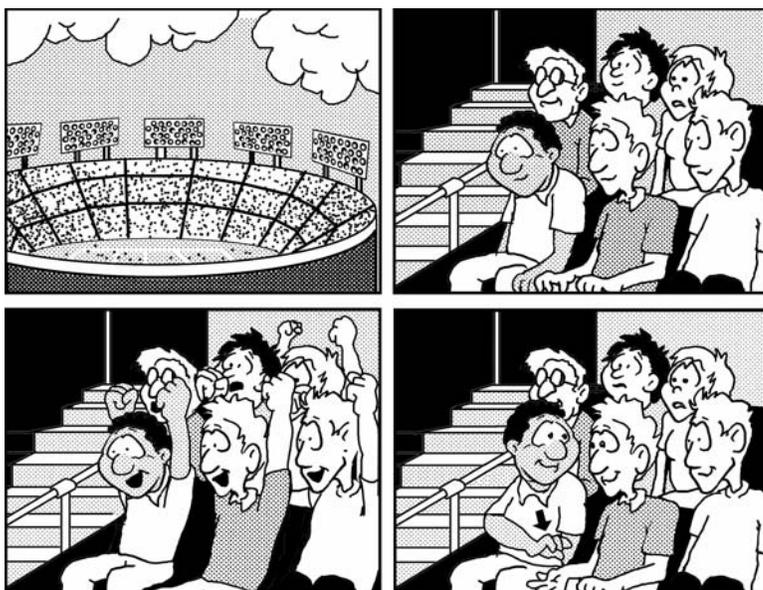
*Words spoken* “All right!”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a homonym of *Give me five* but is synonymous with any of the versions of *All right!*, the difference being that it requires two people.

Previously this was done only by men.

*Description of movement* xxxx



Revise cartoon. Put hands higher (otherwise it looks sexual), and show movement with arrows. Replace third panel with picture of soccer goal. Otherwise have two different gestures illustrated.

### *Related gestures*

Homonym *Give me five*

Related in meaning *High five All right!*—all variations *Got'cha*

Related in form *High five*

## **High five**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* “All right!”

*Name* High Five.

*Meaning* “We did it.” Celebration. An enthusiastic version of the hand slap.

Previously this was done only by men.

*Description of movement* Normally both people are standing, and part of the gesture can be seen as standing up in excitement first before slapping hands.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON (old one didn't work)**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *All right!*—all variations *Hand slap-celebration* *Got'cha*

Related in form *Hand slap-celebration* *Give me five*

**“A-OK”**



*Words spoken* None.

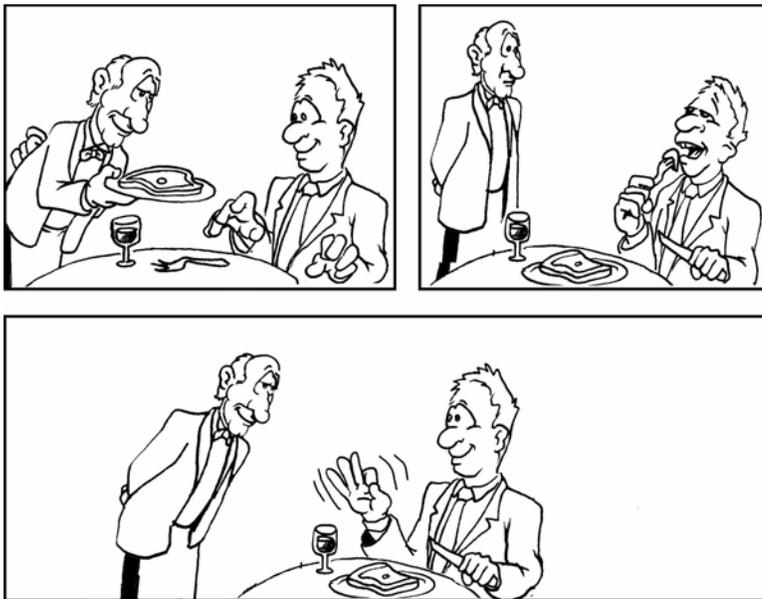
*Name* None, but saying “A-OK” elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning* Very good. A-OK. Perfect.

This is not done to a superior.

*Note well* Though this is similar to an obscene gesture in other cultures, it has no hint of obscenity in the U.S.

*Description of movement* The palm of the hand is directed toward the other person.

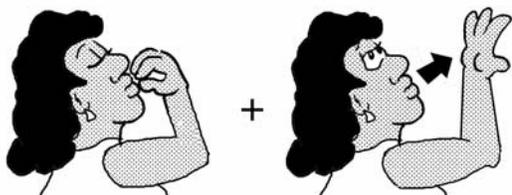


*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *All right!*—all variations *Perfect Got'cha*  
*Thumbs up*

Related in form *Zero*

**“Perfect”**



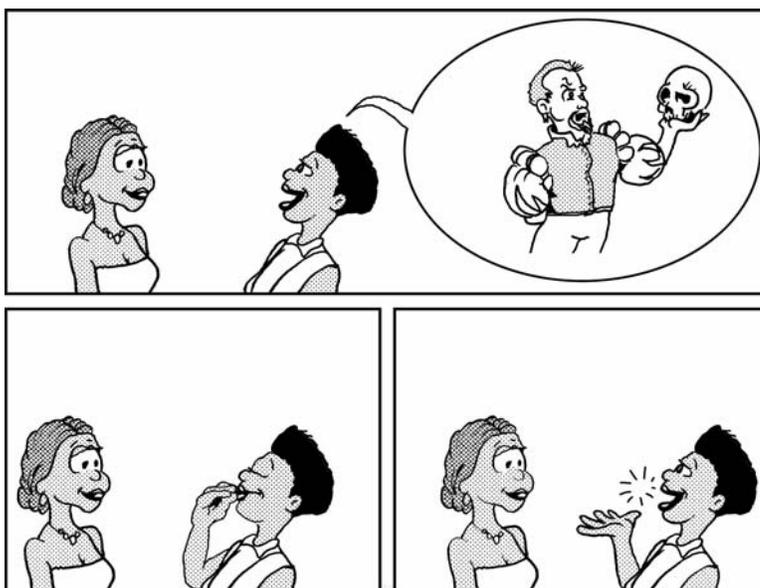
*Words spoken* None. “Perfect” can be said before or after it.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Perfect. Exactly right. The very best.

This is more emphatic than “A-OK.” It would not be done to a superior.

*Description of movement* The fingers are pursed together and kissed lightly, then the hand is flung outward and open, palm to the side.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *All right!*—all variations *A-OK* *Gor’cha*

*Thumbs up*

Related in form *Blowing a kiss*

## **Applause**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Applause. To give someone a hand. Clapping. Clapping your hands.

*Meaning* Approval. Congratulations.

This is typically done by (almost) everyone in an audience at a performance to show appreciation for the show. The clapping is not done in unison. Usually it is done at the end of the performance. It can also be done during the performance to show approval of some part of it. The harder the slapping of hands and the more repetitions of the slapping indicates greater approval.

It can also be done by just one person for another as a sign of large approval.

This is a *reciprocal gesture*: see *Acknowledging applause*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON in audience**

### **CONTEXT CARTOON for one other person (just substitute in pat on back)**

*Diminutive* Very little slapping for a short time indicates little enthusiasm by the audience and is called “polite applause” or “half-hearted applause,” meaning that applause is expected in that situation but is not really meant.

*Emphatic* To stand up while clapping indicates very enthusiastic approval. When most people in the audience stand up while clapping it’s said that they are giving “a standing ovation.”

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Irony* When done for one person only.

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Pat on the back A-OK Perfect Got’cha Thumbs up*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Clapping in unison after a show**

If the people in an audience clap in unison after a performance, it means that they want the performer to return for another bow or to perform an encore. The clapping might be accompanied by saying “Bravo!” or “Encore!”

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Clapping in unison before a show**

If the people in an audience clap in unison before a show has begun it means that they are impatient and want the show to start.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Cheering**

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Words spoken* “Yay.” “Hooray.”

*Name* Cheering.

*Meaning* Great admiration for what has been done or encouragement to continue toward the goal.

This is an emphatic of *Applause*, and though it may be done sometimes at a theatrical show, it is typically done at sports.

*Description of movement* (Almost) everyone stands and raises their arms as in *All right!—fist up* or they circle their mouths with their hands and yell “Yay,” “Hooray,” or some other sounds of encouragement or admiration.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Hands clasped in approval**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Congratulations.

*Description of movement* The hands are clasped together in front of the body, palm overlapping palm, about chest high, and moved towards and away from the body a little, almost as if imitating two people shaking hands.

Done only by women?????

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

#### *Variations*

## **Acknowledging applause**

*Words spoken* “Thank you, thank you,” often just mouthed.

*Name* Acknowledging applause.

*Meaning and context of use* Thank you for the applause. A humble acknowledgement of approval.

It is impolite not to acknowledge applause either by doing this, or *Hold the applause*, or *Hands up for applause*, or just a large *Smile*.

When there is no applause, this is mocking self-congratulations or chastising the audience that they should have applauded. It is always sarcastic when there is only one other person, as if asking for approval, “I’m great.”

*Description of movement* This is *Nod of the head–acknowledgement* repeated several times. With each repetition the performer may nod in a different direction so that in everyone in the audience is acknowledged.

*Emphatic* Exaggerating the nod into *Bowing* is an emphatic form, showing much appreciation of the applause and much humility.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON--facing forward toward the group**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Nod of the head–acknowledgement* *Bowing* *Blowing a kiss*

Related in form *Nod of the head–acknowledgement* *Bowing*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Hands up for applause**

*Words spoken* None. “Thank you, thank you.”

*Name* Acknowledging applause.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a less humble way to acknowledge applause than *Acknowledging applause*.

Compare *Victory-arms raised* for an even less humble way.

*Description of movement* The hands are raised above shoulder level with a *Smile* and the hands are waved slightly.

This differs from *Surrender* only in the facial expression and that the hands may be rotated repeatedly.

This can also be done when there is no applause to indicate success, victory, or to encourage applause. It differs from *Victory-arms raised* in which the arms are higher and the expression much larger.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Acknowledging applause* *Hold the applause* *Blowing a kiss*

Related in form *Surrender*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Hold the applause**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. "Hold the applause."

*Name* Hold the applause.

*Meaning* Thank you for the applause, but please stop now.

At a performance it usually indicates that the person doing it wants the audience to become quiet so that he or she can speak or can continue the performance. It is a polite diminutive of *Stop*.

It is emphatically ironic if there is no applause.

*Description of movement* This is *Acknowledging applause* + *Stop* done with two hands at shoulder level, repeated in unison.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Hands up for applause Acknowledging applause Stop Whoa!*

Related in form *Hands up for applause Acknowledging applause Stop Whoa!*

## **The wave**

### **HEAD SHOT--CONTEXT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* The wave.

*Meaning and context of use* It is not clear if this is a gesture. Some think it's just a fun thing to do, with no obvious meaning. But some say it's a way to show support for your team, like cheering, in which case it would be a gesture.

*Description of movement* This is done by the audience in a sports venue. First one person stands up, then the one who is sitting next on the left side, and then the next after to the left, continuing around the whole stadium until it returns to the person or people who started it. Each person has his hands and arms down alongside the body with palms toward the body and as he or she rises the arms are raised above the head with palms outward.

Usually it is done not by one person after another, but by an entire section of a stadium, creating a wave-like effect when seen from a distance.



## **Victory—arms raised**

[HEAD SHOT--just hands raised](#)

[HEAD SHOT -- index fingers extended](#)

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Victory. I won.

Used only on occasions when there is an audience, mostly in sports or politics.

*Description of movement* The arms are raised almost to full extension and the hands are open, palm outward.

When the index fingers are extended it is more emphatic.

Compare *Hands up for applause* in which the arms are not raised so far and the expression is smaller.

Compare *Surrender* where the facial expression is downcast and the hands are only slightly above shoulder level.

Compare *Stop* where the facial expression is different and the hands are closer together and in front of the body.

## **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *V for victory*

Antonyms *Loser*

Related in meaning *Hands up for applause* *Victory—clenched fist*

Related in form *Hands up for applause* *Stop!* *Surrender* *Victory—clenched fist*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **V for victory**

This is an emphatic of *Victory—arms raised* in which instead of the index fingers being extended a V is made with the index finger and middle finger of each hand.

Except for this, the “V” sign is not commonly used to mean victory anymore.

[CONTEXT CARTOON -- one guy showing it to another at a distance](#)

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Peace sign*

Synonyms *Victory—arms raised*

Antonyms *Loser*

Related in meaning *Hands up for applause* *Victory—clenched fist*

Related in form *Surrender* *Stop*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Victory-clenched fists**

This is *Victory–arms raised* except that the fists of both hands are clenched with the palm-side facing toward the audience. This is more emphatic than *Victory–arms raised* or even *V for victory*. It indicates solidarity with the audience and a triumph of will.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Clenched fist salute*

### **“The winner”**

#### **CONTEXT CARTOON boxing match**

*Words spoken* “The winner!”

*Name* Holding someone’s arm up in victory.

*Meaning* This person has won, triumphed, overcome the others. Often done when there is no official competition but only to acknowledge superiority of the person, sometimes as a joke or sarcastically. Also used informally when a person will hold up a friend’s hand to indicate that he or she has won or triumphed.

This is the standard way to indicate the winner in a boxing match, from which, we suspect, this gesture originated.

*Description of movement* The referee or adjudicator holds up one hand of the winner.

#### **CONTEXT CARTOON not in boxing match**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Irony*

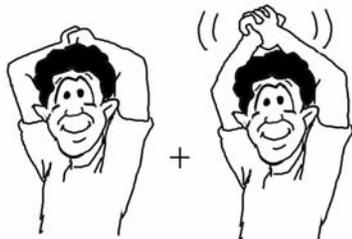
+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *The winner–self-congratulations* *Scoring a point*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **“The winner”–self-congratulations**

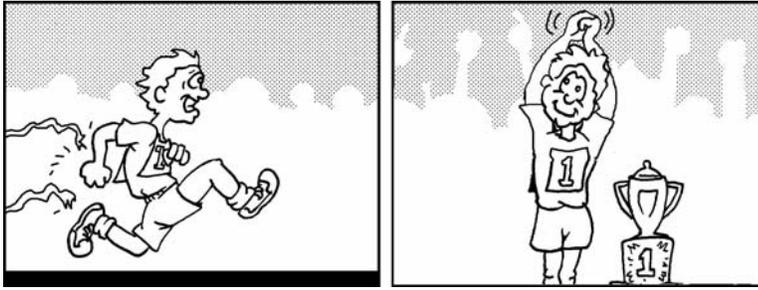


*Words spoken* None. “The winner!”

*Meaning and context of use* Self-congratulations, self-approval. “I did great.” “Aren’t I hot?” “Aren’t I great?” I vanquished my opponent.

Sometimes this is used in response to applause. When there is no applause, it is meant as mock self-congratulations. It’s done when no one else is likely to raise your hand as in *The winner*.

It is more emphatic than *Patting oneself on the back*, or *Holding one’s own lapels*, or *Victory–arms raised*.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

*Related gestures*

*Related in meaning The winner Victory—arms raised*

*Holding one's own lapels Patting yourself on the back*

*Showing how strong you are Gorilla chest beat One-handed chest beat*

*Related in form The winner Victory—arms raised*

## Holding out your lapels



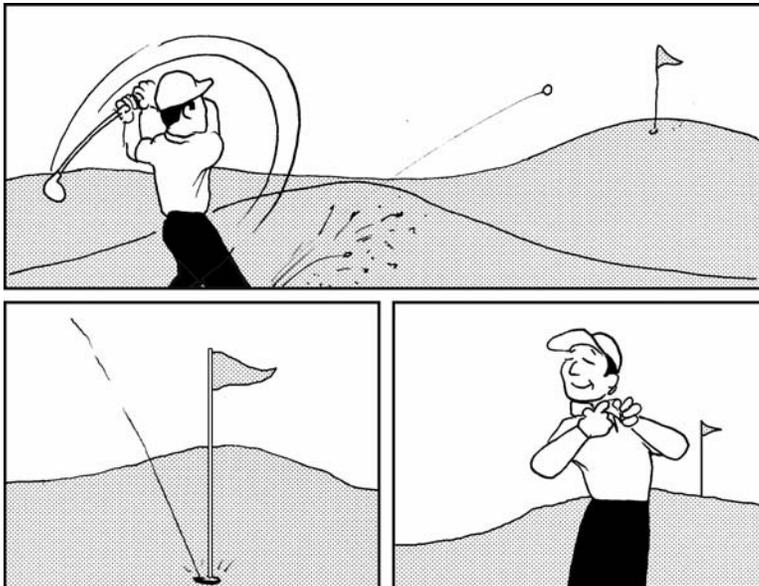
*Words spoken* None. An aimless whistle or *Wolf whistle*.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Self-congratulations, self-approval. “I did great.” “Aren’t I hot?” “Aren’t I great?” This is often done as self-mockery.

Previously only a man would do this. (??)

*Description of movement* You grab your own lapels and hold them out, head tilted backwards with chin thrust forward, and a smile. If you don’t have a coat, you pretend to take your own lapels.



*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Polishing your nails*

Antonyms

Related in meaning

Related in form *Grabbing someone’s lapel*

## Polishing your nails

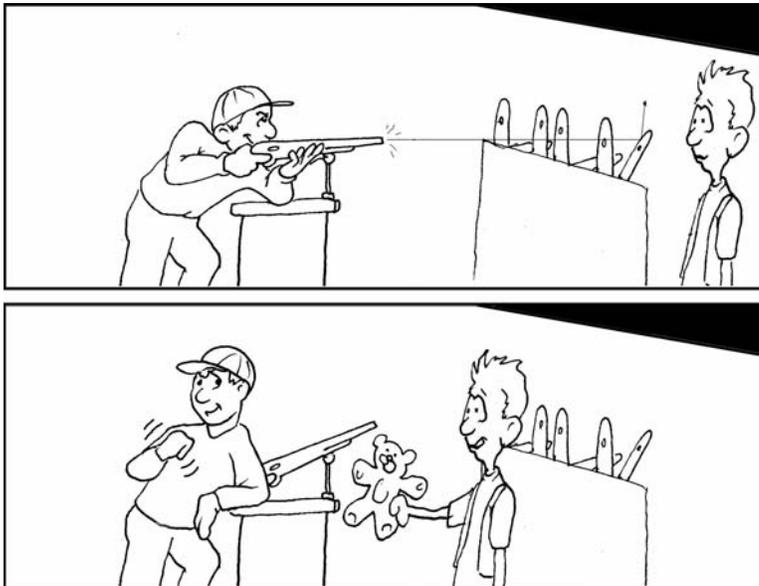


*Words spoken* None. An aimless whistle.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Self-congratulations, self-approval. "I did great." "Aren't I hot?" "Aren't I great?"  
Previously only a man would do this. (??)

*Description of movement* Blow on your fingers and then pretend to polish your nails on your shirt. The head is titled back and you look around in the air.



*Gender* Men only.

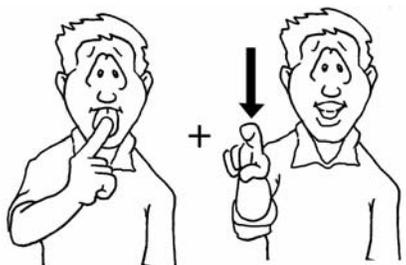
*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Holding out your lapels*

*Related in meaning* *The winner-self-congratulations* *I used my head*

*Scoring a point* *Holding out your lapels*

### Scoring a point



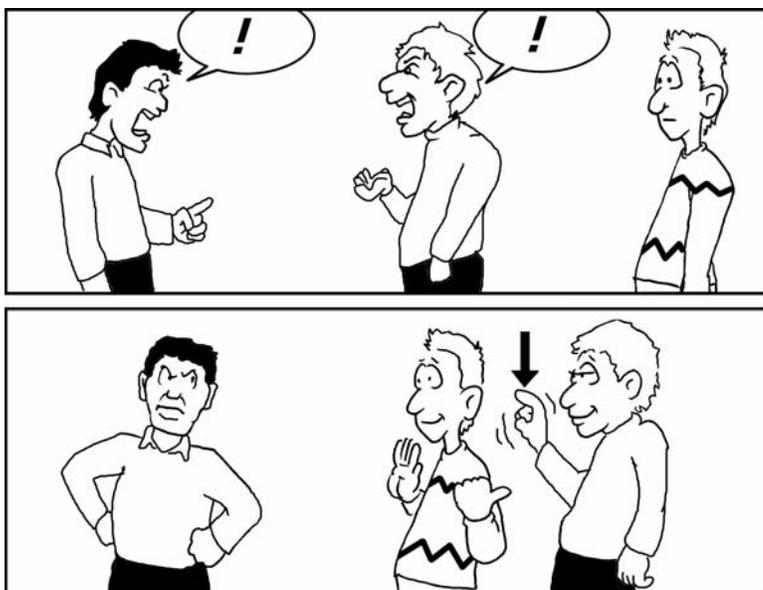
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “Score one for me (for you),” as if what you were doing were a game and you (or the other person) has just scored. It is often done to mark that someone has said something that “put someone in his place” = has bested someone in an argument or discussion.

This is always done in a joking manner and is often used sarcastically.

*Description of movement* This mimics marking a point on a board.



*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes*
- + *Intense look*
- + *Quizzical look*
- + *Pointing* (finger) In succession.
- + *Pointing* (head) In succession.
- + *Irony*
- + *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Holding one's own lapels Patting yourself on the back*

*Showing how strong you are Gorilla chest beat One-handed chest beat The winner*

### “I used my head”



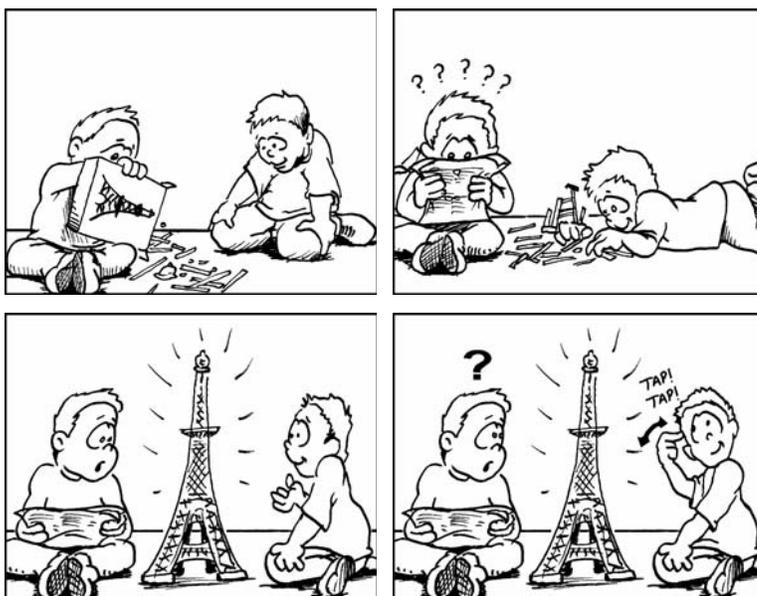
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “I used my head” = I used my intelligence to accomplish that or to figure out what to do. It is often used as a mild joke or a way to show your superiority.

*Note* This does *not* mean that someone is crazy or “touched in the head.”

*Description of movement* Tap the head two or three times.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *The winner–self-congratulations* *Polishing your nails*

*Scoring a point* *Holding out your lapels*

Related in form *Crazy*

## Showing off how strong you are



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* You should be impressed that I was strong enough to accomplish that.

This is even less polite than *Polishing your nails* and *Holding out your lapels* as it is typically done to impress someone with your superiority over them. It is often done as self-mocking. It can be followed by the other person feeling your biceps in mock appreciation.

*Description of movement* The bicep is raised by flexing it.

The other hand can be used to feel one's own muscle to further exaggerate the gesture.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ Yes

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *I used my head*

## **Gorilla chest beat**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* “Ahhh-ahhh” on a rising tone, which is then warbled with the chest beats.

*Add musical score, like Johnny Weismuller doing Tarzan.*

*Name* Beating your chest

*Meaning and context of use* I’m powerful. I’m great. I triumphed because I am the bigger and stronger.

This is done only jokingly, and only by men.

*Description of movement* Repeatedly beat your chest with both fists successively.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Single chest beat* *Showing off how strong you are*

*Holding out your lapels* *Polishing your nails*

Related in form *One-handed chest beat*

# *Mistakes*

This section includes gestures we make when we recognize that we've made a mistake. We also include here apologies and ways we attempt to evade responsibility.

	<b>"Blast!"-finger snap</b>	—	"That's it!"-finger snap
			Come on, come on-finger snap
	<b>"Blast!"-head slap</b>		Thinking-finger snap
			Snapping your fingers in front of someone's eyes
"Let me think"- fingers to bridge of nose	<b>"Blast!"-cover eyes</b>		
	<b>"Blast!"-leg slap</b>	—	Knee slap approval
	<b>Damn!</b>	—	"All right!"- fist down

## **Shooting yourself in the head**

Shrugging your shoulders	—	<b>"Oops!"</b>	
		<b>Ducking your head</b>	— Whyoo
		<b>Finger's crossed- lying</b>	— Fingers crossed- good luck

Sorry — **Hanging your head in shame**

<b>Surrender- white flag</b>	<b>Surrender</b>	—	Victory V for victory Hands up for applause
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**"So arrest me"** — Challenge-chin thrust

"Aw, shucks"-  
embarrassment — **"Aw, come on!"-  
evading responsibility**

**"Nobody here but us chickens"**

### “Blast”–finger snap



revise showing downward curled movement

Add: HEAD SHOT of the upper body showing the head moving down to the side

*Words spoken* “Blast!” “Damn!” “Damn it!” “Darn it!” Tongue click (“Tsk”).  
“Oh, no.” “Oh, shit.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* This is used to indicate irritation at having omitted something, having missed something, having done something wrong, having failed at something. It’s also used for suddenly realizing you’ve forgotten something.

*Description of movement* This is usually done alone. The face is quickly moved slightly to one side and downward in unison with the hand which is moved downward with the snap.

Compare *That’s it!–finger snap* which has a smile and face uplifted.

Compare *Come on, come on–finger snap* which is directed toward someone and has a circular movement.

*Diminutives* The finger snap can be deleted and just the head movement is made with the words “On, no,” or “Oh, shit.”



revise, head movement and hand movement downward

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Blast!*–all variations

Related in meaning *Damn!*

Related in form *That’s it!–finger snap* *Come on, come on–finger snap*

*Snapping your fingers in front of someone’s eyes* *Thinking–finger snap*

### “Blast”—head slap



*Words spoken* “Blast!” “Oh, no!”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* I suddenly realized I forgot something or forgot to do something.

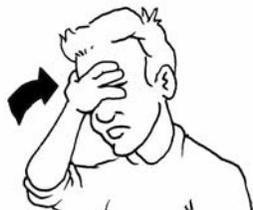
*Description of movement* Normally done for oneself and not to communicate to anyone else. You slap your head with your hand as if “knocking sense into” your head.



Sometimes the heel of the hand is used instead of the palm.



**“Blast!”–cover eyes**



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is the same as the other versions of *Blast* except that by covering your eyes you're acting as if you're contemplating the mistake, a sort of apology.

*Description of movement* This is more likely to be used with another person.



*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Blast!*–all variations

*Related in meaning* *Damn!* *Shooting yourself in the head*

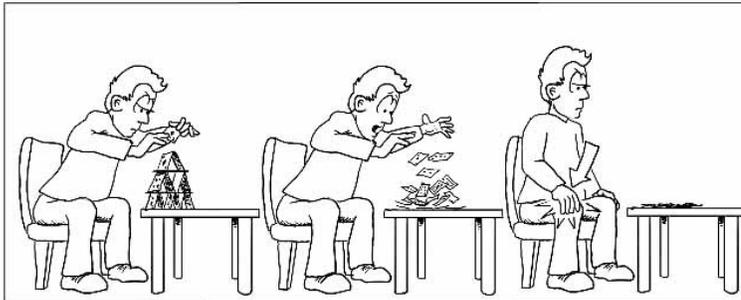
Alex, why is it only men who are screwing up in the last few context cartoons? And white men at that.

Somewhere in these cartoons you should have one that looks like me and another that looks like you, and another with both of us.

*Related gestures*

*Related in form* x

### “Blast”-leg slap



This is a synonym of “*Blast*”-*finger snap*

Compare *Knee slap approval* which has a different facial expression and is typically done when seated. Also with that the hand stays on the knee after slapping it, whereas here it hits the knee and continues on.

#### *Related gestures*

Related in form *Knee slap approval*

## Damn!



revise, head tilted down

This is a synonym of “*Blast!*”–*finger snap*. The hand is pulled down close to the body, from near the shoulder to in front of the waist.

Compare *All right!*–*fist down* where the facial expression is different and the head is held high with the chin slightly thrust out.



revise: arm is bent too far out

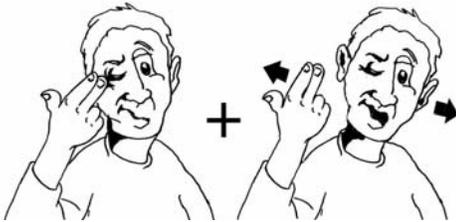
### *Related gestures*

Synonyms *Blast!*–all variations

Related in meaning *Damn!* *Shooting yourself in the head*

Related in form *All right!*–*fist down*

## Shooting yourself in the head



*Words spoken* “P’-k’-tchew” (imitating a gunshot).

*Name* Shooting yourself in the head.

*Meaning* I blew it. I did myself in. I just realized that I made a terrible mistake. Mock suicide for having done something that’s very stupid.

*Note* This does *not* mean suicide.

*Description of movement* Sometimes the look is one of irritation. Sometimes the look is upward, as in *How did I get stuck with such an idiot?*

Typically this is done for oneself and not to communicate with someone. When done with others it is typically used jokily.



revise to make face look more like the head shot

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Blast!*—all variations

**“Blee, blee, blee”—lower lip**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Boy am I stupid. Duh! Of course, why didn't I recognize that.

*Description of movement* With the hand palm down, use the index finger to twiddle your lower lip while making a humming sound so with the lip flapping it sounds like “blee, blee, blee”.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

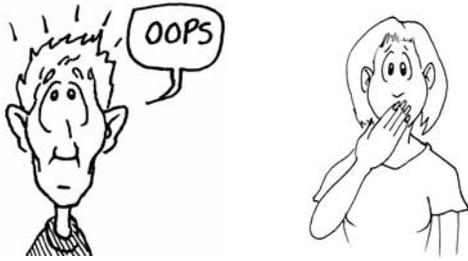
Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *Shooting yourself in the head, XXXX*

Related in form *x*

“Oops!”



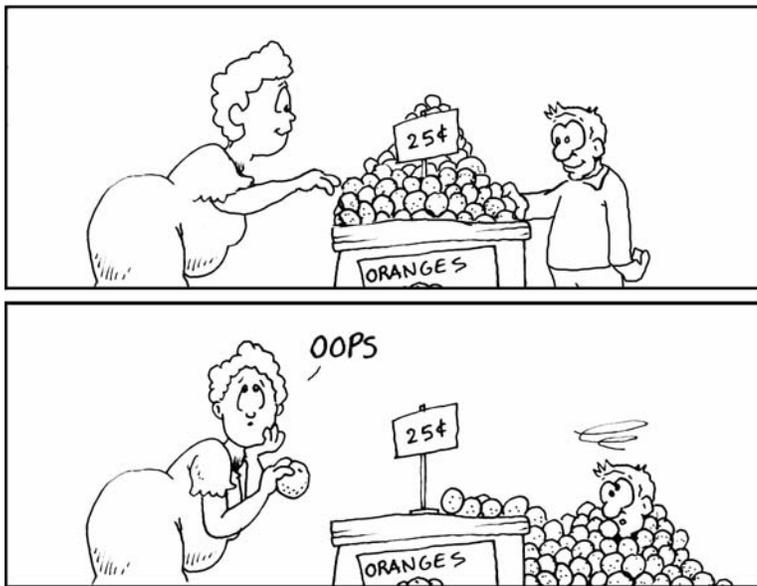
In both the shoulders should be raised.

Words spoken “Oops!”

Name None, though saying the word brings the image of the gesture to mind.

Meaning I made a mistake. I did something wrong.

Description of movement Sometimes the hand covers the mouth. This can also be done with no hand movement, just shrugging the shoulders and the facial expression.



CONTEXT CARTOON--yawn or do something impolite then realize other people are around you and do “oops”

Related gestures

Related in meaning *Hanging your head in shame Oh my God*

Related in form *Shrugging your shoulders Oh my God*

### **Ducking your head**

**HEAD SHOT** duck head and shoulders away with shoulders up around head, very exaggerated

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* This is done as if you were avoiding a blow or something that's thrown at you, though it is meant metaphorically: you're trying to avoid what was verbally directed at you or to avoid the anticipated consequences of some action you did.

*Description of movement* The head and shoulders are ducked away in a very exaggerated manner. It is not actual cowering, which is not a gesture, for cowering has no symbolic meaning: it is meant to actually protect you from a blow.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Shrugging your shoulders* *Whyoo*

## Fingers crossed–lying



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Fingers crossed.

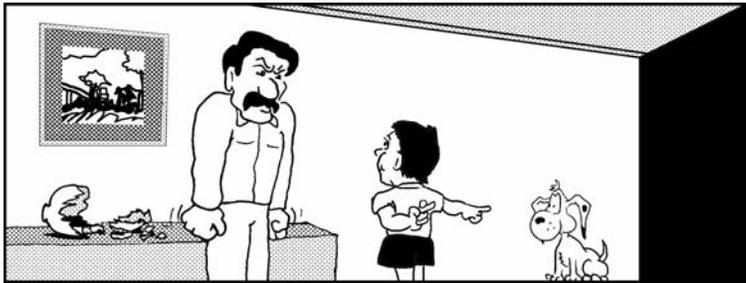
*Meaning* It doesn't count that I'm not telling the truth.

This is a way to evade responsibility for lying.

*Description of movement* The crossed fingers are held behind the back as if to conceal that you are fibbing.

This is usually done by children, since most adults (except politicians) are mature enough to know that this doesn't really excuse a lie.

Compare *Fingers crossed–good luck* where the fingers are crossed in front of the body.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Pointing*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Aw shucks–evading responsibility*

*Nobody here but us chickens*

Related in form *Fingers crossed–good luck*

## **Hanging your head in shame**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Hanging your head in shame. The hang-dog look.

*Meaning* Acceptance of responsibility for something bad. Guilt. Remorse.

*Description of movement* The head only is bowed and kept down with a sad or remorseful expression, eyes tilted up toward the other person.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Variation* *Hanging your head in shame* is followed by raising the head very slightly to look at the other person with the *Quizzical look* except that the mouth is turned down. It is done only with someone you know and indicates acceptance of responsibility and asking for forgiveness. It is very informal. Sometimes if the apology is accepted by the other person saying "OK, OK," then the person will do *Begging like a puppy*.

### **HEAD SHOT--2 panels**

## Surrender



*Words spoken* None. “I surrender.” “I give up.”

*Name* Putting your arms up in surrender. Raising your hands in surrender.

*Meaning and context of use* Used literally this means that you surrender, you put yourself at the mercy of the other person’s power. The higher the hands are raised the more emphatic it is.

Used metaphorically it means that the other person has been criticizing you or pointing out your errors enough that you don’t want them to go on any longer.

*Description of movement* Compare *Stop* where the facial expression is different and the hands are lower and in front of the body.

Compare *Hands up for applause* where the facial expression is different and the hands are waved slightly.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**--actual surrender with a mugger

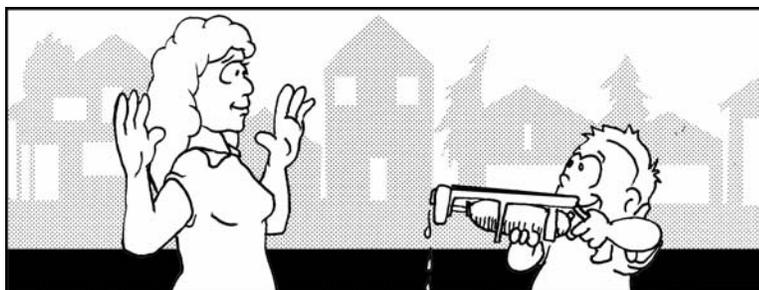
**CONTEXT CARTOON**--surrender because someone is ragging on you

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Yes* + *The quizzical look*

+ *Irony* This is more of a slightly bemused facial expression. It is meant mockingly or playfully, as when a child points a pretend-gun at you.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *So arrest me*

Related in form *Stop Hands up for applause*

## **Surrender–white flag**

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Waving the white flag.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to surrender to the other person's superior power in warfare or to police. It is done at a distance.

*Description of movement* Something white is waved back and forth above the head, usually attached to a stick or some object to raise it higher.

## **“So arrest me”**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* “So arrest me.”

*Name* None, but saying “So arrest me” elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning* I’m sick of hearing you go on about what I did that was bad: if it’s that bad, arrest me.

This is a challenge to “put up or shut up” = do something about what you’re nagging me about or stop talking.

*Description of movement* Put your hands out in front of the body as if to have handcuffs put on.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Challenge–chin thrust*

**“Aw, come on”–evading responsibility**

**HEAD SHOT--see description to compare to “Aw, shucks”**

*Words spoken* “Aw, come on.” “Aw, shucks.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* “You found me out” = you discovered the wrong I did. This is meant as owning up (admitting responsibility) while minimizing the significance of the wrong you did.

We say “Are you shucking me?” to mean that you think the other person is trying to mislead you in order to evade responsibility.

*Description of movement* Only the head movement is made, which we call “tossing your head”, and either “Aw, come on” or “Aw, shucks,” is said or more commonly a click of the tongue “Tsk, tsk” is made.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Nobody here but us chickens*

Related in form *Aw, shucks–embarrassment*

### “Nobody here but us chickens”



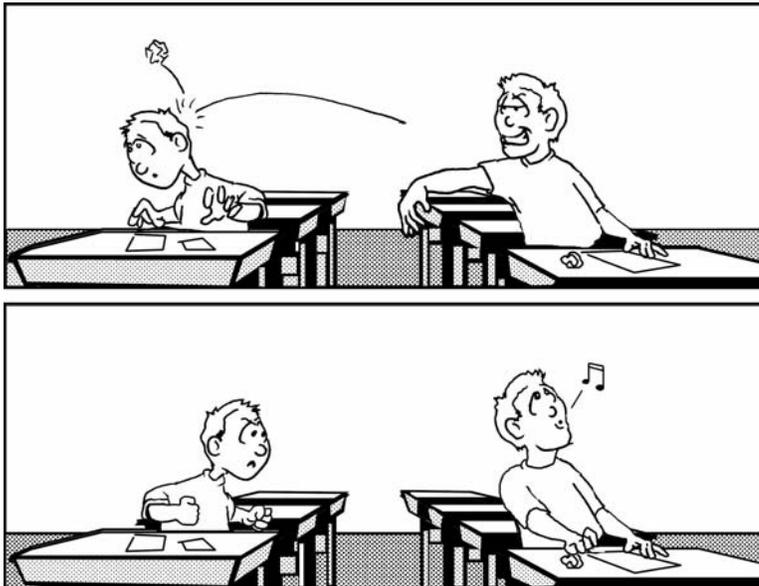
*Words spoken* An aimless tune is whistled.

*Name* Nobody here but us chickens.

*Meaning* Feigned innocence.

This is a response to someone being angry about what you’ve done, often before they’ve even figured out what you did or that it’s you who did it. You pretend to be innocent when you know that the other person won’t believe you. It’s meant as a joke or an attempt to calm an angry situation, since you know that the other person knows you’re responsible. In that sense it is also a challenge.

The name of the gesture comes from an old joke: A farmer hears a noise in the chicken house. He suspects a thief. He goes to the chicken house and yells “Who’s there?” From within the chicken house comes a voice, “Nobody here but us chickens.”



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Aw, come one—evading responsibility* *So arrest me*

# *Disapproval, Anger, Challenges, and Threats*

Gestures for anger at oneself are in the section *Mistakes*, which also contains responses to disapproval. We include here two gestures for turning away wrath. Other gestures of disapproval or threat are *Threat* and all the variations of *Get out of here*. In the next section are gestures of disrespect, which are often challenges.

	No-shaking your head	
Waving hello, goodbye	—	<b>No-hand wave</b>
Disdain/Sneer	—	<b>Pout</b>
		<b>Through-no way</b>
Thumbs up		<b>Thumbs down</b>
	"No way"—arms crossed	<b>Show me</b>
	"Bad, bad"	
Looking into someone's eyes	<b>Staring at someone</b>	<b>Averting your eyes</b>
	<b>Stern look</b>	
"I'm full"	"I'm up to here with you"	
	<b>Slapping a ruler on your palm</b>	
	Angry look	
	Threat (Yes + Angry look)	
	Emphatic threat (No + Angry look)	
Arms akimbo—thinking	<b>Arms akimbo—anger</b>	
	<b>Shaking your finger at someone</b>	
	<b>Turning your back on someone</b>	
	<b>Challenge—chin thrust</b> ———	Howdy Come here—head Head point
	<b>Shaking your fist at someone</b>	
	"Don't push me"—fist in palm	
Wiggling your tongue	—————	<b>Spitting</b>
Leer—tongue out		"You wanna fight?"
Begging like a puppy		<b>Fist in someone's face</b>
Spitting		<b>The finger</b>
Salivating over someone or something		
Licking your lips		
	<i>Turning away wrath</i>	
Stop!	—————	<b>"Time out"</b> — "Whoa!"—calm down
Five	—————	<b>"Sorry"</b>
Ten		

More emphatic



### No-hand wave



*Words spoken* None. “No, no, no” in unison with the waving.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* When combined with the *Intense look* or *Angry look* this means “No—stop doing that.”  
With a neutral or pleased face it means “Enough” = “No more.”

*Description of movement* This can be done by itself or for emphasis with shaking the head.  
Sometimes *Quizzical look* is combined with this, meaning a slight horror of what will happen if the other person continues doing what he or she is doing, or if very surprised then “Stop that for God’s sake!” will be said.

**CONTEXT CARTOON -- with mouth pursed like saying “No, no, no”.**

Enough



**CONTEXT CARTOON -- with surprised face, sort of fearful**

*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *No*
- + *Intense look*
- + *Quizzical look*
- + *Angry look*
- + *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *No—shaking your head* *Shaking your finger at someone*

Related in form *Waving hello, goodbye* *Shaking your finger at someone*

**Shaking your finger at someone**

HEAD SHOT hand extended from body shaking just the index finge forward and back, rest of the fingers in a lightly curled position with thumb over them, not a strong fist, plus shaking the head no

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Shaking your finger at someone.

*Meaning* Disagreement. Don't do that.

This is very condescending and normally would be done only to an inferior.

*Description of movement* The face need not be angry. "No, no, no" is often mouthed in rhythm with the finger shaking. More often "Tsk, tsk, tsk" (a tongue click) is added.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *No*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Angry look*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Just a sec Through-no way No-hand wave*

Related in form *Just a sec*

### **Through--no way**

**HEAD SHOT** Hands in front of the body, one above the other, palms down, and quickly moved to the sides in the same plane.

*Words spoken* "No way."

*Name* None.

*Meaning* This is the same as and we suspect derived from the movement a referee makes when a prizefighter is knocked down and can't get up, signaling the end of the fight. In daily life it means: "You're all washed up," "You're through," "You're finished," or simply the negative "No way."

This isn't necessarily sarcastic, but can be used sarcastically.

When the hands are lifted so that the palms are pointing more towards the other person, it can mean "Enough," "No more."

*Description of movement* The hands are in midway in front of the body, one above the other. The palms are facing the other person at about a 45 degree angle to the floor. The hands are then quickly moved to their own sides in the same plane. There is a frown on the face.

**CONTEXT CARTOON--negative**

**CONTEXT CARTOON--no more, enough**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *No*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Angry look*

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *Safe!*

Related in meaning *No--shaking your head Thumbs down*

## Thumbs down



*Words spoken* None.

*Meaning* Bad. Disapproval. Disagreement.

*Name* Thumbs down.

*Description of movement* Though the plural is used in the name, this is done with only one hand. The gaze is directed to the person to whom you mean to convey the evaluation.

It's never done to a superior, it is impolite except among friends, and is often sarcastic.

More emphatic in the sense of more dismissive is to direct the hand toward the other person and look away from him or her.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *No*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Irony*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *Thumbs up*

Related in meaning *No-shaking your head No-hand wave*

Related in form *Thumbs up*

## **Pout**

### **HEAD SHOT** [Webster's says "To thrust out the lips"]

*Name* A pout. Pouting. To pout.

*Words spoken* None.

*Meaning* This indicates sullenness or displeasure because you didn't get or aren't getting what you wanted, which might only be that you want a favorable emotion directed to you. Sulking.

This is not just a stylized emotion because it is meant to get someone to give you what you want or to show your displeasure.

A common gesture for adolescent girls, it is rarely used by mature adults except for cartoonists. It is impolite.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Disdain/Sneer*

**“Bad, bad”**



*Words spoken* “Bad, bad.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Disapproval.

This is not meant to stop someone or something from what they’re doing. It is done only after the fact.

This is done only by an adult to a child or dog, or by a child to a child or dog. Used by an adult to an adult it would be taken as a jokey way to say the other person has done a minor mistake. It is not done to cats because they cannot take correction.

*Description of movement* The head is inclined down toward the child or dog, with the body bent slightly forward.



*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Intense look*
- + *Angry look*
- + *Smile*

## **Stern look**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Looking sternly at someone. A stern look

*Meaning* Very serious disapproval, to be taken as a warning or threat to stop what you're doing.

*Description of movement* The head is inclined slightly towards the other person. The difference from *Angry look* is small but significant: here the look is more determined and the mouth is not distended.

The more the eyes are narrowed and the face scrunched up, the more emphatic the gesture is until it finally arrives at *Angry look*.

This differs from *Intense look* in that the focus is not inward, which is exceptionally difficult to describe.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Threat Emphatic Threat Angry look Intense look*

Related in form *Threat Emphatic Threat Angry look Intense look*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Slapping a ruler on your palm**

An emphatic of *Stern look* is to add to it by slapping a ruler (or some other long straight object, like a stick) on your palm. This is more of an overt threat: the other person will be hit if he or she doesn't "shape up" = start acting correctly. Used typically only by an adult to a child or to an animal, though never to goldfish or a cat.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

### **Arms akimbo—anger**



*Words spoken* “I’ve had it.” “I’ve had it with you.”

*Name* The posture, not the gesture, is called “Arms akimbo.”

*Meaning* I can’t tolerate any more of what you’re doing or have done, and I’m angry about it. A command to stop. This can be used as a joke and is never done to a superior.

*Description of movement* The *Angry look* is done simultaneously with *Arms akimbo* with the head and torso bent forward. More emphatic is to exaggerate the placing of the hands on the hips and to say “Hmph.”



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *I’m up to here with you* *Shaking your finger at someone*

*Shaking your fist at someone* *Threat (Yes + Angry look)*

*Emphatic threat (No + Angry look)*

Related in form *Arms akimbo—thinking*

## Staring at someone

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to try to establish dominance. You stare at the other person, and if he or she averts your gaze, you are dominant.

This differs from *Looking into someone's eyes* by the facial expression: here the look is intense, almost the *Intense look*, while with *Looking into someone's eyes* it is an open, neutral face. It differs from *Angry look* because there need be no anger here. It differs from *Stern look* in not necessarily having a frown.

Sometimes we do this absent-mindedly, staring at someone who is pretty, handsome, deformed, or curious, or simply an object of our attention. In that case it's not a gesture, and if the other person notices, we *Avert our eyes* to show that we are not intending to make him or her uneasy or to establish dominance.

*NOTE* The idea of an evil eye is not current in the United States.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Angry look Intense look Disdain/Sneer*

Related in form *Looking into someone's eyes Angry look Intense look*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Averting your eyes

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Averting your eyes.

*Meaning and context of use* I'm not really staring at you. This is an attempt to evade personal contact with the other person.

*Description of movement* When you are looking at someone and they notice you staring, you move the direction of your gaze elsewhere, perhaps turning your head, too.

## **Turning your back on someone**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This indicates a strong rejection of what the other person has said or done. But it is not a challenge, only a clear unwillingness to continue a discussion or participate, even as an observer, in some action.

*Description of movement* You turn your back to the other person. If in a group in a more or less enclosed space you simply turn slightly away from the other person. Stronger is to walk away. If there are only the two of you, you definitely walk away.

**CONTEXT CARTOON--enclosed space, turn and talk with others**

**CONTEXT CARTOON--turn and walk away**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *No--shaking your head No--hand wave I'm not listening to you* and other gestures in this section

## Spitting



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Spitting.

*Meaning* Disapproval plus contempt. Finding a subject distasteful.

*Description of movement* There are four versions of this, each more emphatic in one's contempt or distaste.

- Moving your head to one side and expelling just a puff of air.  
This can be used with friends in a joking manner. It can mean simply that you are disappointed or fed up.
- Moving your head to one side and making a sound "P'tui" as if spitting out something that tastes bad.  
This can be used with friends in a joking manner.
- Moving your head to one side and actually spitting.  
This is very strong and not done except as a serious expression of contempt.
- Spitting at the other person.  
This is such a serious expression of contempt that it's an invitation to fight.

### 4 CONTEXT CARTOONS -- one for each of these

*NOTE* Normal spitting just to clear one's throat is considered rude if done in public.

### “I’m up to here with you”



revise, all fingers in the same plane parallel to the ground as in the context cartoon

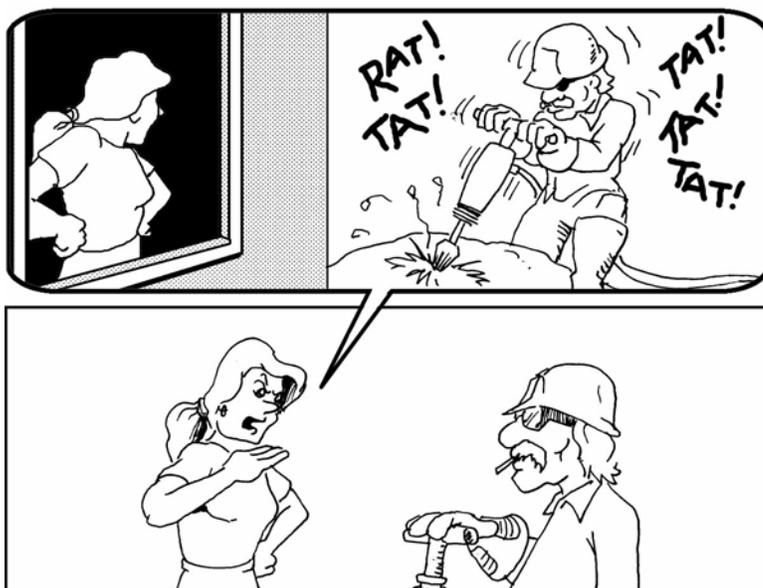
*Words spoken* “I’m up to here with you.” “I’m fed up.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* I can’t tolerate any more of what you’re doing or have done, and I’m angry about it.

*Description of movement* The hand does not touch the throat but is shaken slightly forwards/back or up/down.

This is a metaphorical use of *I’m full*, except there the facial expression is different and the hand is not moved once it gets under the chin.



*Related gestures*

Homonyms *I’m full*

Related in meaning *Arms akimbo—anger* *Shaking your fist at someone*

*Shaking your finger at someone* *Threat (Yes + Angry look)*

*Emphatic threat (No + Angry look)*

## **Wringing someone's neck**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This means that you would like to wring the neck of the person you're talking about.

*Description of movement* The hands are held in front of the body about waist high and the fists are twisted together as in wringing out a washcloth. The face is in an angry look. The person you are talking about is absent from you and the people to whom you direct the gesture.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

### “No way”—arms crossed

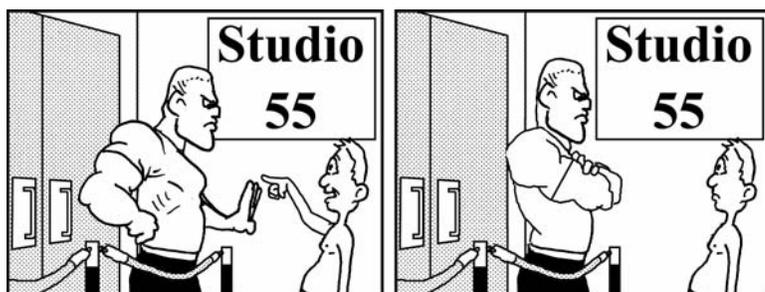


*Words spoken* None. “No way.”

*Name* Crossing your arms.

*Meaning* “No way.” I will not be moved. I will not change my mind. “Just try to get by me.”  
“Just try to get around me” = don’t try to do what I have prohibited without my knowing it.

*Description of movement* The facial expression is *Stern look*. Once the arms are crossed no movement is made.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Arms akimbo—anger Threat (Yes + Angry look)*

*Emphatic threat (No + Angry look)*

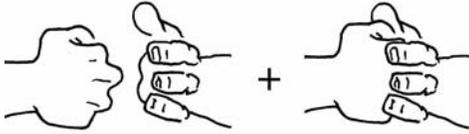
\*\*\*\*\*

### Show me

*Meaning* “Sure.” Show me = I don’t believe you. This is roughly equivalent to *Irony—the long face*.

*Description of movement* Arms are crossed but the head is tilted back. The mouth is turned down and the rest of the face is neutral. The head can be nodded up and down.

**“Don’t push me”–fist in palm**

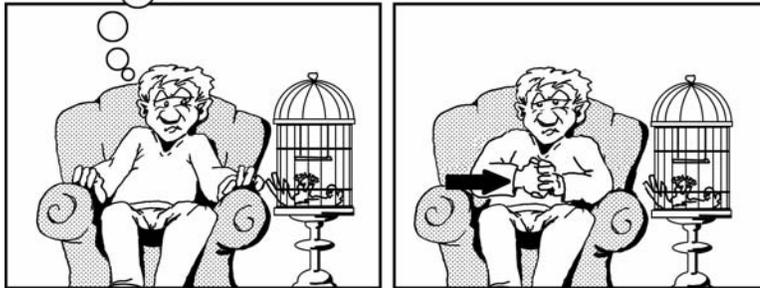


*Words spoken* “Don’t push me”.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “Don’t push me”. I’m getting angry, so you better stop. I’ll get even = I’ll get revenge.

*Description of movement* It is more emphatic to repeatedly hit your palm with your fist.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Challenge–chin thrust* *Angry look*

## **Challenge–chin thrust**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* A challenge.

*Description of movement* Tilt the head back very rapidly just once, thrusting the chin out, mouth closed and turned down.

When this is done very small, often accompanied by the sound “Humph,” it is a synonym of *Poo-pooing*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *I'm up to here with you* *Shaking your finger at someone*

*Shaking your fist at someone* *Arms akimbo–anger*

*Don't push me–fist in palm* *The finger* *Angry look*

*Threat (Yes + Angry look)* *Emphatic threat (No + Angry look)*

Related in form *Howdy* *Come here–head* *Head point*

### Shaking your fist at someone

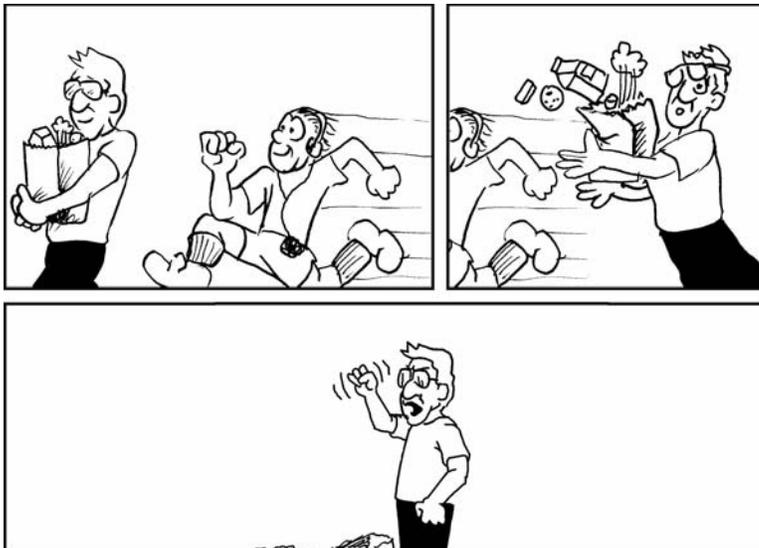


*Words spoken* “Damn you!” “You son of a bitch!”

*Name* Shaking your fist at someone.

*Meaning* This expresses a very strong anger, something like “I’d hit you for doing that if I could.” It’s usually done at a distance when you can’t actually fight.

*Description of movement* The head is often moved in tandem with the shaking of the fist.



revise last panel, the person should be bent forwards at the waist

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Shaking your finger at someone Spitting The finger*

Related in form *Clenched fist salute All right–fist up*

## **“You wanna fight?”**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “You wanna [want to] fight?”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* A challenge to fight.

*Description of movement* Both fists are put up in front of your body in the posture of a boxer and the expression is *Intense look* or *Angry look*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Threat* *Emphatic threat* *Shaking your fist at someone*  
*Fist in someone’s face*

Related in form *Fist in someone’s face* *Shaking your fist at someone*  
*Clenched fist salute*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Fist in someone’s face**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* A challenge to fight.

*Description of movement* One fist is put up to but not touching the other person’s nose, and it is shaken slightly. The expression is *Angry look*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Threat* *Emphatic threat* *Shaking your fist at someone*  
*You wanna fight?*

Related in form *You wanna fight?* *Shaking your fist at someone*  
*Clenched fist salute*

## The finger



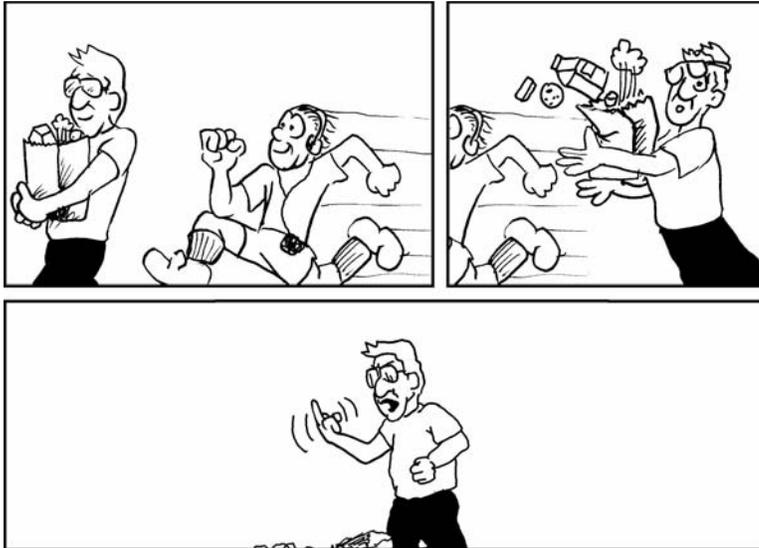
*Words spoken* “Fuck you”.

*Name* The finger. Giving someone the finger. Flipping the bird. Flipping someone off. Giving the bird. Giving someone the middle finger.

*Meaning and context of use* “Fuck you!” An aggressive dismissal of the other person or a response to a perceived wrong. It is normally construed as an invitation to fight. It is far more aggressive than shaking your fist at someone. Often used by an author to an editor or critic.

This is the most aggressive, emphatic gesture an American can make.

When done with *Smile* to a friend it’s a jokey response to what the other person is saying.



*Gender* Though previously rarely done by women, it is now common.

*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes*
- + *Intense look*
- + *Angry look*
- + *Irony*
- + *Smile*
- + *Biting your lip*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Shaking your fist at someone* *Spitting*

**Slap–female to male**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* A slap in the face.

*Meaning and context of use* A woman does this to show outrage or to stop someone, usually a man, from continuing to do something to her. It is not meant as a prelude to a fight, but as a way to stop the man or show her great displeasure.

*Description of movement* One vigorous slap is given to the side of the face of the man, the same side as the hand is coming from.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Female to male.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning xxx

Related in form *Slap–female to female; Slap–male to male; Slap–male to male*

## **Slap–female to female**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* A slap in the face.

*Meaning and context of use* When one woman slaps another it is a prelude to a fight.

*Description of movement* At least one vigorous slap is given to the side of the face of the other woman, the same side as the hand is coming from. This can be followed by the hand returning the other direction, hitting the other side of the face with the back of the hand.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Female to female.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning xxx

Related in form *Slap–female to male; Slap–male to male; Slap–male to male*

## **Slap—male to male**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* A slap in the face.

*Meaning and context of use* When a man slaps another it is not a prelude to a fight but is a way to establish dominance. A fight begins with hitting someone; a slap indicates your superior power or a challenge to the other to show that you are not superior. It is not done to show outrage.

Someone can say metaphorically “That was a real slap in the face” to mean that the person did something outrageous to you which included demeaning you.

Done only to a (supposed) inferior.

*Description of movement* One vigorous slap is given to the side of the face of the man, the same side as the hand is coming from. This is clearly done to establish dominance.

Slapping back and forth across the face, palm hitting one side then the hand returning to the other side hitting the face with the back of the hand, possibly repeated. This is done not only to establish dominance but to inflict pain, showing even greater dominance.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Male to male.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning xxx

Related in form *Slap—female to male; Slap—male to male; Slap—male to male*

## Slap—male to female

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* A slap in the face.

*Meaning and context of use* This is done to establish dominance and to show displeasure with what the woman has done.

*Description of movement* One vigorous slap is given to the side of the face of the woman, the same side as the hand is coming from.

Slapping back and forth across the face, palm hitting one side then the hand returning to the other side hitting the face with the back of the hand, possibly repeated is more than dominance: it is serious chastisement. It can also be an expression of great anger, intending to inflict pain on the woman, yet stopping short of the pain the man could inflict by hitting her with his fist.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Gender* Male to female.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning xxx

Related in form S

## **Slapping—fake**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None, but the sound “Kch, kch, kch” imitating the sound of a real slap in the face.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a jokey way to show displeasure.

*Description of movement* A slapping movement of the hand starting with the palm across, then the back of the hand, then the palm across, done in front of the other person’s face, but not close to the face, as if you were slapping him or her.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* None.

#### *Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

## Spanking

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. “Take that.” “This’ll teach ya.” “This’ll learn ya.”

*Name* Whipping

*Meaning and context of use* This is used by a parent to chastise a child. The child has done something wrong and must be punished. It is punishment. It is symbolic and not just anger, though the adult may be angry. Indeed, there may be no anger at all, the parent saying, “This hurts me more than it hurts you” (which is always a lie).

It can be done by a man to a woman to show displeasure and dominance, as if she were a child to him. But it can also be done by a man to a woman as a joke.

*Description of movement* Parent puts the child over his or her knee and slaps the ass of the child several times.

Alternatively, the parent can grab the child from behind and hold him or her long enough to administer one or more slaps to the bottom of the child.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Emphatics* The parent can use a belt to whip the child, and this is called *Giving a whipping*. This is now nearly archaic because of laws preventing it.

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

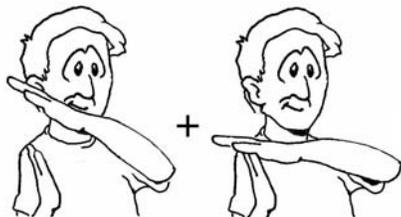
Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *Slapping* (all forms)

## ***Turning away wrath***

The gesture *Whoa!–calm down* is also used to turn away wrath or calm people.

### **“Time out”**



*Words spoken* None.

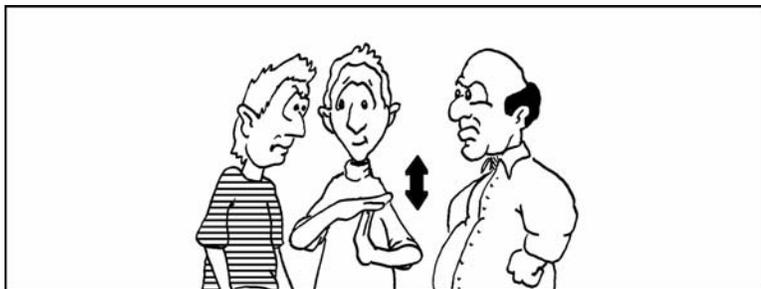
*Name* None. “Time!” “Time out.”

*Meaning* Time out = stop what you’re doing. Take time to cool off = reduce your anger. Take time to let me think or do something.

This is a diminutive or polite form of *Whoa!* It can be used as a joke in trying to defuse an angry situation.

It’s derived, we believe, from sports like basketball and football where it’s used to stop the action and the clock.

*Description of movement* Repeat the movement 3 times with a small form of the *Quizzical look* or *Intense look*.



*Related gestures*

*Antonyms* *Come on, come on–circular* *Come on, come on–finger snap*

*Come on, come on–hand clap*

*Related in meaning* *Sorry* *Whoa!* *Stop*

## “Sorry”

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. “Sorry.” “Excuse me.” “Peace.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to forestall an angry response when you have done something you realize might be taken as an insult, or as an aggressive action, or simply an inconvenience to someone. It’s like saying I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to do that, it was inadvertent. Peace. No harm intended.

*Description of movement* One or both hands are held up in front of the body with no movement along with the *Quizzical look*. The facial expression and the lack of movement of the hand(s) distinguish this from *Whoa!*

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Whoa! Stop! Time out*

Related in form *Whoa! Stop! Five Ten*

# *Disrespect*

These are not anger or threat, but by being disrespectful they are challenges.

**"Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahhh"–tongue out**

**"Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahhh"–wiggle hands at ears**

**"Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahhh"–wiggle hand at nose**

	<b>"I'm not listening to you"</b>	Wiggling your tongue
	<b>Giving the raspberries</b>	Leer–tongue out
One-handed chest beat	_____ <b>Nazi salute</b>	Begging like a puppy
Clenched fist salute		Spitting
Salute	<b>Standing to attention</b>	Salivating over someone or something
		Licking your lips

*Being rude*

**Putting your feet on a table or chair**

**Not giving up your seat**

**Taking someone's seat**

**Belching**

**Farting**

**“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”–tongue out**



*Words spoken* “Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”.



*Name* Sticking your tongue out.

*Meaning* An aggressive challenge.

A diminutive is just to stick out the tongue and make no noise.

This can be used as a joke among equals, since it's typically done only by children.



\*\*\*\*\*

**“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”–wiggle hands at ears**



This is a synonym of *Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh–tongue out* and is also done principally by children.

*Related gestures*

Related in form *I'm not listening*

\*\*\*\*\*

**“Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh”–wiggle hand at nose**



This is a synonym of *Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh–tongue out* and is also done principally by children.

## **Giving the raspberries**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Giving someone the raspberries. The Bronx cheer.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a comment that the other person has done badly or ineptly, almost a challenge.

It's done more by children, but is common as a very impolite gesture with adults.

*Description of movement* The tongue is stuck out with teeth pressed down lightly on it and air is forced between the lower lip and tongue, making the lower lip vibrate noisily.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Thumbs down*

Related in form *Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh—tongue out* *Spitting*

## **“I’m not listening”**

**HEAD SHOT 1** fingers in ears

**HEAD SHOT 2** palms over ears

*Words spoken* “I’m not listening” in a sing-song intonation, or humming an aimless tune, or “La la la la la la.” [musical score for the first](#)

*Name* None, but the sing-song “I’m not listening” elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning* This shows that you don’t want to hear what the other person is saying because you consider it to be unpleasant. Authors typically do this when offered advice by an editor or critic. It is used with someone you know well, and it’s often a bit of a joke.

*Description of movement* Stick an index finger into each ear. Alternatively the palms of the hands can be put over the ears. Closing the eyes is optional.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** [just blah, blah, blah for one character who is shaking her finger at the other person and the other person doing the gesture](#)

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh—wiggle fingers at ears*

## **Nazi salute**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Sieg hiel.”

*Name* Nazi salute.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used only jokingly or sarcastically. It suggests that the other person is acting too domineeringly or that they have been giving opinions that are Nazi-like. It is more dismissive and much more disapproving than using *Salute* in that way.

*Description of movement* The hand hits the chest with either a fist or the palm open and facing the ground, then the arm is extended full-length and stopped abruptly, with the palm facing the ground.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Salute*

Related in form *One-handed chest beat* *Clenched fist salute*

## **Standing to attention**

*Words spoken* None. "Yes, sir!"

*Name* Standing to attention.

*Meaning and context of use* When someone is being officious or checking you out, and it's not a superior but someone you know, you can stand to attention as is done in the military for inspections to mock their attitude. This is sarcastic. It's a milder version of *Nazi salute*.

*Description of movement* Stand very erect without moving as if waiting to be inspected, chin up. Can be combined with *Salute-mocking*.

## **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Previously only men. (??)

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Nazi salute*

Related in meaning *Salute*

Related in form *Standing for attention*

## ***Being rude***

Being rude without thought is just thoughtless, doing what comes naturally without regard to the feelings of others. But being rude on purpose is a way to communicate. It's a purposeful form of disrespect, a challenge or threat, depending on the circumstances. It can mean simply "I don't care what you think, and you can't make me care" or it can be more assertive: "Try and stop me." We list here some of the most common forms of being impolite that are used as challenges or threats.

### **Putting your feet on a table or chair**



### **Not giving up your seat**

[CONTEXT CARTOON](#)

### **Taking someone's seat**

[CONTEXT CARTOON](#)

### **Belching**



### **Farting**



# *Disparaging Comments*

These are all impolite and are not done to a superior.

Disbelief–negative–no		—	<b>Shaking your head in disbelief</b>	=====	No–shaking your head
Disbelief–negative–yes		\	<b>"How did I get stuck with such an idiot?"</b>		Irony

Poke in the ribs–shared joke	————	<b>"Get this guy!"–thumb</b>		Quizzical look
"You–Out!"–thumb	————		<b>"Big deal"</b>	Surprised look
No–hand wave				"Wow"
More or less–hand			<b>"Whoop dee doo"</b>	"Oh my God"
				No?–surprised

**Poo-pooing** == Get out of here!

**Mock yawn**

**Mock sympathy–violin** — "There, there"

**"He's crazy"** — I used my head

**"You're hot"** == Scoring a point

**Chatterbox**

**Disdain/Sneer** — Pout

Howdy		—	<b>Supercilious/Contempt</b>
Chin thrust			
Come here–head			
Head point			

**"She's (he's) stuck up"**

**Smug look**

**"Are you putting me on?"**

**Raising an eyebrow**

**Sticking a knife into someone**

**"Loser"**

**Sniffing**

**"Pee yew"**

**Try to make yourself vomit**

**Scorn**

**Fat** — Pregnant

## Shaking your head in disbelief

**HEAD SHOT** The hands are not raised, head not tilted backward.

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Shaking your head in disbelief.

*Meaning* Disbelief.

*Description of movement* The head is shaken from side to side and is not tilted back, while the face is in a neutral expression, close to wonder.

This differs from *How did I get stuck with such an idiot?* by the head not being tilted back and the eyes not rolled upwards.

This differs from *The surprised look* in that the mouth is not open wide.

This differs *More or less* by the facial expression and the head is not tilted to the side.

This differs from *No-shaking your head* by the facial expression; it could be viewed as a diminutive form of that gesture.

This differs from *Disbelief-negative-no* in that there is no irony in it.

## CONTEXT CARTOON

*Sarcastic or joke* Making the sound “Tsk, tsk, tsk” with the tongue while doing it turns it into sarcasm or at least disapproval.

*Impolite* Can be impolite in context.

*Emphatics* The farther the head is tilted back, the greater the disbelief.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Disbelief-negative Disbelief-negative-yes Disbelief-negative-no*

*Are you putting me on? He’s crazy Raising an eyebrow Scorn Wow*

*Suprised look Oh my God Horror*

Related in form *Disbelief-negative-yes Disbelief-negative-no*

*Quizzical look Wow Suprised look Oh my God Horror*

**“How did I get stuck with such an idiot?”**



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None, but saying the phrase will elicit the image of the movement

*Meaning* “How did I get stuck with such an idiot?” “How can anyone be so dumb?” Lord help me to deal with someone so incapable of understanding. This expresses isbelief at something someone has done or said that is blatantly stupid.

This is an emphatic of *Disbelief–negative*



*Diminutives* Just rolling the eyes upward is a diminutive.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Get this guy–thumb* *He’s crazy* *Disbelief–negative*

Related in form *Quizzical look* *Surprise* *Disbelief–negative*

## **Telephone—foolish talk**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to indicate that the person on the other end of the telephone conversation is going on and on with nothing worth listening to or is talking about a subject you don't want to hear.

*Description of movement* One hand holds a telephone with the arm extended from the body and a the facial expression of "*How did I get stuck with such an idiot?*".

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Call me* "*How did I get stuck with such an idiot?*"

Related in form "*How did I get stuck with such an idiot?*"

**“Get this guy!”–thumb  
HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Get this guy!” “Hey, get this guy!”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “Do you believe what this guy just said?” This is a put-down, indicating disbelief, similar to but milder than *How did I get stuck with such an idiot?*.

*Description of movement* One thumb at head level points to someone about whom the gesture is meant, with eyes upturned and body and face in direction of person to whom the comment is made. The goofy look makes this more than just *Disbelief + Pointing*.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Diminutives* A diminutive is *Shaking your head in disbelief* and then doing the head point to the person about whom the comment is made.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *No* This is for emphasis.

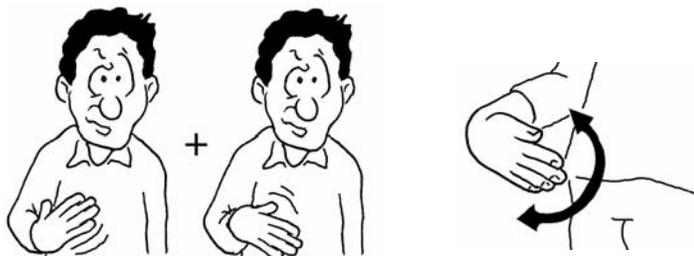
*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *How did I get stuck with such an idiot? He’s crazy*

*Disbelief–negative Poke in the ribs–shared joke*

Related in form *Quizzical look Surprise Disbelief–negative You out!–thumb*

**“Big deal”**

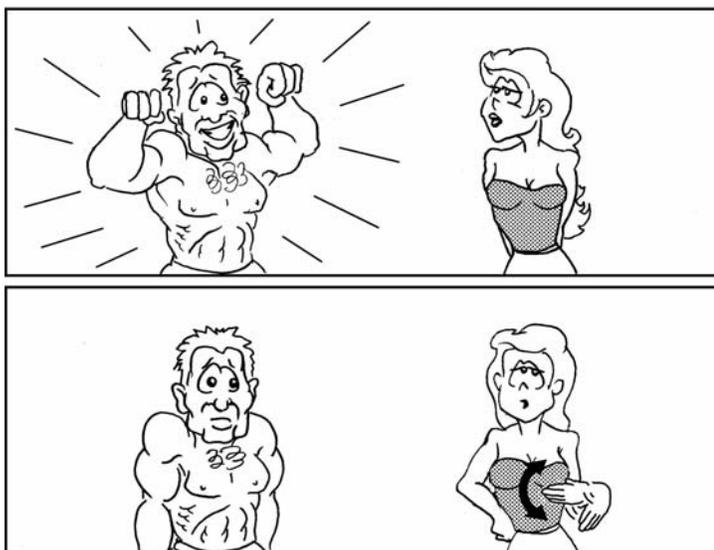


*Words spoken* “Big deal.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “That’s no big deal” = that’s not as impressive as you think it is.

*Description of movement* The hand movement is perpendicular to the ground, which distinguishes it from *No-hand wave*.



*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *No* This is for emphasis.
- + *Pointing* (finger) Done sequentially.
- + *Pointing* (head) Done sequentially.
- + *Irony*

*Related gestures*

- Synonyms *Whoop dee doo* *Mock yawn*
- Related in meaning *You’re hot* *Loser*
- Related in form *No-hand wave*

### **“Whoop dee doo”**

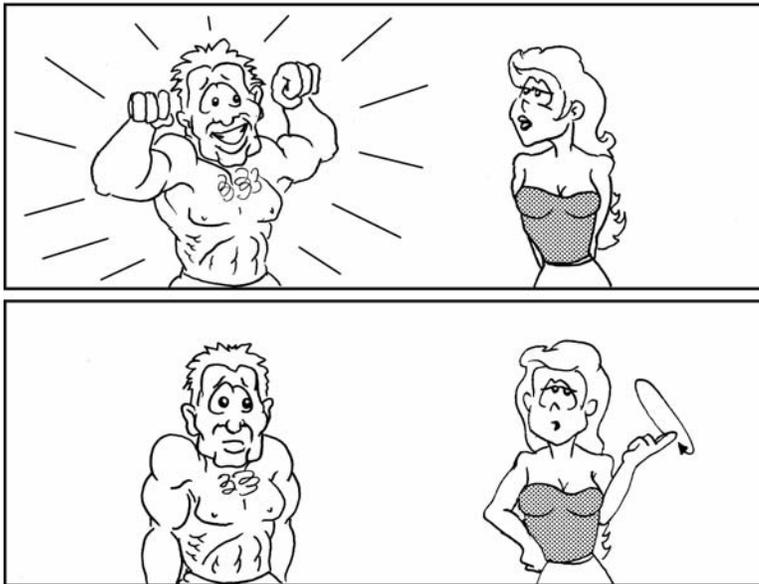


*Words spoken* “Whoop dee doo.” “Big deal.” “Whee.” “Whoopee.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “That’s no big deal” = that’s not as impressive as you think it is.

*Description of movement* The eyes are pointed upward.



*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Big deal* *Mock yawn*

*Related in meaning* *You’re hot* *Loser*

*Related in form* *He’s crazy*

## **Poo-pooing**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Dismissive of an idea or person.: it's small, of no importance or worth.

This is a metaphorical use of *Get out of here* except that the fingers or the whole wrist is flicked.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Scorn* *Get out of here*

Related in form *Get out of here*

## **Mock yawn**

**HEAD SHOT** two parts: face only yawning + hand patting mouth

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Stifling a yawn.

*Meaning* “That’s no big deal” = that’s not as impressive as you think it is. Boring.

*Description of movement* Ostentatiously yawn and pretend to cover your mouth, tapping it with your open palm several times to draw attention to yourself.

It is normally polite to cover your mouth when you yawn.

## **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Big deal* *Whoop dee doo*

*Related in meaning* *You’re hot* *Loser*

**Mock sympathy-violin**  
**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* A sad tune is hummed.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Mock sympathy. Making fun of someone's complaints: he/she is going on and on wanting commiseration for something that's not so very bad.

*Description of movement* Pretend to play a violin while humming a sad tune.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *There, there* *Loser*

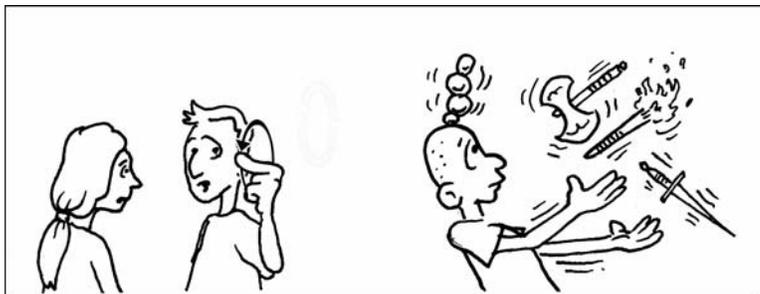
**“He’s crazy”**



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “He’s crazy.” “He’s nuts.” “He should have his head examined.”



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Get this guy*

Related in form *Whoop dee doo I used my head*

### “You’re hot”



*Words spoken* None. “You’re hot.” “Boy, are you hot.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “You’re hot” = you are really good, really important, have done something very impressive.

This is usually but not always sarcastic or a joke. It is done only to an equal.

*Description of movement* Lick your finger, touch it to the other person, then make a sound like steam.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Big deal Whoop dee doo Mock yawn*

### Chatterbox

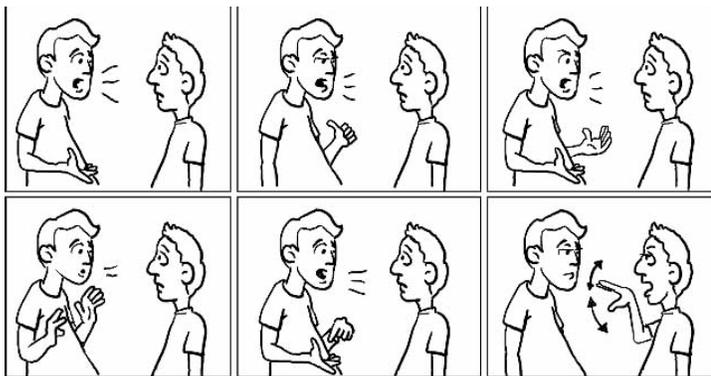


*Words spoken* "Blah, blah, blah."

*Name* None.

*Meaning* The person is going on and on, talking stupidly, or not stopping to let anyone else talk, or being boring.

*Description of movement* The hand is in front of body pointed outward, and the fingers rapidly touch the thumb repeatedly, like the beak of a duck moving quickly.



2nd CONTEXT CARTOON where the gesture is not at the other person but about her

## **Disdain/Sneer**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* To give a look of disdain.

*Meaning and context of use* This is more than disbelief; it is much stronger, a real put-down.

*Description of movement* Look at someone with roughly *Surprised look*, but the lips are pursed, and the head is tilted slightly back, then look away.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Supercilious*

Related in form *Supercilious* *Surprised look* *Quizzical look*

## Supercilious/Contempt

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* To have your nose in the air. To look down your nose at someone.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a supercilious expression: I'm better than you/them.

*Description of movement* The head is tilted back, the nose is raised; the head is turned slightly away from the other person or action, or else the person is sighted along the path of your nose. We say of someone "She has her nose in the air" to mean that she thinks she is better than other people.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Disdain/Sneer* Are you putting me on?

Related in form *Disdain/Sneer* Howdy Come here-head

\*\*\*\*\*

**"She's (he's) stuck up"**



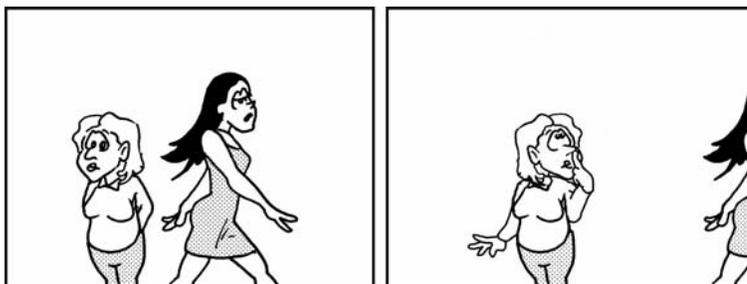
### HEAD SHOT 2 (see description below--mouth is pursed and lips turned down)

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* "She's (he's) stuck up" = that person is conceited, thinking that he or she is better than the rest of us.

*Description of movement* The head can be tilted back with the nose stuck up in the air without the thumb or forefinger pushing up the nose.



revise, add another person

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Supercilious/Contempt*

Related in form *Supercilious/Contempt*

**Smug look**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Smugness. Self-satisfaction. I'm the best.

*Description of movement*

**CONTEXT CARTOON** Have to distinguish this from *Disdain*. Good luck

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Disdain*

Related in form *Disdain*

## “Are you putting me on?”

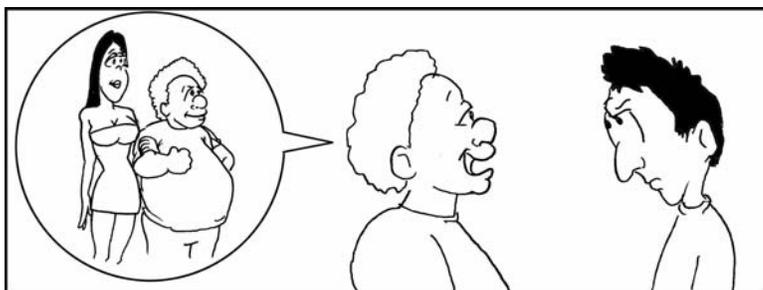


*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Disbelief and disapproval. Questioning the other person’s veracity. Questioning the other person’s authority when the person giving the order or request is not a superior. This is disbelief on the sarcastic side.

*Description of movement* Lower your head as if looking over eyeglasses with eyebrows raised.



**CONTEXT CARTOON** where it is more disapproval

**CONTEXT CARTOON** questioning authority

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Disbelief–negative Supercilious Disdain/Sneer*

Related in form *Angry look Intense look Quizzical look*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Raising an eyebrow**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a diminutive of *Are you putting me on?*

*Description of movement* Just one eyebrow is raised and the head is tilted down and to the side just a little, much less than in *Are you putting me on?*

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

## **“Loser”**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Loser” with a falling intonation. [add music](#)

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* The person about whom the remark is made is a loser = someone who is inept, incompetent, socially unworthy of associating with your group. The gesture is puerile and done only with people you know well.

This is a recent gesture, current only since the millenium.

*Description of movement* The forefinger and thumb describe the letter L, and hence must be done with the right hand. The thumb is at the middle of your forehead.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

## **Sticking a knife into someone**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* I or someone just said something that really hurt, ha, ha.

This is a way to show that you're rubbing salt into the wound, or would like to.

*Description of movement* With the arm extended slightly above waist level, the hand is in a fist as if holding a knife, fingers down, thumb pointed at the other person and then the arm is extended completely in the direction of the other person and the hand is twisted at the wrist two or three times, as if sticking a knife into someone and twisting it. The face is in a pleasurable grimace, as if you are enjoying doing the stabbing.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

## Sniffing

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

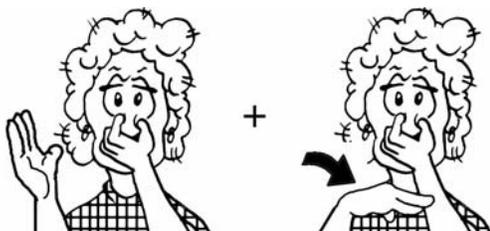
*Meaning and context of use* Something smells bad here meant metaphorically. Something is fishy.  
= something is not right, a bad deal, or a bad situation.

*Description of movement* Loudly sniff with your nose, turning your head as if to find the location of the bad smell.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

\*\*\*\*\*

#### “Pee yew”



*Words spoken* “Pee yew.” [Add music.](#)

*Name* None, but saying “Pee yew” elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning* “You stink.” “You did really badly.” “That was awful.”

Holding the nose for a bad smell is not a gesture. This is a gesture only when the hand is waved in front of the face as if to wave away the odor and it’s used to make a comment on someone or something.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Loser Disdain/Sneer Disbelief-negative*

*Are you putting me on? Raising an eyebrow Try to make yourself vomit Scorn*

**Try to make yourself vomit**

HEAD SHOT pretend to be vomiting

HEAD SHOT pretend to put index finger down your throat

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “That’s awful.” Metaphorically, what was said or done is disgusting: it’s so bad it makes me gag.

*Description of movement* Stick one index finger into your throat as if trying to make yourself vomit.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Emphatics* Pretend to put your index finger into the back of your throat while doing this.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Pee yew*

## Scorn

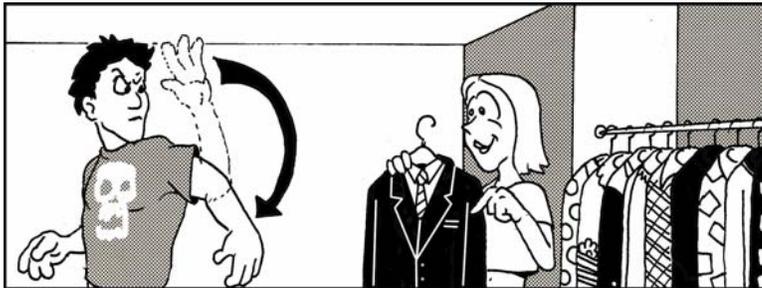
### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* “Get out of here,” sometimes mouthed and not said.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “Get out of here” meant figuratively. “That’s ridiculous.” Scorn. Disgust with the other person. Sharp disapproval.

*Description of movement* Move the arm downward and to one side away from the body, flicking the wrist, and then turn your head away from the other person. This differs from *Get out of here* by the head and body being turned away from the person to whom it is directed after the hand movement.



revise, put an arrow above head showing it is turned away after this

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Are you putting me on? He’s crazy Disdain/Sneer*

*Disbelief–negative*

Related in form *Get out of here*

**Fat**

**HEAD SHOT**--like *Pregnant* except for the face

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* He/she is fat.

This is impolite.

*Description of movement* The mouth is closed and the cheeks are filled with air to distend them and the belly is thrust forward.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**---like *Pregnant* except fat person in the balloon

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Pointing* Sequentially.

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Pregnant*

# *Getting Attention*

## **Clearing your throat for attention**

Straight arm hello — "Here I am"

"Excuse me"—index finger —

**Rapping on a table for attention**

**Tapping a glass for attention**

**Tap on shoulder for attention** —

**Tugging on a sleeve for attention**

"Psst" — Spitting

**Standing up to get attention** — Standing to attention

**Lifting someone's chin**

**Turning someone's face to you—abruptly**

**Turning someone's face to you—gently**

**Snapping your fingers in front of someone's eyes**

**Grabbing someone's lapel**

**Knocking on a door**

**"Shave and a haircut, two bits"**

Let me think—finger held up

One

Howdy—finger

Just a sec

That's it!—finger in air

Pat on the back

Patting the back—greeting

## Clearing your throat for attention

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* “Ahem” = hum and force your breath out with your throat nearly closed so both your vocal cords and the back of your throat vibrate.

*Name* Clearing your throat.

*Meaning and context of use* I would like to talk. Please notice me.

This is polite.

Though listed as a word in some dictionaries, it is not a word in that it cannot be combined with other words in a sentence. It is a gesture, especially when combined with covering one’s mouth.

*Description of movement* The hand may cover the mouth as if you were politely clearing your throat.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Quizzical look*

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Excuse me–index finger*

*Related in meaning* *Here I am* *Rapping on a table for attention*

*Tapping a glass for attention* *Tap on shoulder for attention*

### “Here I am”



*Words spoken* “Here I am.” “Help.” “Call on me.” “Me.”

*Name* Raising your hand.

*Meaning* This is an insistent way to get someone’s attention.

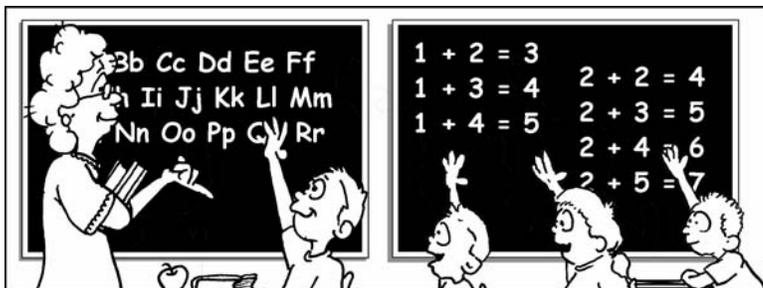
Among equals in a small group this is a sarcastic way to get attention, as if the other person were in charge and you need permission to speak or no one will let you speak.

*Description of movement* The hand is held up with palm facing the person to whom the gesture is directed. The hand is not usually waved. An emphatic is to rotate the hand several times, still palm out. In that case it is distinguished from *Hello* not only by context but in most cases by facial expression.

### “Here I am.”

CONTEXT CARTOON--like one in the airport from old version of “Hello” but only the one person has his hand up waving, while the other is unaware.

“Please call on me.”



Revise, one of them using the left hand.

“Help, stop please.”



*Emphatics* Holding a hat or loose object such as a towel in the hand that is waving.

*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes*
- + *Intense look*
- + *Quizzical look*
- + *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Excuse me–index finger*

Related in meaning *Waving hello, goodbye Straight-arm hello*

*Straight-arm hello Howdy–finger Rapping on a table for attention Tapping a glass for attention Tap on shoulder for attention*

*Clearing your throat for attention*

Related in form *Waving hello, goodbye Straight-arm hello*

\*\*\*\*\*

**“Excuse me”–index finger**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Excuse me.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a diminutive of *Here I am*.

With a weary look it means you’re tired of and fed up with waiting to be noticed.

*Description of movement* Only the index finger is extended.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** *people are close to each other*

Waiter come here.



*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes*
- + *The intense look*
- + *Yes+ The intense look*
- + *The quizzical look*

+ Yes+ *The quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

+ Yes+ *Smile*

Related in meaning *Waving hello, goodbye* *Straight-arm hello*

Related in form *Waving hello, goodbye* *Straight-arm hello*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Just a sec* *One* *Howdy-finger*

Synonyms *Here I am*

Related in meaning *Straight-arm hello* *Howdy-finger*

*Rapping on a table for attention* *Tapping a glass for attention*

*Tap on shoulder for attention* *Clearing your throat for attention*

Related in form *Let me think-finger held up* *Straight-arm hello*

*Howdy-finger* *One*

## **Snapping your fingers to get someone's attention**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used like "Excuse me—index finger" except it is much more insistent and is impolite. It is never done to a superior.

*Description of movement* This is the same as for "Excuse me—index finger" except that the middle finger and index finger are snapped.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

*Variations*

## **Rapping on a table for attention**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Rapping on a table.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a polite way to try to get a group of people to be quiet and listen to you.

It can be used in place of *rapping a gavel on a table* in order to get the attention of everyone at a meeting and to get them to be quiet, saying “Order, order.” This is called “bringing a meeting to order.”

It is more emphatic than *Clearing your throat for attention*.

*Description of movement* The hand is in a fist and the knuckles are rapped on the table.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Emphatics* Much more emphatic is to hit the table with your open palm quite loudly, which means more like “Hey everyone, shut up!”.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *The intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Pointing*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Tapping a glass for attention* *Tap on shoulder for attention* *Clearing your throat for attention*

Related in form *Knocking on a door* *Shave and a haircut, two bits*

## **Tapping a glass for attention**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* At a table where you are eating this is a way to get people to be quiet and listen to you or to prepare for a toast. It is not impolite.

It is sometimes used to get the attention of a waiter at a restaurant, and then it is impolite.

*Description of movement* A glass is tapped with a piece of silverware, usually a knife.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON--at a meeting**

### **CONTEXT CARTOON--at a restaurant to get a waiter**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *The intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Pointing*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Rapping on a table for attention Tapping a glass for attention Tap on shoulder for attention Clearing your throat for attention*

## **Tap on shoulder for attention**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. "Ahem."

*Meaning* A polite way to get someone's attention.

*Name* None.

*Description of movement* Lightly tap the person on the shoulder with your fingertips. Usually this is done from the side or from the back of the person who is being tapped. The use of the fingertips as well as context distinguishes this from *Pat on the back*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Clearing your throat for attention*

Related in form *Pat on the back* *Patting the back—greeting*

## **Tugging on a sleeve for attention**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Mommy mommy.” “Daddy.” “Hey, mister.” “Hey, lady.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* This is a way to get someone’s attention that is normally done only by small children. If done by an adult it is a joke.

*Description of movement* Tug on the person’s sleeve, or coat.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning All the gestures in this section.

Related in form *Grabbing someone’s lapel for attention*

**“Psst”**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* The sound “Psst.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a surreptitious way to try to get someone’s attention.

*Description of movement* The mouth and chin are lifted sharply, directed towards the person who’s attention you want to get, while you say softly “Psst” once or twice.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning All the gestures in this section.

Related in form *Spitting*

## **Standing up to get attention**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Standing up to get attention.

*Meaning and context of use* In a group of people who are seated at a meeting, you stand up to indicate that you want to be called upon to speak. If everyone is already standing, you detach yourself and approach the place where the person running the meeting is and stand there silently. It can also be used to indicate silent disagreement, an assertion of opposition.

We also stand silently to be counted when there is voting, so we say that you should “stand up and be counted.”

This is a synonym of *Here I am* but much more forceful.

## **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Here I am*

Related in form *Standing to attention*

## **Lifting someone's chin**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. "Come on, now."

*Name* Lifting someone's chin.

*Meaning and context of use* When a person is looking downwards, either ashamed (*Hanging your head in shame*) or depressed, you lift his or her chin with a couple of fingers in order to get him or her to look at you. It means "Don't be depressed," "Cheer up." Compare the phrase "Lifting someone's spirits."

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Turning someone's face to you* *Sorry*

*Clearing your throat for attention* *Tap on shoulder for attention*

Related in form *Turning someone's face to you*

## Turning someone's face to you--abruptly

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Words spoken* None. "Look at me."

*Name* None.

*Meaning* This is a very insistent, abrupt, forceful way to make someone look at you and pay attention to what you're saying. It is impolite.

This is never done to a superior.

### CONTEXT CARTOON--done abruptly with angry look

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No* This means don't turn away.

+ *The intense look*

+ *The angry look*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Lifting someone's chin* *Excuse me--index finger*

*Clearing your throat for attention* *Tap on shoulder for attention*

Related in form *Lifting someone's chin*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Turning someone's face to you--gently

### CONTEXT CARTOON --gentle

*Words spoken* None. "Look at me."

*Name* None.

*Meaning* If done with gentleness, especially a man to a woman or a woman to a man, it is a way to try to get the other person to look you in the eye and be more intimate with you.

This is never done to a superior.

### CONTEXT CARTOON--done gently, man to woman, to be intimate

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Smile*

+ *Yes + Smile*

+ *No + Smile* This means don't turn away.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Lifting someone's chin* *Excuse me--index finger*

*Clearing your throat for attention* *Tap on shoulder for attention*

Related in form *Lifting someone's chin*

## **Snapping your fingers in front of someone's eyes**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. "Is anyone there?" "Snap out of it."

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* When someone is staring vacantly, you do this to try to "bring them back" to "where you are," that is, to get them to pay attention to their surroundings, particularly you. This is not generally aggressive, though it may be tinged with impatience.

*Description of movement* The fingers are snapped twice in front of the other person's eyes. Snapping more would be interpreted as *Come on, come on-finger snap*.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Come on, come on-finger snap*

Related in form *Come on, come on-finger snap Blast!-finger snap*

*Thinking-finger snapping That's it!-finger snap*

## Grabbing someone's lapel

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. "Look here." "Listen to me".

*Name* Grabbing someone by the lapel. Buttonholing someone (the buttonhole is the slit on the lapel of a man's suit jacket in which a flower can be stuck).

*Meaning and context of use* This is a very forceful, aggressive, and impolite way to make someone pay attention to you. It borders on being a threat. It is a show of power, though often done by someone who is provoked by the other condescending to him or her.

Previously this was used as a way to make physical contact while talking and, when not accompanied by *Angry look*, it was friendly.

*Description of movement* Grab the lapel of a man, or a part of his shirt or jacket at the upper chest + *Angry look*.

*Gender* Man to man, woman to man. If done by a man to a woman it is a major threat.

### CONTEXT CARTOON--unfriendly

### CONTEXT CARTOON two men talking in a friendly way

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *Tugging on a sleeve for attention* *Turning someone's face to you* *Snapping fingers in front of someone's eyes*

Related in form *Tugging on a sleeve for attention*

## Knocking on a door



*Words spoken* “Hello?”

*Name* Knocking on a door.

*Meaning* I’m here and would like to be let in. Can you come to the door, please?

*Description of movement* The door is rapped several times quickly with the knuckles of a fist. The harder the movement and the more noise made, the more emphatic the gesture is.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Here I am* *Excuse me—index finger*

Related in form *Rapping on a table for attention* *Tapping on a glass for attention*

\*\*\*\*\*

## “Shave and a haircut, two bits”

This is *Knocking on a door* in the rhythm to the tune below. Often the tune is whistled.

[insert music]

*Meaning and context of use* This is a happy, jokey way to knock on a door. The name comes from the tune and the words “Shave and a haircut, two bits” (“two bits” is an old way to say “a quarter dollar”). To do the tune or knocking in rhythm just to the end of “Shave and a haircut” and leave out the part for “two bits” elicits a very strong feeling of incompleteness, that things are not right because it has not come to the end (see the movie *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*).

## ***Demands and Requests***

The gestures in the section *Getting Attention* are demands or requests, too, as are many of those in *Offerings*. Almost all the gestures in *Directing Movement* are also demands or requests. Many other gestures can be turned into a request by adding *Quizzical look*.

	<b>More</b>	—		Up
Down		—		Get up
Be seated		—		<b>Less</b>
	<b>Tell me more</b>	—		Come on, come on—circular
				Come on, come on—finger snap
Stop!		—		<b>Poke in the ribs—stop</b>
Whoa!				Poke in the ribs—shared joke
				<b>"Come again?"</b>
				<b>Call me</b>
				<b>"Shhh"</b> — My lips are sealed
				<b>Sit down here</b> — Be seated
				<b>Thumbing a ride</b> —
				You—Out!—thumb
				Get this guy—thumb
				<b>Roll down your window</b>
				<b>Waiter, the check—writing in the air</b>
				<b>Waiter, the check—writing on your palm</b>
				<b>Begging like a puppy</b> —
				Leer—tongue out
				"Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh"—tongue out
Begging	—			Salivating over someone or something
				<b>Kneeling</b>
				<b>A joint?</b>
				<b>Cigarette?</b>
				Pout

## **More**

**HEAD SHOT** -- wave palm upwards same as *Up*

*Words spoken* None. "More." "Higher."

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* "More." "Hurry up." Louder. This is a request for the other person to either continue or to intensify what they're doing. It is a metaphorical use of *Up*, as when we say "Turn the volume up," and is a homonym of that gesture.

It can be used by one person using two hands to encourage a group of people to cheer louder at a sports event.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** -- more (radio volume) -- use big black notes for music and this gesture, and in next panel small notes and the person is smiling

**CONTEXT CARTOON** -- sports even

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Pointing* (head)

+ *Pointing* (gaze)

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Up*

Related in meaning *Up*

Related in form *Get up*

## **Less**

**HEAD SHOT** -- wave palm downwards same as *Down*

*Words spoken* None. "Less." "Lower."

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* "Less." "Slow down." Softer.

This is a request to for the other person to do what they're doing with less intensity.

This is a metaphorical use of *Down*, as when we say "Turn the volume down," and is a homonym of that gesture.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** -- less (radio volume) -- use small notes for music and this gesture, and in next panel big black notes and the person is smiling.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

+ *Pointing* (head)

+ *Pointing* (gaze)

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Down*

Related in meaning *Down*

Related in form *Sit down here* *Be seated*

## **Tell me more**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This indicates that you don't understand or want more explanation and want the person to continue talking.

*Description of movement* This differs from *Shrugging your shoulders* in that the shoulders are not lifted as high and one or both hands are waved circularly.

Physically it's a diminutive of *Shrugging your shoulders* + *Come on, come on*—circular.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *More* *Come on, come on*—circular

*Come on, come on*—finger snap

Related in form *Come on, come on*—circular *Shrugging your shoulders*

### **Poke in the ribs–stop**

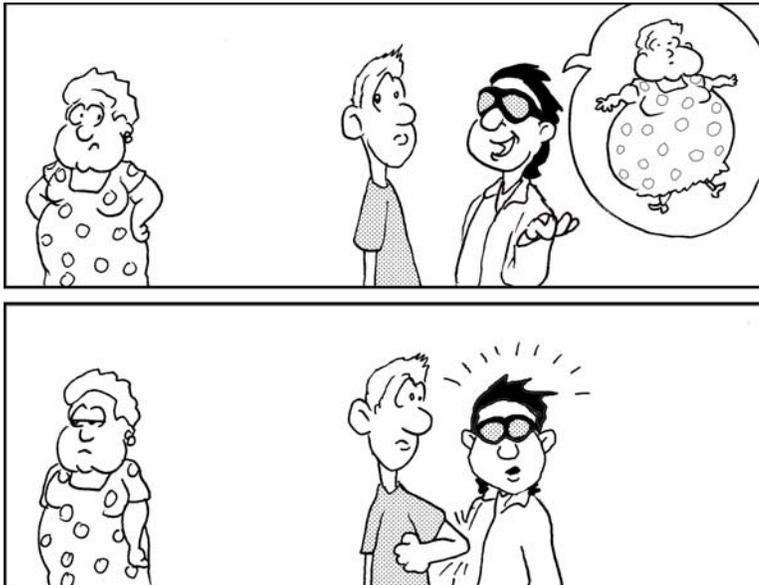


*Words spoken* None. “Shut up” in a whisper or mouthed.

*Name* To poke someone in the ribs.

*Meaning* “Shut up.” “Cut it out” = stop what you’re doing. “Pay attention.”

*Description of movement* This differs from *Poke in the ribs–shared joke* not only in the context of use but in the facial expression, which is the *Angry look*.



#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Stop! Whoa!*

Related in form *Poke in the ribs–shared joke*

**“Come again?”**



revise or second one: all fingers are cupped around the ear

*Words spoken* None. “Come again” = please repeat more clearly or louder. “What was that?”  
“What did you say?”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Please repeat what you said more clearly or louder.

This is not a gesture when it’s used to hear a faint sound.

*Description of movement* The facial expression is *Quizzical look*. The index and middle fingers are used to push the ear out, with or without the other two fingers in line with them.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Tell me more*

Related in form *Call me*

## **Call me**

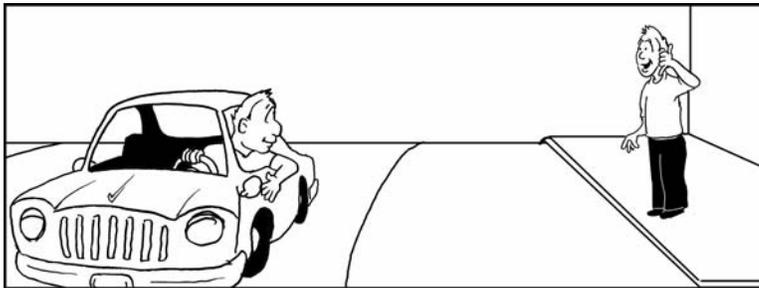


*Words spoken* None. “Call me” mouthed but not spoken.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* None.

*Description of movement* The thumb is placed to the ear and the little finger is stuck out with the other fingers curled in, mimicking an old-style telephone where the part for speaking was at the bottom and the part for listening was at the top. Then the hand is rotated quickly several times. Used only at a distance. Not done to a superior.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *The intense look*

+ *The quizzical look*

+ *Pointing* (before, during, or after)

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Come again?*

## “Shhh”



*Words spoken* The sound “Shhh” made by expelling the breath over your tongue with lips slightly pursed.

*Name* To shush someone.

*Meaning* Don’t say anything: “Be quiet.” “Keep it a secret.” “It’s just between you and me.”

Be quiet



Keep it a secret.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *The intense look*

- + *The quizzical look*
- + *The angry look*
- + *Pointing* usually afterwards
- + *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *My lips are sealed* *Poke in the ribs—stop*

Related in form *My lips are sealed*

## **Mock whisper**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Keep it quiet. Don't let others know.

*Description of movement* Turn the head to one side, and the hand of the side that is turned from is raised to the mouth, palm open and facing to the direction the movement is, eyebrows raised.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning “*Shhh*”

Related in form *x*

## **Tiptoeing**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Tiptoeing.

*Meaning and context of use* We've got to be very careful. "Watch your step" = go slowly and carefully so you don't do something that will cause a problem. Be careful not to disturb that person or thing.

It might seem that this is just an attempt to be careful and not disturb someone, but it is used metaphorically or exaggeratedly.

*Description of movement* Walk slowly, carefully on the balls of your feet. The facial expression is with eyebrows raised, mouth turned down and pulled back, showing anxiety and care not to be discovered. Can be combined with *Shhh*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

## **Sit down here**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. "Here." "Sit here." "Sit."

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* An invitation for the other person to sit down next to you. It's often used as a way to encourage a member of the opposite sex to be more intimate with you.

*Description of movement* The person seated pats a place next to him or her with the palm downward while smiling.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Down Be seated*

Related in form *Down Less*

## **Thumbing a ride**



*Words spoken* None

*Name* Thumbing a ride. Hitchhiking.

*Meaning* A request for a ride.

See also *Just a bit*.

*Description of movement* Done only at a distance.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *The intense look*

+ *The quizzical look*

+ *Yes + The quizzical look*

+ *No + The quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in form *You-Out!–thumb* *Thumbs up* *Get this guy–thumb*

## **Roll down your window**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* In a car this is done either to someone in the car or to a driver in another car to indicate that the person should roll down his or her window, even though many cars have electric windows without a crank.

*Description of movement* The hand is moved in a circular motion as if cranking a window.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

### **Waiter, the check—writing in air**

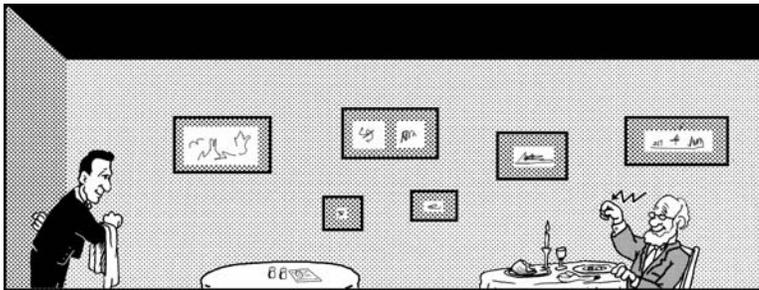


*Words spoken* None. “The check” can be mouthed.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Please bring me the check (the bill).

*Description of movement* Pretend to be writing in the air. The hand is raised as in *Come here*.



*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes*
- + *The intense look*
- + *The quizzical look*
- + *Yes + The quizzical look*
- + *The angry look*
- + *Smile*

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Waiter the check—writing on palm*

*Related in form* *Waiter the check—writing on palm*

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### **Waiter, the check—writing on your palm**

Instead of writing in the air, pretend to be writing on your palm, which is raised to head height.

## **Begging like a puppy**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* Panting. “Please, please.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* This is jokey begging, like a dog asking for a doggy treat. It’s a way to make a request in a jokey way.

*Description of movement* The hands are up in front of and to the sides of the head, the palms are out and fingers curled over, the tongue is out, with a small version of *Yes + The quizzical look*, while panting like a dog.

The hands need not be raised to look like paws, and then it’s just like a **happy dog panting**, less a request than a happy agreement.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Begging* *Oh Lord, let it be*

Related in form *Leer-tongue out* *Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh-tongue out*

*Wiggling your tongue* *Giving the raspberries* *Licking your lips* *Spitting*

*Salivating* *Tongue out anticipation*

## **Kneeling**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Kneeling. To get down on one knee.

*Meaning* This is an earnest request bordering on begging. As a way to indicate respect it is archaic. However, it can be used as a joke. It is still the standard posture for a man to assume when he proposes marriage to a woman.

*Description of movement* Only one knee touches the ground, the other leg is bent and the foot is on the ground. The hands are together as in *Oh Lord, let it be*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Emphatic* To kneel on both knees with head to the floor indicates complete submission.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Begging* *Oh Lord, let it be* *Begging like a puppy*

## **A joint?**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Let's smoke a joint = smoke a marijuana cigarette. Do you have a joint?

*Description of movement* Index finger and thumb are close together as if holding a small cigarette, lips pursed and the breath is drawn in loudly as if in preparation to hold your breath, with *Quizzical look*.

This is a responsive reciprocal gesture, to be answered with either *Yes-nodding* or *No-shaking the head*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes* The addition of this makes it into a stronger question.

## **Cigarette?**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Do you have a cigarette you can give me? This was common when a much larger percentage of the population smoked, but is rare now.

This is a responsive reciprocal gesture, to be answered with either *Yes-nodding* or *No-shaking the head*.

*Description of movement* Index finger and middle finger form a V and are brought to your mouth with *Quizzical look*.

# *Surprise, Disbelief, Confusion*

## *Anxiety and Relief*

Several of the gestures in *Disparaging Comments* are also used for surprise or disbelief, as noted there. Several of the gestures in *Thinking* are also used to express confusion or uncertainty.

Disbelief–negative–no		—	<b>Surprised look</b>	
Disbelief–negative–yes			<b>Horror</b>	
			"Oh my God"	— Oops!
			"Wow"	
			<b>No?–surprised</b>	
			<b>Scratching your head</b>	That's odd Quizzical look
More or less–head		—	<b>Shrugging your shoulders</b>	
It doesn't matter to me			"So?" "Why?"	
			"Fyoo"	
			"Whyoo"	
			"Bwww bwww bwww"	

### *Anxiety, Relief*

**Biting your nails** — Lip bite

**Sigh of relief**

**Tired**

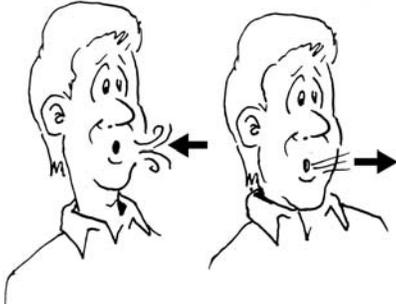
**Donkey burble**

"Whew!"–I'm glad that's over

"Whew!"–That was a close call

Alex: I'm convinced that the following four are distinct gestures (Surprised look, Horror, "Wow", "Oh my God")--we may need to get together for me to demonstrate.

### Surprised look



revise, delete the second face

*Words spoken* None, but the breath can be shaped into a unvocalized "Ahhh."

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Surprise. Amazement.

This is on the border of conventional gesture and stylized emotion.

We say that something "takes your breath away" to describe this.

*Description of movement* Facial expression only, with head tilted slightly up, with a sharp intake of breath, held for a moment, then expelled. The mouth is nearly pursed.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Pointing* (finger)

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Horror Wow Oh my God Disbelief*

Related in form *Horror Wow Oh my God Disbelief Oops!*

## **Horror**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* A look of horror.

*Meaning and context of use* Surprise plus fear.

*Description of movement* This is a facial expression which is sometimes accompanied by raising the hands to the shoulders, or in front of the head, or over the ears as if to ward off what is fearful.

This is on the border of stylized emotion and conventional gesture.

It differs from *Surprised look* by a much more extended face: the mouth is very wide open. Also, the breath is not exhaled loudly.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Surprise Wow Oh my God Disbelief*

Related in form *Surprise Wow Oh my God Disbelief*

*Shrugging your shoulders Oops!*

**“Oh my God”**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Oh my God.”

*Name* None.

(The phrase is used promiscuously by adolescent girls and does not evoke the gesture.)

*Meaning* This is a diminutive of *Horror* or an emphatic of surprise. It is on the border of conventional gesture and stylized emotion.

*Description of movement* An intake of breath plus covering the mouth with the palm of the hand. This can be done when alone.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Oops! Surprise Wow Disbelief Horror*

Related in form *Oops! Surprise Wow Disbelief Horror*

**“Wow”**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Wow” can be mouthed and not said.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Surprise plus pleasurable admiration.

*Description of movement* Eyes widen a lot, head pulled slightly back. With just the mouth open it is a stylized emotion. It differs from *Surprised look* in that the eyebrows are raised.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Surprised look Horror Oh my God Disbelief*

Related in form *Surprised look Horror Oh my God Disbelief*

## **No?–surprised**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “No.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* No!–you’ve got to be kidding. Surprise. Amazement.

This is often done sarcastically, as if to say that what has been related to you is not surprising but totally obvious, as when one says, “Yeah, and the sun rises in the East.”

*Description of movement* The mouth is opened into a large O while the palm of one hand hits your cheek lightly and the head is then tilted away from the slap, and the eyebrows are raised much as in *Surprised look*.

## Scratching your head



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Scratching your head.

*Meaning* Simple disbelief or confusion. Trying to understand.

*Description of movement* This is the *Quizzical look* plus the hand movement.

The head is kept tilted and the hand scratches several times with the fingers, the thumb held against the head. Often done when alone.

## CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Quizzical look That's odd*

Related in form *Quizzical look That's odd*

## Shrugging your shoulders

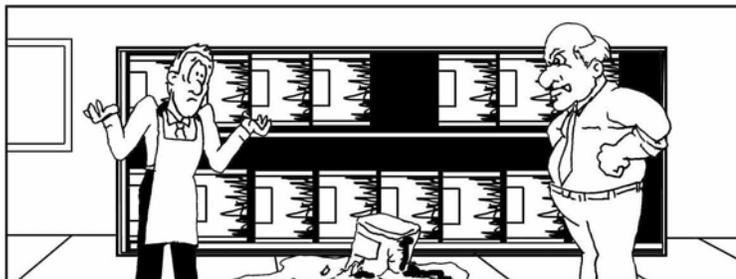


*Words spoken* “Beats me!” “I don’t know.”

*Name* Shrugging your shoulders.

*Meaning and context of use* I don’t know. Often used to disavow responsibility.

*Description of movement* Shoulders are brought up very high and the face is almost in the *Quizzical look*. This differs from *More or less-head* in that the head is not tilted left and right.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *More or less*

Related in form *Horror More or less-head It doesn’t matter to me*

**“So?” “Why?”**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* “So?” “Why?”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* So? Why?

*Description of movement* Shoulders are lifted slightly—much less than in *Shrugging your shoulders*—and *Quizzical look* is added. The hands are at waist level in front of the body held parallel to the floor and then rotated so that the palms are at about a 60 degree angle to the floor.

If “So?” is meant, then that is said or mouthed.

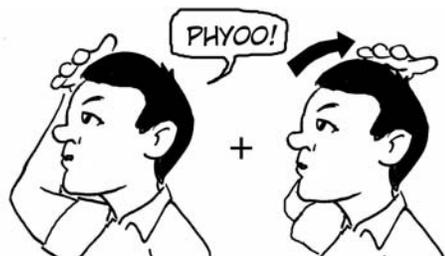
**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Shrugging your shoulders*

Related in form *Shrugging your shoulders* *More or less* *It doesn't matter to me*

“Fyoo”



revise: “Fyoo” instead of “Phyoo”

*Words spoken* The sound “Fyoo.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “That just went over my head” = I didn’t understand that because it was too complicated, or obscure, or convoluted. A sarcastic remark about the speaker’s lack of intelligibility.

This can be done about a superior, but never to a superior.

*Description of movement* Hand is passed over head. Sometimes *Disbelief*– *shaking your head* is added.



*Related gestures*

Antonyms *That’s it!*–*finger in air* *That’s it!*–*finger snap*

Related in meaning *Whyoo!* *Surprise*

Related in form *Whyoo* *Surprise*

## “Whyoo”



*Words spoken* The sound “Whyoo.”

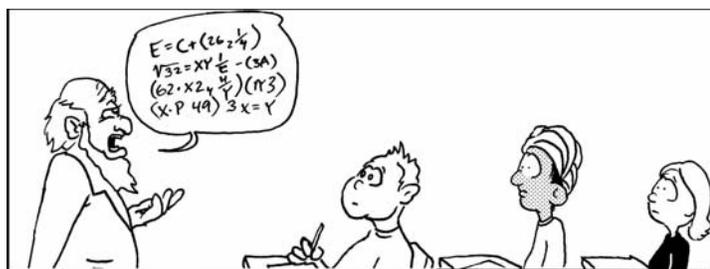
*Name* None.

*Meaning* “I didn’t catch that” = an idea or what the speaker said went by too fast for me to understand.

This is distinguished from *Fyoo* in that it is not sarcastic, more a sense of helplessness.

*Description of movement* Turn your head as if to watch something like a car going past very fast; done only once.

Distinguished from *Surprise* by the eyebrows not raised, mouth is not open all the way, and the head is turned quickly just once with the eyes moved as if tracking an object.



revise

This doesn't work because he has to turn his head anyway.

*Related gestures*

Antonyms *That's it!—finger in air* *That's it—finger snap*

Related in meaning *Fyoo!* *Surprise*

Related in form *Surprise*

**“Bwww bwww bwww”**

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* The sound “Bwww bwww bwww.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “What the hell was that all about?” “I’ve got to clear my mind” = think more clearly, get rid of my confusion or tiredness.

*Description of movement* Shake the head back and forth rapidly four or more times as if “to clear the cobwebs,” with lips held loose slapping together while humming.

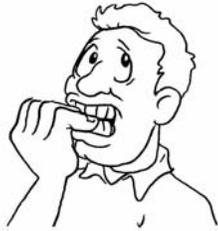
### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Donkey burble*

## **Anxiety, Relief**

### **Biting your nails**



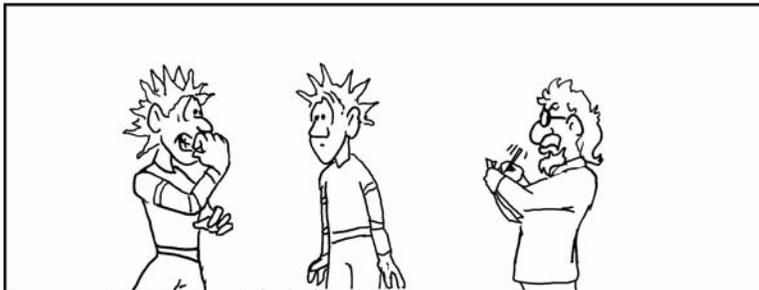
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Biting your nails.

*Meaning* Biting your nails can be a stylized emotion of anxious anticipation. But pretending to bite your nails communicates to other people that you are anxiously anticipating the outcome of some action or deliberation.

This is often used as a joke.

*Biting your lip* is a synonym in context, but less emphatic.



*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Biting your lip*

## **Gulp**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* A gulping sound.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “I’m worried.” “I’m anxious.” Usually done in jest, though in relation to a real anxiety.

*Description of movement* An exaggerated gulping that shows one swallowing. Swallowing as if in anxious fear. Can be combined with *Loosening your collar* for emphasis.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

## **Loosening your collar**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “I’m worried.” “I’m anxious.” Usually done in jest, though in relation to a real anxiety.

*Description of movement* Run your index finger between the front of your buttoned collar and your neck as if your collar were too tight, though don’t actually loosen the collar. Can be combined with *Gulp* for emphasis.

**C**

## **Sigh of relief**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None, though the breath is audible.

*Name* A sigh of relief.

*Meaning and context of use* Relief that something is now over, finished, done.

*Description of movement* A big breath is taken with the head and torso lifted, then exhaled audibly. It is more emphatic if done with a whistle as the breath goes out. Distinguished from *Surprised look* not only in the facial expression but also in the breathing: here it is taken in slowly and let out slowly.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Whew! Donkey burble*

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## **Tired**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None, though the breath is audible.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Tired, worn out.

*Description of movement* A big breath is taken with shoulders raised up slightly, then the breath is exhaled audibly while the shoulders are lowered and the head is bent forward completely. Differs from *Sigh of relief* by the head tilting much farther down.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Donkey burble**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* Sound of lips flapping.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a synonym of *Sigh of relief* or can be used to indicate that you're physically tired or emotionally worn out.

*Description of movement* The lips are loose and cheeks flap as air is expelled, making a sound somewhat like a horse or donkey.

This differs from *Bwww bwww bwww* as the lips are flapped by the air passing through them with no humming and the head is not shaken.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Sigh of relief Whew!*

Related in form *Bwww bwww bwww*

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**Panting–fatigue**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to indicate fatigue. In context it can also be understood as ***Panting from the heat.***

*Description of movement* Eyes slightly downcast, tongue is out, panting like a dog. It is distinguished from *Begging like a dog* by the facial expression.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

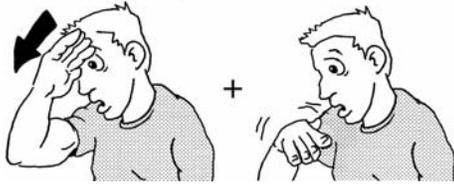
Synonyms XXXXX

Antonyms XXXXXXXXX

Related in meaning XXXXXXXX

Related in form *Begging like a puppy*

**“Whew!”—I’m glad that’s over**



*Words spoken* “Whew!” (a sound on the exhalation of breath).

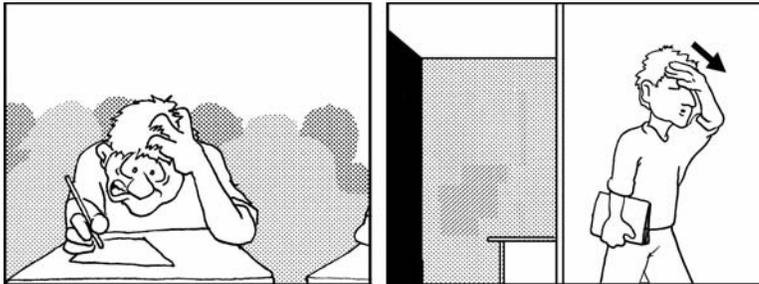
*Name* None.

*Meaning* Relief. I’m glad that’s over—a difficult task has been done.

When done with others and the movement is exaggerated it is more like a joke.

This is an emphatic of *Sigh of relief* that adds the pretense of wiping sweat from your brow.

*Description of movement* Breath drawn in as you wipe your forehead, expelled as your hand is moved down. The movement is an imitation of wiping sweat from your forehead and then shaking it off your hand. Often done when alone.



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**“Whew!”—that was a close call**

The same movement as for *Whew!* can in context mean “That was close” = that was a close call (a near disaster) which you are glad that you avoided.

When done with others and the movement is exaggerated it is more like a joke.



*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Sigh of relief* *Donkey burble*

# Thinking

"Let me think "  
-frown

"Let me think "  
-fingers to bridge of nose

"Let me think "  
-eye roll

"Let me think "  
-finger held up

Quizzical look | — "That's odd"  
Scratching your head

One  
"Excuse me!"-index finger  
Howdy-finger  
Just a sec

"That's it!"-finger in air

"That's it!"-finger snap

— "Come on, come on"-finger snap  
"Blast!"-finger snap  
Snapping your fingers in  
front of someone's eyes

Arms akimbo-  
anger

Arms akimbo-  
thinking

"Hmmm"  
-hand to chin

Thinking-  
finger snapping

Thinking-  
fingers in a tent

Hands clasped  
behind back-thinking

Thinking-  
hand against head

**“Let me think”–frown**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Let me think.”

*Name* Frowning.

*Meaning and context of use* Let me think. Indicates that you want a moment to think, not just that you are thinking.

*Description of movement* This can be understood as an emphatic of *Intense look*. It differs from *Intense look* as the eyes are squinted more and the brow is furrowed with the head bent slightly down, as if you were looking for something small. Or the eyes can be shut, indicating maximum inward concentration. The entire posture is held while thinking. If wearing glasses, the glasses are taken off.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Let me think*–all variations *Hmmm* *Thinking–fingers in tent*

*Related in meaning* *Hmmm* *Thinking–fingers in tent* *Thinking–hand to chin*

*Thinking–head against hand* *Arms akimbo–thinking* *That’s odd*

### “Let me think”–fingers to bridge of nose



*Words spoken* None. “Let me think” might be spoken before the movement to the posture.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Let me think. Indicates that you want a moment to think. When with someone else it’s expected that you will either come up with something pertinent to what had been said or else say that you don’t know and the other person is not to bother you until you stop the posture. Often done in response to a question.

This is an emphatic of *Let me think–frown*

*Description of movement* The hand grasps the bridge of the nose. The posture is held while thinking. If wearing glasses, the glasses are taken off.

*NOTE* The same movement except that the bridge of the nose is rubbed is often made not as a gesture but to relieve tension, eyestrain, or a headache.



#### *Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Let me think*–all variations *Hmmm* *Thinking–fingers in tent*

*Related in meaning* *Hmmm* *Thinking–fingers in tent* *Thinking–hand to chin*

*Thinking–head against hand* *Arms akimbo–thinking* *That’s odd*

## “That’s odd”



*Words spoken* None. “That’s odd.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* That’s odd. Let me think.

*Description of movement* This is *Quizzical look* plus a tilt of the head. The posture is held for several seconds, then returned to normal as one either gets the idea or gives up trying.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Quizzical look Hmmm Disbelief*

Related in form *Quizzical look*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Let me think—eye roll

**HEAD SHOT -- just head back and eyes up**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This means “Let me think” and differs from *That’s odd* by having no suggestion of oddity or puzzlement in what’s being contemplated.

*Description of movement* This is *Quizzical look* but with eyes staring off into space.

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Let me think—all variations Hmmm Thinking—fingers in tent*

Related in meaning *Hmmm Thinking—fingers in tent Thinking—hand to chin*

*Thinking—head against hand Arms akimbo—thinking That’s odd*

**“Let me think”–finger held up**

HEAD SHOT 2 corresponding to the two descriptions below

*Words spoken* None. “Let me think.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Let me think. Indicates that you want a moment to think, not just that you are thinking.

*Description of movement* This is *Just a sec* + *Let me think–eye roll* plus a slight frown and the head tilted slightly back. Alternatively it’s *Just a sec* + a frown and the head tilted forward.

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Let me think*–all variations *Hmmm* *Thinking–fingers in tent*

*Related in meaning* *Hmmm* *Thinking–fingers in tent* *Thinking–hand to chin*

*Thinking–head against hand* *Arms akimbo–thinking* *That’s odd*

*Related in form* *Just a sec* *Excuse me–index finger*

**“Hmmm”–hand to chin**



*Words spoken* The sound “Hmmm.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Let me think. Indicates that you want a moment to think, not just that you are thinking. This emphasizes the cogitation and de-emphasizes the puzzlement of *That’s odd*.

*Description of movement* The posture is held while thinking. Sometimes the hand is held to the mouth. Sometimes the chin is stroked, especially when done by a man who has a beard.



*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Let me think*–all variations *Hmmm* *Thinking–fingers in tent*

*Related in meaning* *Thinking–fingers in tent* *Thinking–hand to chin*

*Thinking–head against hand* *Arms akimbo–thinking* *That’s odd*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Thinking–hand against head**

**HEAD SHOT** While seated, one arm on table grasps other elbow, other hand brought up to face level where face leans against it

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Thinking. A synonym of *Thinking–hand to chin*.

*Description of movement* The index finger is generally raised but need not be. Usually done when alone.

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Let me think*–all variations *Hmmm* *Thinking–fingers in tent*

*Related in meaning* *Hmmm* *Thinking–fingers in tent* *Thinking–hand to chin*

*Arms akimbo–thinking* *That’s odd*

**Thinking—fingers in a tent**

**HEAD SHOT** While seated, elbows on table, fingers make a tent just below mouth.

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Thinking.

*Description of movement* All the fingers or only just the index fingers make a triangle. Typically this is done when alone. A variation is to tap the index fingers together, indicating nerves or an impatience to get the idea.

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Let me think*—all variations *Hmmm*

*Related in meaning* *Hmmm* *Thinking—fingers in tent* *Thinking—hand to chin*

*Thinking—head against hand* *Arms akimbo—thinking* *That's odd*

### Arms akimbo—thinking

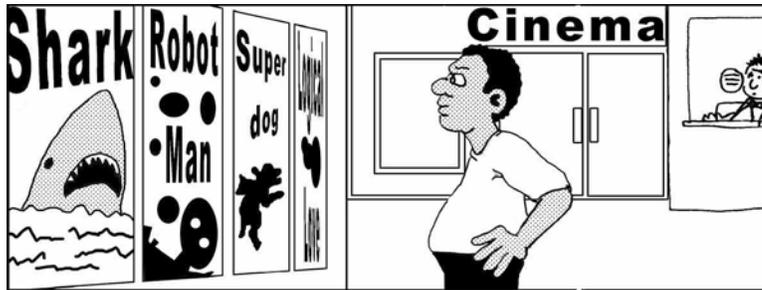


*Words spoken* None.

*Name* The posture, not the gesture, is called “arms akimbo.”

*Meaning* I’m thinking. It can also be used to indicate that you’re waiting.

*Description of movement* The posture is held while thinking. The facial gesture and upright posture here distinguishes this from *Arms akimbo—anger*. Though this is a communicative gesture, it is often done without our even realizing we’re doing it.



*Synonyms* *Let me think*—all variations *Hmmm* *Thinking—fingers in tent*

*Related in meaning* *Hmmm* *Thinking—fingers in tent* *Thinking—hand to chin*

*Thinking—head against hand* *Arms akimbo—anger* *That’s odd*

## **Hands clasped behind back–thinking**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* I'm thinking.

*Description of movement* Hands are clasped behind your back while you walk, possibly in a small space or outdoors on a path. The expression is inward concentration.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Let me think*–all variations. *Arms akimbo*–thinking

Related in form *So arrest me* *Hands clasped behind back*–waiting

## **Thinking–finger snapping**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* I've almost got the idea or word, it's coming to me. Come on, come on idea (word), come to me.

This is a variation of *Come on, come on–finger snap* used figuratively to mean that the idea or word should come to you.

*Description of movement* The head is either tilted down with the eyes inwardly focused or closed, or the head is as in *Let me think–eye roll*, and the finger and thumb of one hand are repeatedly snapped as in *Come on, come on–finger snap* but without any circular motion.

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Come on, come on–finger snap*

*Come on, come on–hand clap* *Come on, come on–circular*

Related in form *Come on, come on–finger snap* *That's it!–finger snap*

*Blast!–finger snap* *Come on, come on–circular*

**“That’s it!”–finger in air**



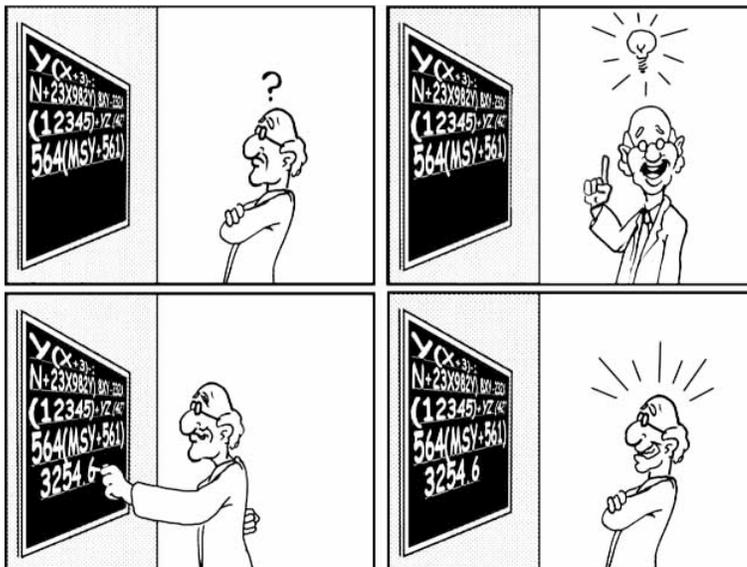
*Words spoken* “That’s it!” “Ah, ha.” “Now I remember!” “I’ve got it!”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Now I understand. Now I have the idea.

This is less emphatic than *That’s it–finger snap*.

*Description of movement* This differs from *Just a sec* by the facial expression, particularly the mouth being open, and by the head being tilted back.



*Related gestures*

Synonyms *That’s it!–finger snap*

Related in form *Just a sec*

**“That’s it!”–finger snap**  
**HEAD SHOT**

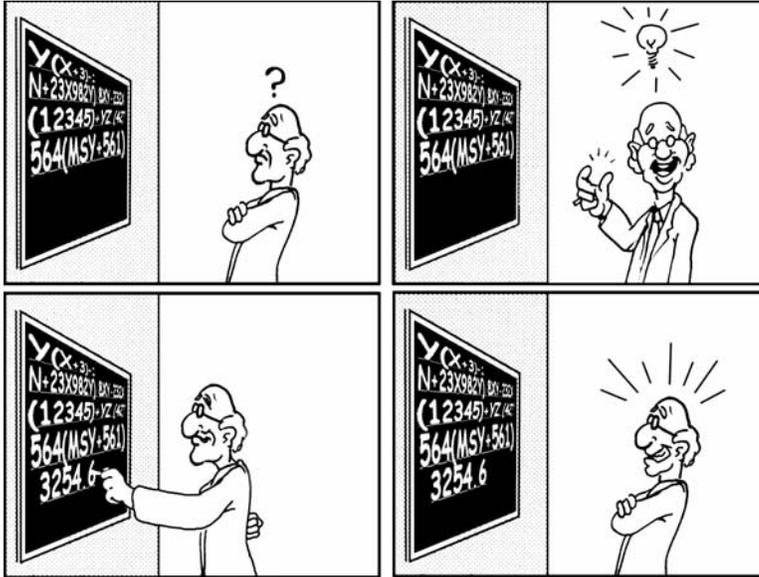
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Now I understand. Now I have the idea.

This is an emphatic version of *That’s it!–finger in air*.

*Description of movement* This is distinguished from *Blast–finger snap* by the facial expression, the head not being tilted down, and the hand not moved down.



*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *That’s it!–finger in air*

*Related in form* *Just a sec* *Blast!–finger snap*

*Come on, come on–finger snap*

## **Hand above eyes—sighting**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* I'm looking hard for something in the distance. Can be used metaphorically: looking for an idea or for something that can't be seen nearby.

*Description of movement* The hand is flat, palm downward and is placed above the eyebrows. The whole head is projected slightly forward and may be rotated from left to right as if looking for something in the distance.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

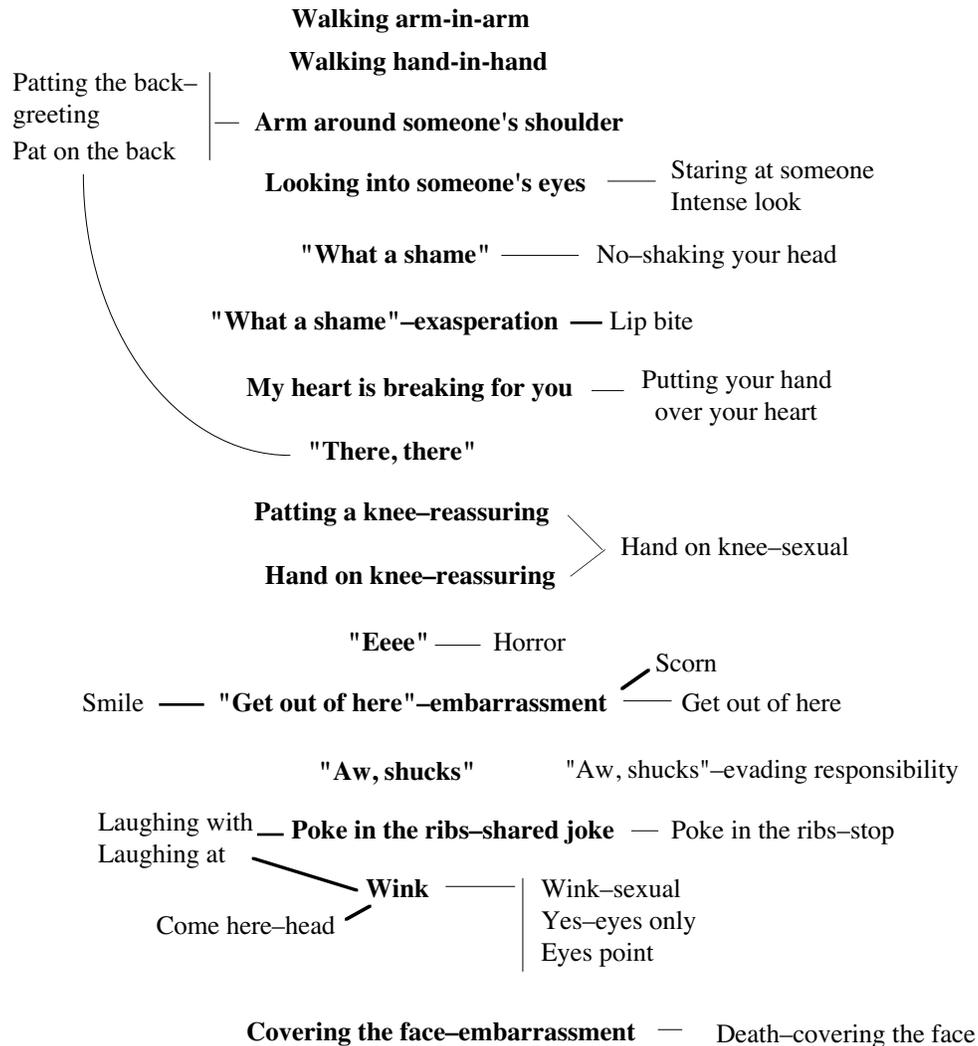
*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Thumb up—sighting*

Related in form *Salute*

# Shared Feeling, Embarrassment

Celebrations are in the section *Success, Self-Approval*. Kissing, which is also a gesture of shared feeling, appears in the section *Greetings, Farewells, Introductions*. Many of the gestures in *Eating and Drinking* are meant to share a feeling.



**Walking arm-in-arm**

HEAD SHOT -- walking arm-in-arm man and woman

HEAD SHOT -- walking arm-in-arm woman and woman

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Walking arm-in-arm.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a polite or formal way for a man to escort a woman.

It is also used by a man with a woman to express and continue intimacy.

Sometimes women will walk arm-in-arm, but one of them does not first offer the other her arm to be taken as a man will do for a woman. It is used to express some emotional closeness.

Men do not walk arm-in-arm because it suggests a sexual link.

When a woman has become very dependent on a man we say she is "hanging on his arm."

*Description of movement* A man puts his arm out from his side, elbow bent with his hand towards his body, and the woman links her arm in his. Or a woman can take a mans arm, linking hers in his. Or two woman can link arms.

*Gender* Man + woman or woman + woman.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Walking hand-in-hand*

Related in form *Walking hand-in-hand*

**Walking hand-in-hand**

HEAD SHOT -- walking hand-in-hand man and woman

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Walking hand-in-hand.

*Meaning and context of use* This is an intimate way for a man and a woman to walk together.

Women might walk hand-in-hand, too, but it's unusual. (??)

Men do not walk hand-in-hand because it suggests a sexual link.

*Gender* Man + woman.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Walking arm-in-arm*

Related in form *Walking arm-in-arm*

## **Holding hands in a circle**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Holding hands.

*Meaning and context of use* Unity and shared purpose.

This can be used silently, for example, for meditation or prayer before commencing a meal or activity, or it can be done as a group while singing.

*Description of movement* At least three people hold hands, left hand to right hand, to complete a circle.

This might be done by two people, but then only one hand is held.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Walking hand-in-hand*

## **Arm around someone's shoulder**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to indicate intimacy or reassurance.

*Description of movement* Facing the same direction as the other person, you wrap the arm nearest to him or her around his shoulder and move closer to do that.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *Patting the back-greeting* *Pat on the back*

## Looking into someone's eyes

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Looking into someone's eyes.

*Meaning and context of use* We look into someone's eyes to get their attention or to indicate that we are paying attention to what they say. This is called "making eye contact."

When done insistently with someone of the opposite sex it means that you are interested sexually in him/her. This is sometimes called "giving someone the eye." If the other person wants to respond, he/she smiles and returns the gaze.

If two people gaze into each others eyes for more than a moment without aggression, it is very intimate and is called "looking into his/her eyes," as if they were looking into each other's souls. It is not restricted by gender.

*Description of movement* This is distinguished from staring at someone by the facial expression: here it is a neutral, open face, while for staring it is close to the *Intense look*.

### CONTEXT CARTOONS

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Staring at someone Intense look*

**“What a shame”**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* The tongue click “Tsk, tsk, tsk” is done as the air is expelled. “What a shame” can be said after the breath is expelled.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “It’s a shame.” “What a pity.” Sympathy. Commiseration.

*Description of movement* Take a deep breath, with upper torso moved backwards a little, then while expelling the breath the head is moved down while shaking it back and forth as in *No-head shake*.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *There, there Hand on someone’s knee reassuring*

Related in form *No-shaking your head*

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**“What a shame”—exasperation**

If *What a shame* is done after *Biting your lip* it expresses exasperation or frustration.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

## **My heart is breaking for you**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* My heart is breaking for you. You have my deepest sympathy. More generally it can be used to indicate deep feeling or sympathy for the other person.

*Description of movement* Both hands are open, palms facing the body, and one on top of the other they cover your heart. The facial expression is sympathetic. One hand can be used, which is distinguished from *Putting your hand over your heart* by the facial expression.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Putting your hand over your heart*

*Variations* ***I loveyou* (♥)** This is *My heart is breaking for you* followed by both hands being extended from the heart with palms up in the direction of the other person, as if offering him or her your heart. This is less sympathy than an expression of love.

### “There, there”



revise, person on right should be leaning in a bit

*Words spoken* “There, there.” “That’s all right.” “That’s OK.”

*Meaning* Reassurance.

This is not used with a superior because it supposes some intimacy.

More emphatic is to *Embrace* the other person after doing this,

*Name* None.

*Description of movement* The person’s shoulder is patted two or three times. When done from the side it is the same movement as *Pat on the back*, but the facial expression is different.



revise leaning in and right-hand person shouldn't be smiling

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No* This makes it more emphatic.

+ *Intense look*

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *What a shame* *Patting a knee—reassuring*

*Related in form* *Pat on the back*

## **Patting a knee—reassuring**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Reassuring. Sympathy. Concern. Kind regard.

*Description of movement* Pat the other person's knee firmly several times. It is more emphatic to add *What a shame* while doing this.

This is more emphatic than *There, there*, but less emphatic than *Embrace*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Normally this is done by a man to a man. If done between genders, it's likely to be understood as sexual.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No* This makes it more emphatic.

+ *Intense look*

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *What a shame* *There, there*

*Related in form* *Knee slap approval* *Hand on knee—sexual*

*Getting ready to leave*

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## **Hand on knee—reassuring**

This is an emphatic form of *Patting a knee—reassuring* and is only used with great intimacy. It can be mistaken for an attempt to be sexually intimate.

**“Eeeee”**

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. The sound “Eeee.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Empathy for a serious pain or problem, like disgust.

*Description of movement* This is entirely a facial expression: the lips are opened and pulled down as far as they can go with the brow furrowed.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Horror*

**“Get out of here”–embarrassment**



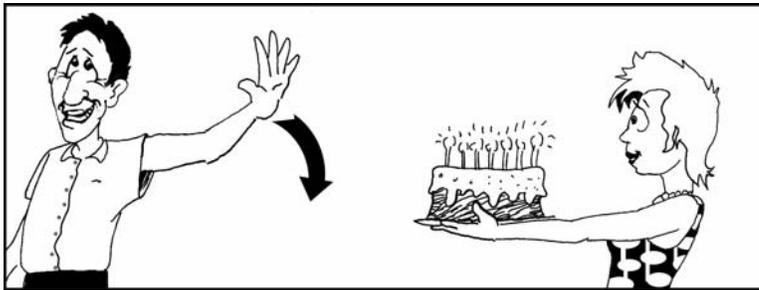
*Words spoken* “Get outta here.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Pleased but embarrassed. It’s too much.

This is much more emphatic than *Smile*.

*Description of movement* This differs from *Scorn* in that there you face the person, while here you turn away with a smile.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Smile* *Aw, shucks*

Related in form *Scorn* *Get out of here*

**“Aw, shucks”**



*Words spoken* “Aw, shucks.”

*Name* None, but saying “Aw, shucks” elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning* Pleasurably embarrassed, like a little boy embarrassed.

This is not done in the presence of a superior. It’s like a mild joke at your own expense.

*Description of movement* Only the head movement is shared with *Aw, shucks*—*evading responsibility*.



*Gender* This is done by men only. (?)

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Get out of here—embarrassment*

## Covering your mouth—embarrassment

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a way that women try to hide their embarrassment by covering their mouth with their hands.

It can also be done when eating to hide your mouth when you're chewing as a politeness to others not to show them what you have in your mouth.

*Description of movement* The open palms cover the face, fingers pointing upwards.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Gender* Women only.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Aw, shucks—embarrassment* *Get out of here—embarrassment*

Related in form *Covering the face—death*

### **Poke in the ribs—shared joke**



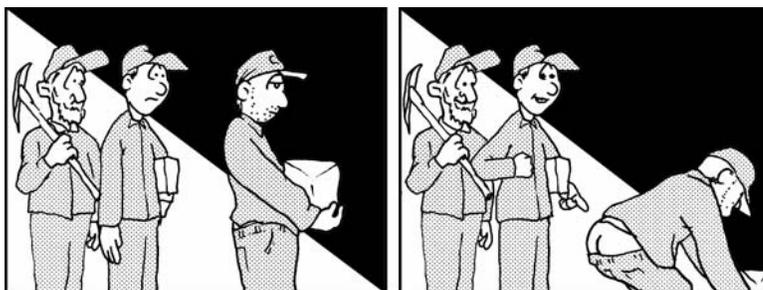
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Poking someone in the ribs. Ribbing someone.

*Meaning* “Did you get it?” = did you understand the joke? “I’m kidding.” “I’m ribbing you” = I’m teasing you. “Take a gander at that” = look at that. “Hey, take a look at that!”

*Description of movement* This differs from *Poke in the ribs—stop* not only in the context of use but also in the facial expression.

It is very informal and not done to a superior.



**CONTEXT CARTOON-2, looking at an elephant on the street or a very tall building, no joke involved.**

*Gender* Previously this was men only. (??)

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No* This adds disapproval of what’s being pointed out.

+ *Quizzical look* Do you believe that?

+ *Pointing* Done sequentially.

+ *Irony*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Poke in the ribs—stop*

Related in meaning *Laughing Wink*

## Wink



revise: add arrow down, head tilted

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Winking at someone.

*Meaning* “Did you get it?” = Did you understand the joke? Collusion. Not done with a superior.

*Description of movement* One eye only is closed while the head is tilted down slightly and to the side slightly.

Can be combined with *Come here–head*.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Poke in the ribs–shared joke* *Come here–head*

Related in form *Yes–eyes only* *Eyes point*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Wink–sexual*

Related in meaning *Poke in the ribs–shared joke*

## *Eating and Drinking*

Wiggling your tongue	<b>Rubbing your hands in anticipation</b> ——— Let's get down to work— dust hands
Leer—tongue out	
"Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh"— tongue out	—— <b>Licking your lips</b> —— Salivating
Giving the raspberries	<b>"Ahhh"</b>
Begging like a puppy	<b>"Ohhh"—indigestion</b> — Stomach pat greeting
	<b>"I'm full"</b> ——— "I'm fed up to here with you"
	<b>Hot food</b>
	<b>"A toast!"</b> <b>Refusing to toast</b>

## Rubbing your hands in anticipation



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Rubbing your hands in anticipation.

*Meaning* Pleasurable anticipation, especially but not only for food.

This can also mean anticipation of a scheme you are imagining, and hence can be used to indicate scheming. In that way, with a nasy face, it is often done as a joke.

*Description of movement* The palms are rubbed together in front of the body, but the palms are flat rather than intertwined as in *Let's get down to work—hands dusting* and the expression here is happy rather than determined.

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Tongue out anticipation* *Licking your lips*

Related in meaning *Begging like a puppy*

Related in form *Let's get down to work—hand dusting*

## **Licking your lips**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Licking your lips.

*Meaning* Anticipation of something good to eat. Can be used for anticipation of anything that is physically pleasurable or as a comment on something being figuratively “tasty.”

This can be just a physical reaction to an odor of food, but it is commonly used to communicate pleasurable anticipation.

It is somewhat impolite and is not done in the presence of a superior.

It is very impolite when used to indicate that someone of the opposite sex is desirable (tasty).

*Description of movement* Lick your lips in an exaggerated way.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** before food perhaps at a soda fountain watching someone prepare a milk shake

**CONTEXT CARTOON** woman looking at a handsome man--and here's your chance to do one cartoon that looks like me

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Rubbing your hands--anticipation* *Tongue out in anticipation* *Salivating*

*Related in form* *Leer--tongue out* *Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh--tongue out*

*Wiggling your tongue* *Giving the raspberries* *Spitting*

*Begging like a puppy* *Salivating*

## “Ahhh”

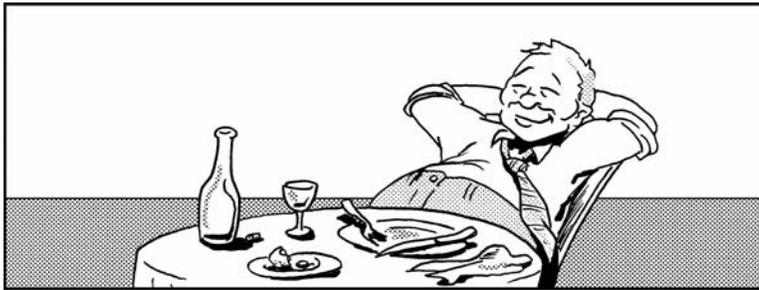


*Words spoken* “Ahhh.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Contented. Satisfied. Used after finishing a meal or whenever satisfied with something, for example, after having finished a big piece of (seated) work. It can be done when you're alone or with others present.

This borders on the impolite and is not done in the presence of a superior. It's more emphatic to put your feet up on the table, but that is very impolite.



2nd Context cartoon, like “*That's that*”.

*Gender* This is rarely done by a woman. ??

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *I'm full Ohhh*

\*\*\*\*\*

## “Ohhh”—contentment

CONTEXT—just like the last cartoon except patting your stomach

This differs from *Ahhh* in that you pat your stomach with both hands and don't lean back as far.

### **“Ohhh”–indigestion**

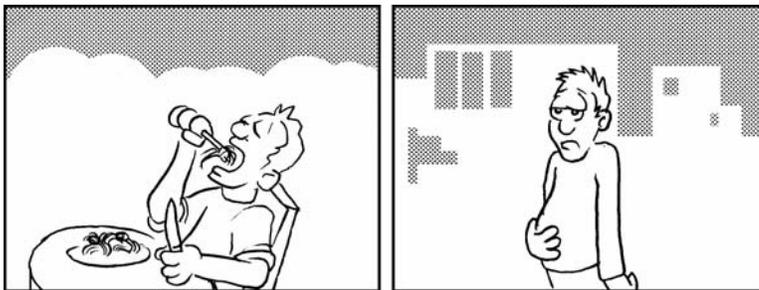


*Words spoken* “Ohhh.”

*Name* Holding your stomach.

*Meaning* I ate too much. My stomach hurts.

Though apparently only a physical reaction, it’s often used to communicate your feeling to others.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Ahhh*

Related in form *Stomach pat greeting*

**“I’m full”**

**HEAD SHOT** similar to “I’m fed up” but smiling

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “I’m full” = I’ve had more than enough to eat.

*Description of movement* This differs from *I’m fed up* by the facial expression and the hand is not moved at the throat.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Ahhh*

Related in form *I’m fed up*

**Waving hand in front of mouth—hot food**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None, but the breath is exhaled loudly.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This food I just ate is very hot, either in temperature or very spicy. Though it might be a physical reaction, it is used often enough to convey that idea to others to be classified as a conventional gesture--a stylized emotion.

*Description of movement* The open hand palm downwards is waved up and down in front of your mouth.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

## Thirst

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None

*Meaning and context of use* I'm thirsty. Give me a drink. Usually comic.

*Description of movement* Tongue is way out and head is tilted forward, eyes opened wide, almost the surprised look. Though this appears to be pantomime, it's standard enough to be a conventional gesture.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *Leer-tongue out Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh-tongue out*

*Wiggling your tongue Giving the raspberries Licking your lips Spitting*

*Salivating Tongue out anticipation Begging like a puppy Panting from the heat*

*Variations*

### “A toast!”



*Words spoken* “Here’s looking at you.” “Cheers.” “Here’s to . . . .” “A toast.”

Rarely now: “Here’s mud in your eye.” “Bottoms up.”

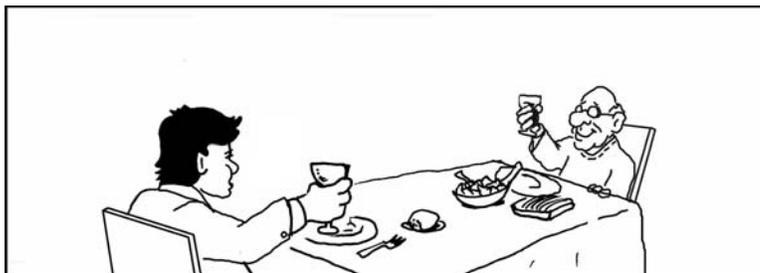
*Name* A toast.

*Meaning* This is used to express intimacy, or to commemorate an occasion, or as approval. The approval can be to honor to someone or something; one might say “Here’s to the great artist Alex,” or at the end of a speech someone might say, “To freedom.” The gesture in honor of someone or something is called “making a toast” or “toasting someone.”

*Description of movement* One person initiates the movement, then the others do the same, which is called “returning the toast.” The hand is lifted + *A nod of the head—acknowledgement*, then the glass is drunk from while looking at the other person(s). This is normally done when almost everyone in the group has an alcoholic drink. If someone is not a drinker of alcohol, the movement can be made but without drinking.

If in a small group, everyone clinks their glasses together, possibly one at a time..

The gesture can be done by someone who is alone to commemorate for himself or herself the meal or the thought.



Another CONTEXT CARTOON of a small group, with 2nd panel clinking glasses  
Another CONTEXT CARTOON of a large group, bubbles showing thinking about someone, and glasses raised as if to that person

*Emphatic* The entire glass of alcohol is drunk at one go.

*Diminutives* Raise the hand and make the movement without a glass.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Refusing to toast**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* When a toast is made to someone, something, or some idea, this shows disagreement that the person or thing should be honored. When a toast is made for intimacy, refusing to toast is an insult.

*Description of movement* When the toast is made, put your glass down, or if the subject of the toast is made clear before others pick up their glasses, don't pick up your glass. Stay seated if others stand.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *No* This intensifies it.

+ *Intense look*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Refusing to shake hands*

Related in form *Refusing to shake hands*

## **Another round**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Another round of drinks, please.

*Description of movement* In a restaurant or bar, you get the attention of the waiter or bartender and make a circle with the index finger pointing out. The eyebrows may be raised as if in a quizzical look.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

#### *Variations*

## **Holding a plate out for more food**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Please put more of that food on my plate so I can eat it.  
This is not generally impolite.

*Description of movement* A plate is held out at a level where the other person can put food on it.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

# ***Work***

**Let's get down to work—dust hands** — Rubbing your hands in anticipation

**Let's get down to work—wipe hands on pants**

**Let's get down to work—hitch up pants**

**That's that—dust hands** ——— **That's that—dust hands—metaphorical**

**That's done—shoot** ——— **Got'cha**

## Let's get down to work—dust hands



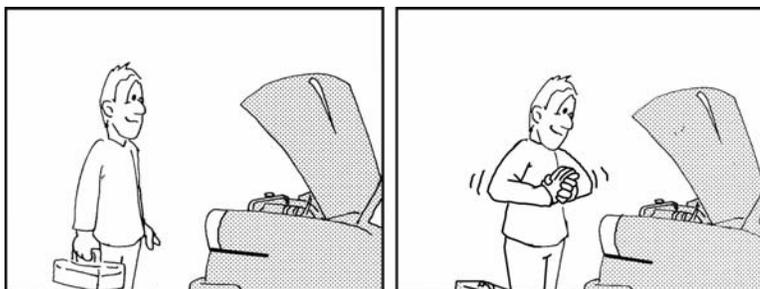
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* All right, let's get down to work.

This is also done alone. Though it may seem like this is just a physical preparation for work, it is quite standardized and clearly conveys meaning to others.

*Description of movement* This differs from *That's that* in that the hands are rubbed together like washing them and the look is determined rather than pleased. It is sometimes followed by *Let's get down to work—wipe hands on pants*.



*Gender* Men only. ???

*Combinable gestures with it*

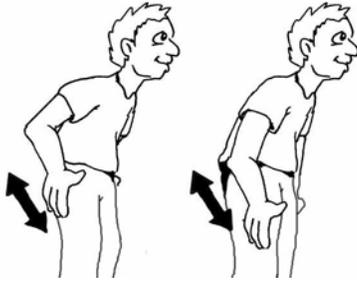
- + Yes
- + Intense look
- + Smile

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Let's get down to work—wipe hands on pants*

Related in form *That's that—dust hands Rubbing your hands in anticipation*

### Let's get down to work—wipe hands on pants



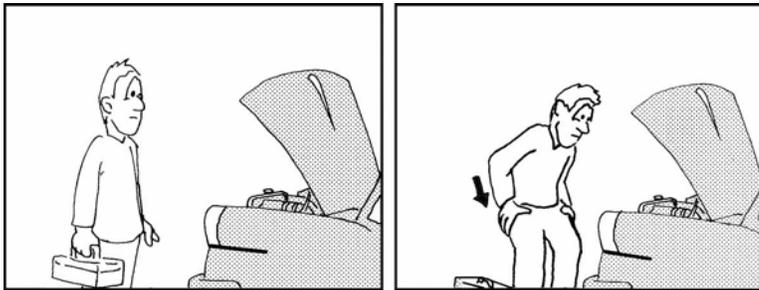
*Words spoken* “OK” with the breath expelled in a drawn out manner.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Let's get down to work.

This is also done alone. Though it may seem like this is just a physical preparation for work, it is quite standardized and clearly conveys meaning to others.

*Description of movement* Wipe hands on the sides of your pants as if to dry sweaty palms.



*Gender* Men only. ???

*Related in meaning* *Let's get down to work—dust hands*

## **Let's get down to work–hitch up pants**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Hitching up your pants.

*Meaning* Let's get down to work.

This is also done alone. Though it may seem like this is just a physical preparation for work, it is quite standardized and clearly conveys meaning to others.

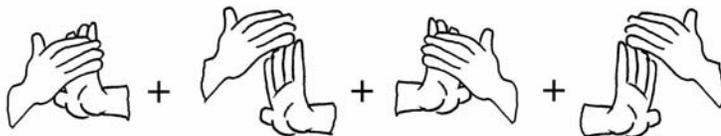
*Description of movement* Pull up your pants with both hands at the waist.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON** same as previous one modified to hitch up pants

*Gender* Men only.

Related in meaning *Let's get down to work–dust hands*

### **That's that–dust hands**



*Words spoken* None. “That’s that.” “Done.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* I’ve finished with that. That’s the end of that job or problem.

*Description of movement* Slap your hands as if you’re dusting them off. It’s more likely to be used in the presence of someone than *That’s done*.

It differs from *Let’s get down to work–dust hands* by context and the facial expression, which here is a smile and for the other is an intense look, and the hands are more slapped than wiped against each other.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON metaphorical use**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *That’s done–dust hands*

Related in form *Let’s get down to work–dust hands*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **That’s that–dust hands–metaphorical**

*That’s that–dust hands* can be used metaphorically to mean that you will have nothing more to do with what has been discussed. It is said that you are “wiping your hands of the matter.” In that case it is impolite if directed to the person who is discussing that matter.

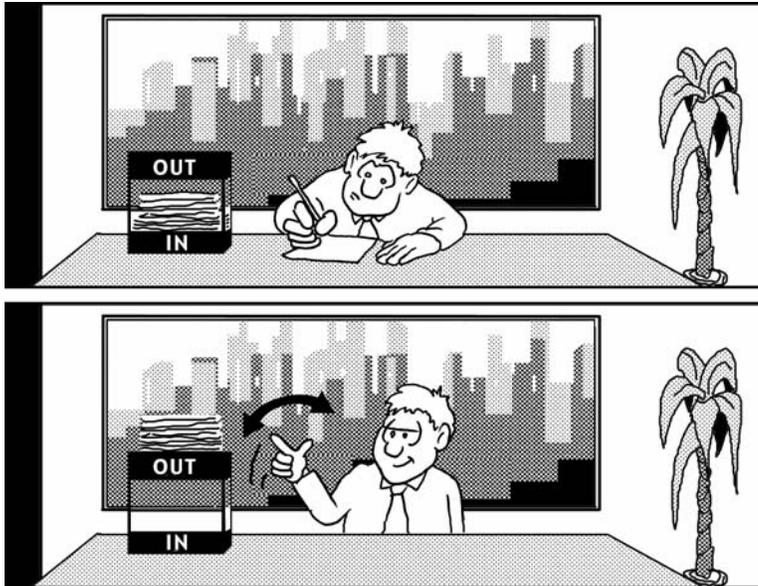
**That's that–shoot**  
**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None, though a tongue click can be made. “That’s that.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* I’ve finished that off. That’s done.

*Description of movement* This is more like shooting a gun than *Got’cha*. It’s often done alone.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *That's that–dust hands* *Got’cha*

Related in form *Got’cha*

## *Miscellaneous Commentary*

These gestures are commentaries that don't naturally fall into any of the other sections.

**Sleep**

**Pregnant** — Fat

**Quotes**

**Death—closing the eyes**

**Death—covering the face**

**Taking your hat off—respect** — Tip of the hat

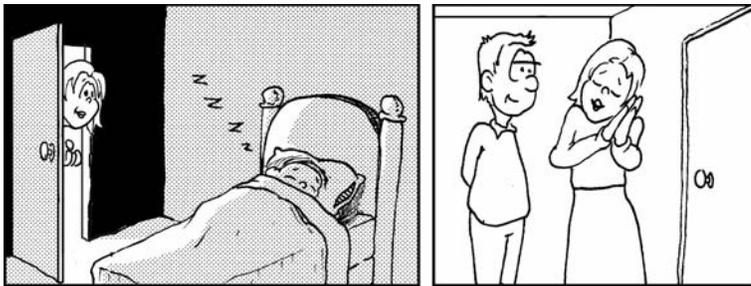
## Sleep



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Sleep. He/she/it is sleeping. I'm going to sleep.



revise, add third panel where she points to the door

*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes* Sequentially.
- + *No* Sequentially.
- + *The quizzical look* Sequentially.
- + *Pointing* Sequentially. This picks out who or what is or should be sleeping.
- + *Smile* Sequentially.

## **Married**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* That person is married, where it's clear who's referred to either by conversation or some kind of pointing.

*Description of movement* Hold out your left hand far from the body and point with the index finger of your right hand at the ring finger on your left hand.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes* Emphatic of the gesture.
- + *No* He/she isn't married.
- + *Quizzical look* Is he./she married?

*Related gestures*

- Homonyms *x*
- Synonyms *x*
- Antonyms *x*
- Related in meaning *x*
- Related in form *x*

*Variations*

## Pregnant

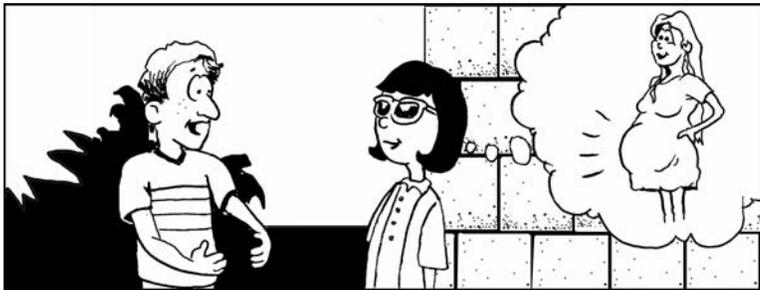


*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “She’s pregnant.” This is borderline impolite.

*Description of movement* The hands are moved up and down very little a couple times.  
The expression *Fat* has the same hand movement, but the cheeks are distended.



*Gender* Men only. (??)

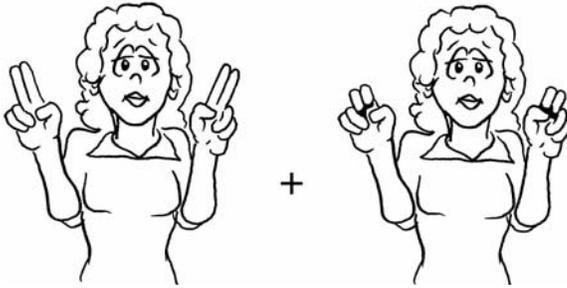
*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Fat*.

## Quotes



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Air quotes.

*Meaning* Scare quotes: what I've said is not to be taken literally.

This can also be used as actual quotes: what you're going to say or show with a gesture is an actual quote from someone.

*Description of movement* The movement is repeated twice. It's done before you say what you are disavowing.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Smile* This indicates that you're letting the other person in on the joke.

## **Death—closing the eyes**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This person is dead.  
A mark of respect for the dead.

*Description of movement* The eyelids of the dead person are pulled down with y our fingers and/or thumb.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Death—covering the face*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Death—covering the face**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This person is dead.  
A mark of respect for the dead.

*Description of movement* The whole body if possible, and if not then just the face is covered by a cloth, or blanket, or piece of clothing.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Death—closing the eyes*

## **Taking your hat off—respect**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a mark of respect to a solemn situation, for example, in the presence of a dead person, or at a funeral or other religious ceremony, or on entering a Christian church, or giving the Pledge of Allegiance.

Until recently it was considered impolite to wear a hat indoors, and it was a mark of respect to take your hat off when entering someone's home or a building

Previously it was also used to show respect in the presence of a superior.

*Description of movement* The hat is taken off. It's usually held in front of the body.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Tip of the hat*

Related in form *Tip of the hat*

# *Time*

See also *Time out*.

## **Time**

**You're late**      Time out

**Time's up**      | "Let me think"—finger held up

                     | "Excuse me"—index finger

**"Just a sec"** — | Howdy—finger

                     | One

**Hands clasped behind back—waiting**

**Tapping your foot—impatient waiting**

**Drumming your fingers—impatient waiting**

**Twiddling your thumbs**

## Time

**HEAD SHOT** one pointing to wrist watch close up

**HEAD SHOT** one pointing to wrist with no wrist watch

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “Note the time.” Time is the subject matter.

This is often done with one of the combinable gestures.

*Description of movement* Point with the index finger of your right hand to the top of your left wrist where you have a watch or where a watch would be if you had one.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes* Emphatic. “Hurry up.”

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

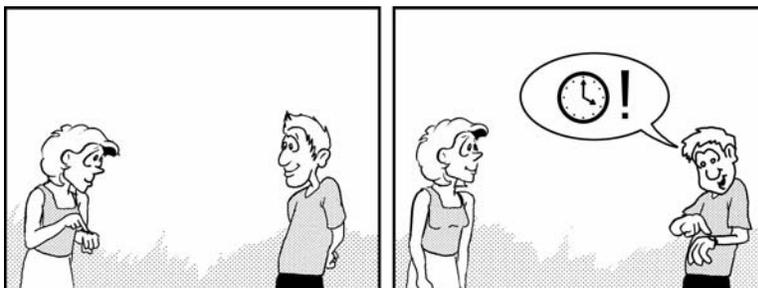
+ *No* “There’s no time.” “We’re out of time.” “Hurry up.”

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

+ *The intense look* “I’m serious about the time.”

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

+ *The quizzical look* “What’s the time?”



+ *The quizzical look + Yes* “Is there time?” or an emphatic of “What’s the time?”

+ *The angry look* “I’m angry about how long you are taking.”

“I’m angry that you’re late.”

+ *Irony* Comment on someone taking too long. Often with *Yes*.

*Related gestures*

Related in form *You’re late*

*Variation* Extend the hand and just look at the wrist.

## **You're late**

### **HEAD SHOTS**-two corresponding to the two descriptions

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Are you aware of what time it is?—in the context of someone being late. Are you aware how long you're taking?

*Description of movement* Look ostentatiously at your wrist, holding it up above waist level, as if checking the time combined with either *Are you putting me on?* or *Raising an eyebrow*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Time + Angry look*

Related in form *Time*

## Time's up



*Words spoken* None.

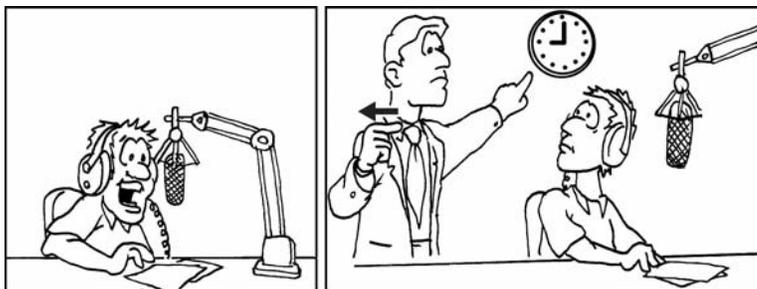
*Name* None.

*Meaning* This means that the time allotted to you is over and you must finish, and by extension of that it can mean that the other person should “cut it short” = end what they are doing or saying.

It's never done to a superior.

*Note* This does *not* mean suicide. This does *not* mean an unfortunate outcome that you brought on yourself, for which we use *Shooting yourself*.

*Description of movement* You need not point to a clock if the reference to time is understood from the context.



## CONTEXT CARTOON--cut short what you're doing, without reference to time

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *The intense look*

+ *The angry look*

+ *Pointing-finger*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Whoa! Stop!*

*Note:* Sahnny Johnson (1979) says that this can also mean that someone is in big trouble, though we have not seen it used that way.

## “Just a sec”



*Words spoken* None. “Just a sec” = just a second.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Please wait, as I won’t be long. What I’m doing or going to do will take only a short time.

This is a variation on *One* used in a context that indicates that it is meant as one second, or one minute, i.e., a very short time.

*Description of movement* This differs from *Let me think* by the facial expression, and the head is not bent down.



*Related gestures*

+ *Yes*

+ *No*

+ *The intense look*

+ *The quizzical look*

+ *The angry look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *Excuse me—index finger*

Related in form *Let me think—finger held up One*

## **Hands clasped behind back—waiting**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* I'm waiting.

*Description of movement* Hands are clasped behind back while looking around, possibly with a pursed mouth. Rising up and down on your toes is part of the movement.

This differs from *Hands clasped behind your back—thinking* in that the focus is outward, looking around, and you stay in one place, moving only up and down on your toes.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON--as in next cartoon**

*Gender* Men only. ???

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Tapping your foot—impatient waiting* *Twiddling your thumbs*

*Drumming your fingers—impatient waiting*

Related in form *Hands clasped behind back—waiting*

## Tapping your foot—impatient waiting

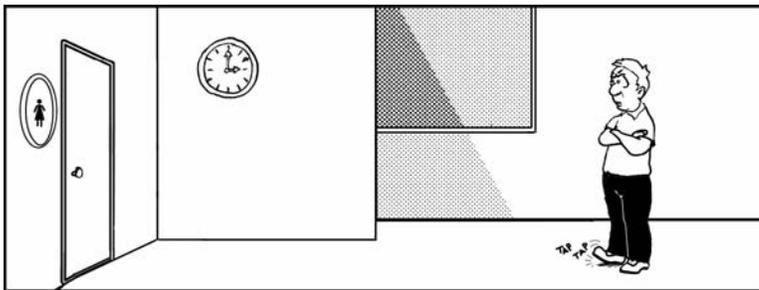


*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Tapping your foot.

*Meaning* Impatient waiting. “I’m disgusted with how long this is taking.”  
This is very impolite.

*Description of movement* This incorporates a diminutive version of *Angry look*.



*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Drumming your fingers—impatient waiting*

*Related in meaning* *Twiddling your thumbs*

## **Drumming your fingers—impatient waiting**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Drumming your fingers

*Meaning and context of use* This is a synonym of *Tapping your foot—impatient waiting*. It, too, is impolite.

*Description of movement* While seated, repeatedly tap your fingers on a table or chair arm in sequence from index finger to little finger.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Tapping your foot—impatient waiting*

Related in meaning *Twiddling your thumbs*

## Twiddling your thumbs



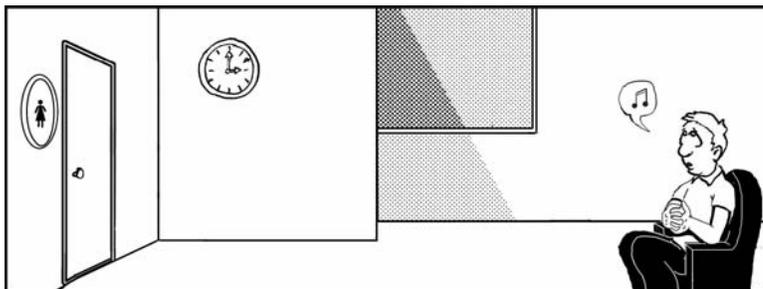
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Twiddling your thumbs

*Meaning* I'm bored and I've got nothing better to do than this.

This can be a nervous habit, but when used intentionally it indicates impatience or an ostentatious display of waiting.

*Description of movement* It can be combined with *Shaking your head in disbelief*.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *The intense look*

+ *The angry look*

+ *Irony*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Drumming your fingers—impatient waiting*

*Tapping your foot—impatient waiting*

# *Money*

**Money**

**"Pay up"**

**Begging with outstretched palm**

**Passing the hat**

**Snapping paper money**

## Money



*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Money is what it takes. Money is the motive. He/she has a lot of money. He/she is doing it for the money. He/she is avaricious.

*Description of movement* The index finger and thumb are rubbed together several times, as if feeling money.



*Combinable gestures with it*

- + *Yes* This makes it more emphatic.
- + *No* This means no money, I (he/she) have no money.
- + *The intense look*
- + *The quizzical look* Is it money? Do you have any money?
- + *Yes + The quizzical look* This is a plea for money or an earnest query whether the other person has money.
- + *The angry look* This is a negation: it's not money. You're wrong to think it's money. Combined with *No* it's very strong.
- + *Pointing* (finger)
- + *Pointing* (head)
- + *Pointing* (gaze)
- + *Irony*

**“Pay up”**

**HEAD SHOT** Hand outstretched

*Words spoken* None. “Pay up.” “Pay me.” “Money.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning* “Pay up.” “Pay me.” This is a demand to be paid.

*Description of movement* The hand is outstretched palm up, the palm is flat at waist level, arm extended with *The intense look* or *The angry look*. Shaking the hand up and down makes it more emphatic. It can be combined sequentially with *Money* to be more explicit.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Angry look*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Begging–outstretched palm*

Related in form *Begging–outstretched palm* *Offering an introduction*

## Begging with outstretched palm

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Begging. Asking for a handout

*Meaning and context of use* Begging for money.

*Description of movement* This is *Pay up* + *Quizzical look*, except that the hand is cupped and the arm is not extended. It's called "Asking for a handout," and the posture of the body is withdrawn.

It differs from *Pay up* not only in the facial expression but also in that the elbow is bent and the hand is held closer to the body.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No* + *The quizzical look*

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Pay up* *Offering-introduction*

**NOTE** *Putting a hat out*

A hat is put out in front as a static sign of a request for money to be put into it. This is used to ask for money. It is meant to be less intrusive, less personal, and is the typical way someone who is playing music in a public place (a "busker") will try to collect money for his or her performance. In that case an open musical instrument case, like a guitar case, is used in place of a hat, and the performer puts some money in it before beginning to indicate the purpose of the hat being there.

## **Passing the hat**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Passing the hat. The phrase is used absent the gesture when a request for money to be donated is made to a group, even when that group is not present.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a way to collect money from a group of people.

*Description of movement* A hat is passed around a group of people with the expectation that at least some of them will put money into it. The hat can be passed from person to person, or one person can go around the group with the hat, putting it in front of each other person, each time using the *Quizzical look*.

It need not be a hat that is passed around: any small object in which money could be collected will serve, such as a small box or a basket. It is regularly done in some Christian churches with a special plate (“collection plate”) for that purpose.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Yes* + *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Pay up*

Related in form *Pay up*

## Snapping paper money

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is done when given paper money. It looks like you're checking whether it's real, but the significance of the gesture is rather that you are certifying for yourself that you've got the money, a small pleasure that you actually have it.

*Description of movement* Each end of the piece of paper money is taken with a thumb and forefinger of one hand and the ends are brought towards each other than quickly extended to the full length of the bill with a snap, which is repeated once.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Money*

*NOTE* *Biting a coin*

In olden times one might bite on a coin to determine if it were real gold, as gold is malleable. But that wasn't a gesture, for it had no value beyond actually testing whether the coin was real.

# *Luck, Superstitions, Oaths*

**Fingers crossed–good luck** — Fingers crossed–lying

Begging like a puppy | — **"Oh Lord, let it be"** — Swami  
Begging

**Making the sign of the cross**

**Knock on wood** — Rapping on a table for attention  
Knocking on a door

**Throwing salt over your shoulder**

**Swearing on a bible**    **I swear** — Stop!

**"Cross my heart"**

**My lips are sealed**

**Putting your hand over your heart**

**Saluting the flag**

## Fingers crossed—good luck



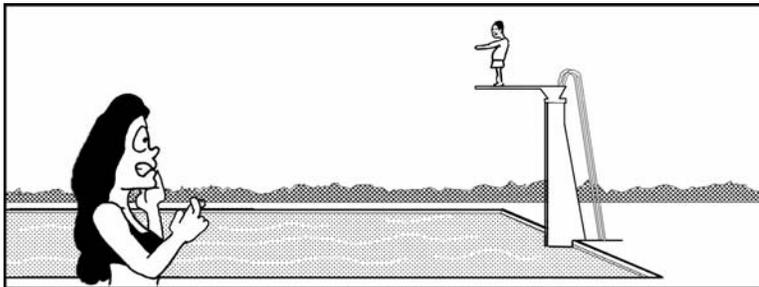
*Words spoken* “Fingers crossed.”

*Name* Fingers crossed.

*Meaning* Good luck. I hope this turns out well. I hope you/I succeed.

This can be combined with *Biting your nails* or *Biting your lip*.

*Description of movement* Distinguished from *Fingers crossed—lying* by the hand being held in front of the body as well as by the facial expression.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No* This means that you hope there won't be a bad outcome.

+ *Intense look*

+ *Biting your lip*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Oh Lord, let it be* *Making the sign of the cross*

*Knock on wood* *Throwing salt over your shoulder*

Related in form *Fingers crossed—lying*

### “Oh Lord, let it be”

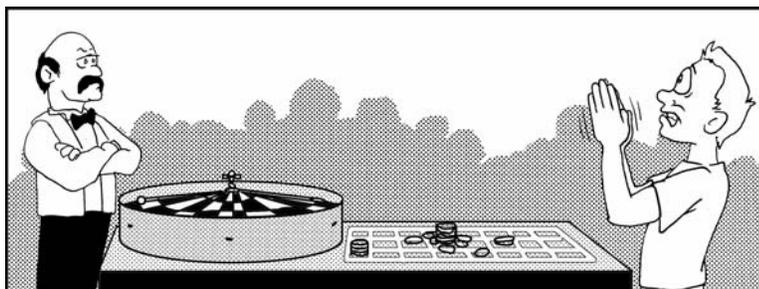


revise, head not lifted so much but eyes rolled upwards--perhaps two cartoons, one side, one front

*Words spoken* None. “Oh Lord, let it be.” “Dear God let it be.”

*Meaning* This is almost the posture of praying. But it is not actual prayer. It indicates strong hope for a favorable outcome. May it happen. May it really come to pass. This is more emphatic than *Crossing your fingers*. It is done by people who are not religious. It is often done when someone says something that you hope will come true, or when you’re looking at something hoping that it will turn out all right. It can be done jokingly as an exaggerated indication of hope.

*Description of movement* This is the posture people take when praying except that the head is raised and the hands are moved forward and back slightly repeatedly.



revise to agree

with new head shot.

HEAD SHOT 2 -- mother watching a child on a high diving board???

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Swami Begging like a puppy Begging*

Related in form *Swami May it come to pass—head only*

*NOTE* Praying is not a gesture, for it has no symbolic value beyond the actual praying.

*Variations*

- Sometimes a person will clasp his or her hands together, fingers intertwined, looking more forward, which is less of a prayer than a wish.

**May it be so—head only**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None

*Name* None

*Meaning and context of use* May what you just said come to pass, as if invoking heaven.

*Description of movement* The head is tilted backward with the face at about a 45 degree angle upwards with the eyebrows lifted.

**CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms “*Oh Lord, let it be*”

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

*Variations*

## **Making the sign of the cross**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Making the sign of the cross.

*Meaning* Warding off evil. May this not come to pass.

It is said that this was once believed to ward off vampires, but it's used that way now only as a joke. Generally now this is used to exaggerate the danger or unpleasantness of a possible outcome in a jokey way.

Except for very religious Christians, this has no religious significance now, though previously it did, when a real cross hung around the neck might be held up in front of the body.

*Description of movement* The fingers are held up in a cross in front of the body at chest height.

**CONTEXT CARTOON--offering candy to a woman who makes the sign of the cross (this actually happened to me recently!)**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Fingers crossed* *Oh Lord, let it be* *Knock on wood*

*Throwing salt over your shoulder*

## **Knock on wood**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Knock on wood.”

*Name* To knock on wood.

*Meaning* This is used to ward off evil, for good luck as in “May it be so,” or to preserve a predicted favorable outcome.

*Description of movement* The knuckles are rapped on a piece of wood, usually three times.

Sometimes the wood is only touched, in which case the person might say “Touch wood,” which is how the gesture would be called, too.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Fingers crossed—good luck* *Making the sign of the cross*

*Oh Lord, let it be* *Throwing salt over your shoulder*

Related in form *Rapping on a table for attention* *Knocking on a door*

## **Throwing salt over your shoulder**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning* Warding off bad luck. This is done only after having spilled salt, which is believed to bring bad luck if not followed by this gesture.

*Description of movement* Some grains of salt are thrown backwards over the shoulder opposite to the hand that holds the salt.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Fingers crossed—good luck* *Making the sign of the cross*

*Oh Lord, let it be* *Knock on wood*

## I swear



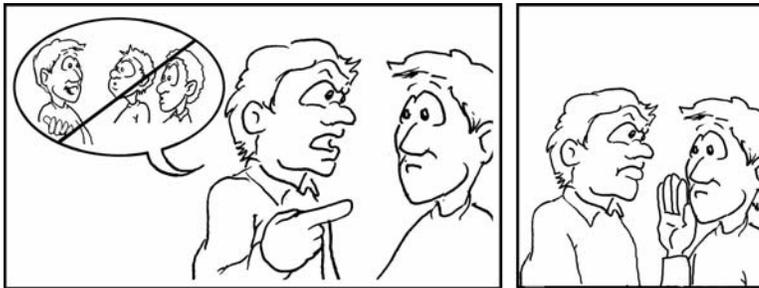
*Words spoken* None. "I swear," or the particular words of the oath being taken.

*Name* To swear to something. To take an oath

*Meaning* On my honor, it's true. I swear that I have told the truth. I swear that I will tell the truth. I swear to obey the rules you just set out. I swear that I will keep it a secret.

*Description of movement* Only the right hand is used.

On my honor it's true.



Taking an oath.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** [without bible](#)

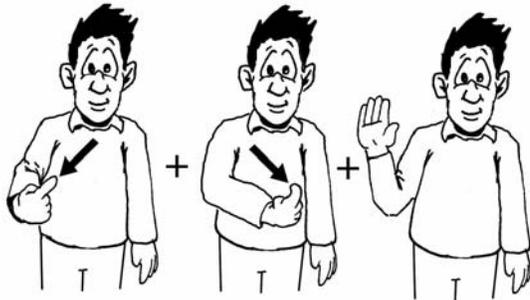
*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Swearing on a bible* *Cross my heart* *My lips are sealed*

Related in form *Stop!*

*NOTE* *Swearing on a Bible* To swear on a Bible requires speech, the particular words of the oath being taken, and hence is not a conventional gesture. It is an emphatic of *I swear* and was previously used in swearing-in a government official to take up his or her post.

### “Cross my heart”

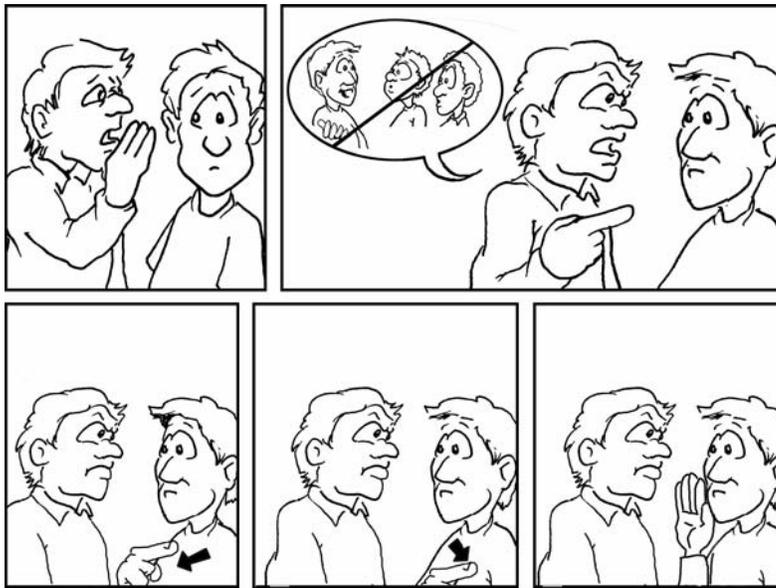


*Words spoken* “Cross my heart.” “Cross my heart and hope to die.”

*Name* To cross your heart.

*Meaning* This is an oath that you are telling the truth. I swear it’s true.

This is an emphatic of *I swear*. It is rarely done to a superior. Mostly it is done by children or by adults in a jokey manner.



Related in meaning *Swearing on a bible* *I swear* *My lips are sealed*

## **My lips are sealed**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Zipping your lips

*Meaning* “You’re secret is safe with me” = I won’t tell anyone.

*Description of movement* An index finger and thumb together are drawn across the lips which are closed, like closing a zipper. This is very informal.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

Related in meaning *Swearing on a bible* *I swear* *Cross my heart*

Related in form *Stop!*

## Putting your hand over your heart



revise, look directly at the other person

*Words spoken* None. “Would I lie to you?”

*Name* Putting your hand over your heart.

*Meaning* I swear it’s true. Can be combined with *I swear*.

## CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Related in form *Humble me* *Moi*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Saluting the flag



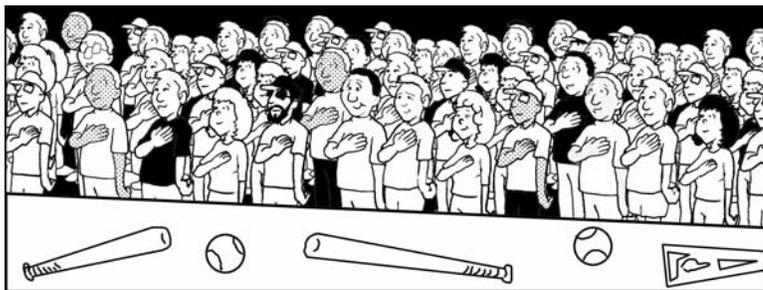
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Saluting the flag.

*Meaning* Saluting the flag. Typically this is done when the “Pledge of allegiance” is recited by a group or when the national anthem is played.

Not to do it when everyone else is doing it is a political statement.

*Description of movement* Either this is done or *Salute*, but not both.



*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Salute* (in context)

# How Much, Counting

In this section are gestures indicating quantity, size, and number. See also *More* and *Less* in the section *Demands and Requests*.

**"Just a bit"**

**This small**

**This big**  She's stacked

**This size by this size**

**This tall**

**Counting to yourself**

**Counting to others**

	<b>One</b> 	"Just a sec"
	<b>Two</b> 	"Excuse me"—index finger
Victory		"Let me think"—finger held up
Peace		Howdy—finger

**Three**

**Four**

**Five**

**Six**

**Seven**

**Eight**

**Nine**

	<b>Ten</b> 	Whoa!
		Stop!
		Sorry
A-OK	<b>Zero</b> 	
Perfect		

**Nothing—empty hands** — That's that—dust hands

### **“Just a bit”**



*Words spoken* None. “Just a bit.” “Just a little.” “A little.”

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* Give me just a little of that. A little of whatever is the subject.

*Description of movement* The thumb and forefinger are held close to the body and head and the gap between them is roughly perpendicular to the ground, while you look at your fingers.

Note that the person making the gesture looks at his fingers, thereby directing attention to the movement.



revise, man making the gesture should be looking at his fingers

*Emphatics* The fingers can be squeezed together in movement to indicate very small.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Yes* + *The quizzical look*

+ *The intense look*

+ *Pointing* (head)

+ *Irony*

This converts the gesture to its negative: Sure I mean just a bit—ha, ha.

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *This small*

Related in form *This small*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **“A short distance”—hitchhiking**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* When a person is hitchhiking and does *Just a bit* it means that he or she want a ride for only a short distance.

When a driver does *Just a bit* when driving past a person hitchhiking it means that he or she is going only a short distance, otherwise he or she would stop and give a ride.

When followed by *Just a bit* it means that you want a ride for only a short distance.

When the driver shows *Just a bit* it means that he or she is going only a short distance and so

**This small**

**HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* The thing under discussion is small or this size.

*Description of movement* This differs from *Just a bit* by the gap between the fingers being parallel to the ground and the hand held lower and farther from the body.

**CONTEXT CARTOON -- someone hitchhiking and the driver makes this gesture**

This is used to show that the driver is going only a little way and that is why he or she isn't stopping to pick up the hitchhiker.

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Just a bit This big This size by this size*

Related in form *Just a bit This big This size by this size*

## This big



*Words spoken* None. “This big.”

*Name* None, but saying “This big” elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning and context of use* This indicates roughly the size of the thing you are talking about: this big, or simply big.

It’s also used to indicate a lot of some mass, and then the hands are cupped.

To make it more emphatic the hands are shook up and down in unison a couple times.



## CONTEXT CARTOON 2 -- indicating a big mass

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No*

+ *The intense look*

+ *The quizzical look*

+ *Pointing (head)*

+ *Irony*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *She’s stacked This small This size by this size*

Related in form *She’s stacked This small This size by this size*

## **This size by this size**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is how we indicate the size of an object.

*Description of movement* First the palms are held apart facing each other perpendicular to the ground and perpendicular to the body for the width of the object, then they are held parallel to the ground and perpendicular to the body facing each other for the height of the object. Less common is to follow that with one palm facing your body perpendicular to the ground and the other palm also facing your body closer to your body perpendicular to the ground for the third dimension of the object.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *This big This small*

Related in form *This big*

## **This tall**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to indicate the height of something, namely, the distance from the ground to your palm. It is used for animals, people, children, and things. It is not impolite.

*Description of movement* The hand is held palm downward away from the body parallel to the ground.

Typically this is used for the height of something shorter than you, but the hand can be raised higher than the head so long as the palm is parallel to the ground. The farther the arm is extended away from the body the more emphatic the gesture is.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No*

+ *The intense look*

+ *The quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

## **Counting to yourself**

### **HEAD SHOTS from 1 to 10**

*Name* Counting on your fingers.

Typically we count to ourselves with our fingers starting with a closed hand palm facing inward to the chest, extending first the thumb, then index finger, then each finger successively on one hand until the entire hand is open for 5, then for 6 we start the procedure on the other hand beginning with the thumb continuing then to 10.

To count further, after 10 we close both hands into fists and repeat the procedure.

Often we say the numbers as we count.

Some people use the movements for *Counting to others* to count to themselves, except with the palm facing inwards.

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Counting to others*

## Counting to others

**One**

HEAD SHOT

**Two**

HEAD SHOT

**Three**

HEAD SHOT

**Four**

HEAD SHOT

**Five**

HEAD SHOT

**Six**

HEAD SHOT

**Seven**

HEAD SHOT

**Eight**

HEAD SHOT

**Nine**

HEAD SHOT

**Ten**

HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. The word for the number can be mouthed.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* These are typically done at a distance or in a situation where the other person cannot hear you, and we don't say the numbers.

*Description of movement* Typically we count to others by directing the closed hand facing outwards at shoulder level and beginning with the index finger for 1, then extending each finger successively up to 4 which is all fingers extended, then the thumb is extended for 5. Then we continue by doing the same on the other hand.

We also display numbers this way without counting, simply holding up the appropriate number of fingers, though this is usually done only for numbers up to 5, or for 10 with both hands quickly opened and held with all fingers splayed. Sometimes we exaggeratedly mouth the numbers.

We can display multiples of 5 by repeatedly opening and closing the hand, and multiples of 10 by repeatedly opening and closing both hands. Thus for 24 we can do the following.

HEAD SHOT 10 + 10 + 4

To indicate distinct groups of people or things we can show one number on one hand and then another or same number on the other hand, usually successively.

CONTEXT CARTOON 2 + 3 -- showing ordering drinks

*Related gestures for One*

Homonyms *Just a sec*

Related in meaning *Just a sec Let me think–finger held up*

Related in form *Let me think–finger held up*

*Related gestures for Five*

Homonyms *Whoa! Stop!*

*Related gestures for Ten*

Homonyms *Whoa! Stop! Nothing–empty hands Sorry*

## Zero



revise, no movement lines and palm outward

We can display zero to another person by making a circle with our index finger and thumb as in *A-OK*, palm facing the other person. Only the context of use and possibly the facial expression distinguishes this from *A-OK*.

*NOTE* This is *not* an obscene gesture.

*Related gestures*

Related in form *A-OK* *Perfect*

## **Nothing–empty hands**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Empty hands.

*Meaning and context of use* That's all there is. I'm not hiding anything. I don't have anything. There's nothing.

This is how we show the other person that we have nothing, where the context might mean that this means no money, or no food, or no weapon.

*Description of movement* The hands are held in front of the chest or waist, palms out with fingers splayed pointed downwards. They can be rotated a bit. More emphatic is to add *No* and/or *Biting your lip*.

Preceding it by *That's that–dust hands* this is more an indication of an activity coming to an end. Dealers at casinos do the combination at the end of their shift before they walk away from a table to show that they have no chips; we do not know if that's where the gesture originated.

Note that this is exactly the same movement as *Stop!* except that the fingers point downward rather than upward.

**CONTEXT CARTOON** two people, one has \$\$\$ in baloon, other shows hands empty????

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *No*

+ *Intense look*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Zero That's that That's done That's that–dust hands*

Related in form *Whoa! Stop! Go that way–palm Ten Sorry*

# *Sexual and Obscene*

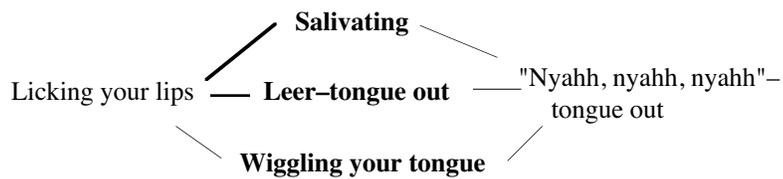
See also *The finger*.

Some of these are quite aggressive and are related to the gestures for anger or threat.

**"What a babe!"**

This big — **She's stacked** — Pregnant

**Wolf whistle**



**Pat on the ass—sexual**

**Hand on knee—sexual**

Patting a knee—reassuring  
Hand on knee—reassuring

**Limp wrist**

**Licking your eyebrow**

**Batting your eyelashes**

**Wink—sexual** — Wink

**Kiss, kiss** — Whistling like for a dog  
Blowing a kiss

**"He's jerking you around"**

**Pelvic thrust**

**Mooning**

**Exposing your breasts**

**"Eat me!"—hand on crotch**

**"Eat me!"—point to crotch**

The finger

### **“What a babe!”**



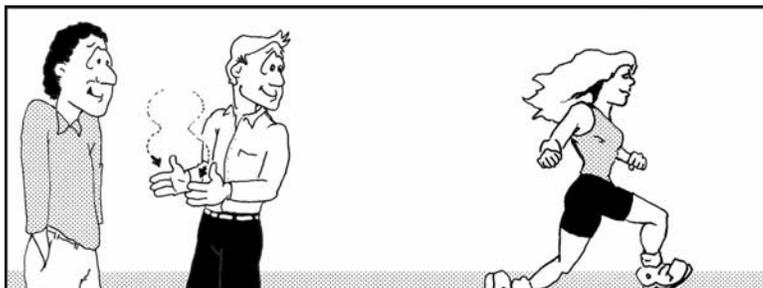
*Words spoken* “What a babe!” “Wow!” “Look at that build.” “Check her out” = look at and appreciate her. Wolf whistle.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* She’s really sexy. She has a very sexy body.

This is done only by a man to a man about a woman.

*Description of movement* Outline the shape of a woman’s torso and hips.



*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *No*

+ *Pointing* (head)

+ *Pointing* (gaze)

+ *Smile* This re-inforces the meaning to lasciviousness.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *She’s stacked* *Wolf whistle*

## **She's stacked**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None, but saying "She's stacked" elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning and context of use* She's stacked = she has big desirable breasts.

*Description of movement* A man holds his hands in front of his chest with the palms cupped and facing the chest, shaking them as if he were the woman holding her breasts.

This is impolite bordering on obscene.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Man to man only.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Wolf whistle* *What a babe!* *This big*

Related in form *Pregnant* *This big*

## **Wolf whistle**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* The wolf whistle:



*Name* Wolf whistle.

A sexually predatory man is called a “wolf,” though that expression is now not common.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used to indicate appreciation of a woman’s sexual attractiveness. It’s done only by a man to a woman to communicate to another man or to the woman herself. It is very impolite.

It can be used more generally for admiration of anything that someone does.

This was previously done by men only, but some women do it to men now.

*Description of movement* The head is moved in a diminutive of *Come here–head*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON—with woman**

### **CONTEXT CARTOON-- appreciation of what someone has done**

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *She’s stacked* *What a babe!*

## Salivating over someone or something

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* He's standing there with his tongue out.

*Meaning and context of use* This indicates appreciation and anticipation of pleasure.

It's mostly used by men.?? It is impolite but not necessarily obscene.

*Description of movement* The eyebrows are raised and the head is shaken up and down slightly in a diminutive of *Yes* while the tongue is out and salivating.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Begging like a puppy*

Related in form *Leer-tongue out Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh-tongue out*

*Wiggling your tongue Giving the raspberries Licking your lips Spitting*

*Begging like a puppy*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Leer-tongue out

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Leering.

*Meaning and context of use* An exaggeration of *Salivating* used for sexual desire or invitation. It is very impolite bordering on obscene.

*Description of movement* The head is tilted to one side with the tongue out and to the side of the mouth and the eyes rolled upwards.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Tongue out anticipation Wink Wiggling your tongue*

*Wolf whistle Kiss, kiss*

Related in form *Tongue out anticipation Begging like a puppy*

*Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh-tongue out Wiggling your tongue*

*Giving the raspberries Licking your lips Spitting*

## **Wiggling your tongue**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is an invitation to sexual intercourse. It is very crude and often used aggressively. Obscene.

*Description of movement* Wiggle the tongue outside the mouth pointed in the direction of the other person. It can be done by a man or a woman.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* There are no gender restrictions on this.

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Tongue out anticipation* *Wolf whistle* *Wink*  
*Eat me!* *Kiss, kiss*

Related in form *Tongue out anticipation* *Begging like a puppy* *Spitting*  
*Nyahh, nyahh, nyahh, nyahh–tongue out* *Giving the raspberries* *Licking your lips*

## **Pat on the ass–sexual**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is used by a man to “cop a feel” = get a chance to touch a woman sexually without permission. It is very aggressive, as it is normally unwanted by the woman.

*Description of movement* The man puts his hand on the woman’s ass.

Previously a man might pinch a woman on the ass, but that seems to be archaic now.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

*Homonyms* *Pat on the ass–approval*

*Related in meaning* *Hand on knee–reassuring* *Kiss, kiss*

*Pat on the ass–sexual* *Wiggling your tongue* *Tongue out leer*

## **Hand on knee–sexual**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is an invitation to become sexually more intimate.

It is aggressive if combined with *Leer–tongue out*.

*Description of movement* A man puts his hand on a woman's knee while she is seated, or vice-versa a woman puts her hand on a man's knee.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Pat on the ass–sexual Kiss, kiss Hand on knee–reassuring*

*Kiss, kiss Pat on the ass–sexual Wiggling your tongue Tongue out leer*

Related in form *Knee slap approval Hand on knee–sexual*

*Hand on knee–reassuring Getting ready to leave*

## Limp wrist



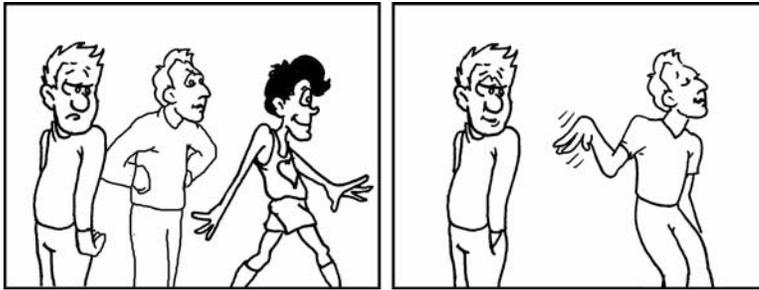
*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Limp wrist.

*Meaning and context of use* This is meant to be an imitation of a homosexual man, indicating that the person under discussion or being pointed to is a homosexual.

It's a synonym of *Licking your eyebrow*.

*Description of movement* The head is tilted to the side and up, the wrist of one hand is bent and limp, and this is often accompanied by a mincing step.



*Gender* Man to man or man to woman only. (??)

*Related gestures*

*Synonyms* *Licking your eyebrow*

## **Licking your eyebrow**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Licking your eyebrow.

*Meaning and context of use* This is meant to be an imitation of a homosexual man, indicating that the person under discussion or being pointed to is a homosexual.

It's a synonym of *Limp wrist*

*Description of movement* The head is tilted to the side, a fake smile is put on, the little finger is licked and then drawn across the eyebrow on the same side as the hand. The shoulder can be turned down with the head and a little sideways movement made with the hips.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Man to man or man to woman only.

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Limp wrist*

## **Batting your eyelashes**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None

*Name* Batting your eyelashes

*Meaning and context of use* This is as a sexual invitation when used by a woman to a man.

Sometimes this is used by men as a joke, imitating a woman to indicate a come-here attitude. It can also be used by a woman to a man as a joke by exaggerating it.

*Description of movement* The head is tilted slightly, the eyes are fluttered (winked) rapidly several times, with a smile bordering on a pout.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Men only.

*Related gestures*

Synonyms *Wink–sexual*

Related in form *Yes–eyes only*

## Wink—sexual



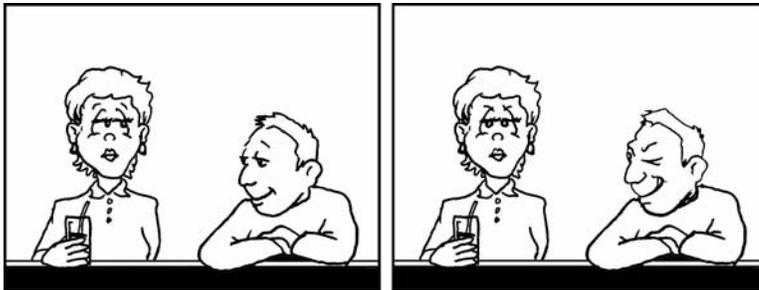
revise: add arrow down, head tilted

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Winking at someone.

*Meaning* Let's collude on an affair. "Come here."

It can be done sarcastically or as a joke.



*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Batting your eyelashes*

Related in form *Yes—eyes only*

"When we like somebody, we smile. When we want to do something about it, we wink."

Maurice Chevalier in the film *The Smiling Lieutenant*, 1931.

## **Kiss, kiss**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Kiss, kiss” may be spoken before or after it, and that phrase elicits the image of this movement.

*Name* Kiss, kiss.

#### *Meaning and context of use*

Man to woman: Though this can be a sexual invitation, it is not normally. Rather it is used as a sarcastic or aggressive way to indicate that the man thinks the woman is unreasonably angry and he wants to “make up” = reconcile.

Woman to man: As for man to man but it can also be a sexual invitation.

Man to man or woman to woman: A sexual invitation and obscene and aggressive.

This can also be used by a woman performer while the audience is applauding at the end of a performance to indicate appreciation, “I love you,” but the chin is not raised. Then it is not impolite or obscene.

*Description of movement* Kiss the air in front of you twice, with your lips pointed towards the other person and your chin slightly raised.

### **CONTEXT CARTOONS**

#### **including one towards an audience**

#### *Related gestures*

Related in form *Blowing a kiss Embrace and kissing the air*

*Kiss on the cheek Kiss on the mouth*

Related in meaning *Pat on the ass–sexual Kiss, kiss*

*Hand on knee–reassuring Hand on knee–sexual*

*Pat on the ass–sexual Wiggling your tongue Tongue out leer*

### “He’s jerking you around”



#### Revise- put hand at side of body

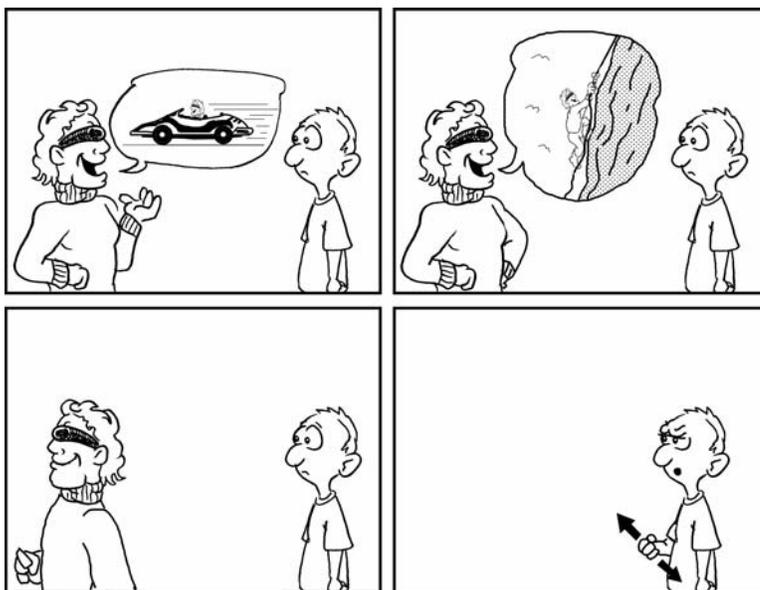
*Words spoken* None. “He’s jerking you around.” “He’s jerking you off.”

*Name* None, but saying “He’s jerking you around” elicits the image of the movement. “To jek off” = to masturbate.

*Meaning and context of use* He or she is trying to make you believe something false or stupid, often in order to take advantage of you. “He’s jerking you around” = “He’s jerking your chain” = he’s trying to manipulate you.

This is done by men to men only. It is very impolite, but is not meant as obscene or sexual.

*Description of movement* Pretend to masturbate. The mouth is open with a variation of *Irony*, or a false smile, or *The angry look*, or a vacant, stupid look.



#### REVISE--third person, one who does gesture does this to the third one

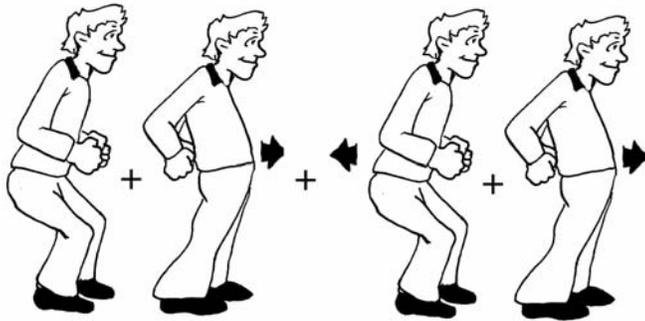
*Gender* Men only.

#### *Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Scorn*

Related in form *Eat me!*

### Pelvic thrust

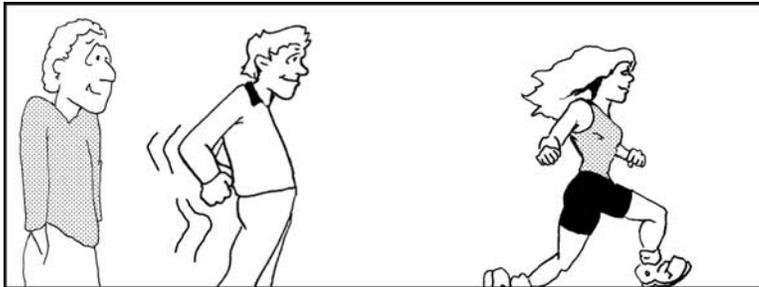


*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* I'd like to have sexual intercourse with her.  
Obscene.

*Description of movement* The hips are thrust forward and back twice as if in sexual intercourse.  
Often the upper teeth bite down on the lower lip as if in very intense intercourse.



*Gender* Men only.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *What a babe!* *Wolf whistle* *She's stacked* *Tongue out leer*  
*Salivating over someone or something* *Wiggling your tongue*

## **Mooning**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Mooning.

*Meaning and context of use* Normally this is just exhibitionism done by adolescent men. But it can be done as an insult.

*Description of movement* Expose your buttocks, bend over, and direct them at the other person. Normally done only at a distance.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Men only.????

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Exposing your breasts*

## **Exposing your breasts**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* Exposing your breasts

*Meaning and context of use* Take a look at this. Wouldn't you like some of this?

This can be just simple exhibitionism, but is often meant as a sexual enticement for what can't be had, or as just aggression. Aggressive and obscene.

*Description of movement* This can be combined with *Wiggling your tongue*.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Gender* Women to a man or men only.

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *She's stacked* *Mooning*

## **“Eat me!”**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Eat me” mouthed.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is an obscene insult that is a challenge to fight, suggesting that the other person should perform fellatio on you. Contempt.

*Description of movement* The index finger is jabbed several times towards the crotch, with the rest of the hand curled in and the head is tilted at an angle, rather than holding the crotch. The face is *Angry look* and very intense. The words need not be spoken.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

#### *Related gestures*

Homonyms *x*

Synonyms *x*

Antonyms *x*

Related in meaning *x*

Related in form *x*

#### *Variations*

# *Offerings and Refusals*

## *Offerings*

**Offering your hand for a handshake**  
**Offering your hand to walk hand-in-hand**  
**Offering your arm to walk arm-in-arm**  
**Offering your cheek to be kissed**  
**Offering your lips to be kissed**

## *Refusals*

**No thanks**

**Static refusal**

**Active refusal**

**Strong rejection refusal**

**Refusing to shake hands**  
**Refusing someone's hand**  
**Refusing someone's arm**  
**Refusing to kiss someone on the cheek**  
**Refusing to kiss someone on the lips**  
**Refusing to toast**  
**Turning your back on someone**  
**Averting your eyes**  
**Get out of here**

**Offering your hand in assistance**

**Offering an object**

**Offering something—hand point**

After you — "Voilà!" — | Go that way—palm  
Introducing someone

## ***Offerings***

Beginning any reciprocal gesture before the other person does is a kind of offering, an offer to participate in that gesture. The following are understood as distinct gestures.

- **Offering your hand for a handshake**

The hand is extended from the body at waist level with palm perpendicular to the ground. It is listed in *Greetings, Farewells, and Introductions* as *Offering your hand in friendship*.

[CONTEXT CARTOON](#)

- **Offering your hand to walk hand-in-hand**

The hand is extended from the body at waist level with palm up.

[CONTEXT CARTOON](#)

- **Offering your arm to walk arm-in-arm**

The arm is crooked and extended from with the elbow pointed towards the other person.

[CONTEXT CARTOON](#)

- **Offering your cheek to be kissed**

[CONTEXT CARTOON](#)

- **Offering your lips to be kissed**

[CONTEXT CARTOON](#)

In this section we list additional offerings.

## ***Refusals***

If the other person to whom an offer is made clearly notes what is done and does not complete the gesture, then that is another gesture, a *refusal* and, depending on the kind of offer, context, and way in which the refusal is done it can be mild or quite a strong rejection.

***No thanks*** Simply doing *No—shaking your head* indicates that you don't want to complete the gesture. This is polite.

***Static refusal*** Simply disregard the offer. Do nothing or continue doing what you were doing. This is not polite.

***Active refusal*** Look at the person or at the thing being offered and then look away, possibly with *Supercilious/Contempt*. This is a definite rejection.

***Strong rejection refusal*** Look at the person or at the thing being offered and do *Get out of here*.

Several refusals are noteworthy enough to be considered distinct gestures.

- **Refusing to shake hands**

This is listed in *Greetings, Farewells, and Introductions*.

- **Refusing someone's hand**

- **Refusing someone's arm**

- **Refusing to kiss someone's cheek**

- **Refusing to kiss someone on the lips**

This is often done by averting the lips.

[CONTEXT CARTOON](#)

- **Refusing to toast**

This is listed in *Eating and Drinking*.

- **Turning your back on someone**

This is listed in *Disapproval, Anger, Challenges, Threats*.

- **Averting your eyes**

This is listed in *Disapproval, Anger, Challenges, Threats*.

- **Get out of here**

This is listed in *Directing movement*.

## **Offering your hand in assistance**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None. “Here, take my hand.”

*Name* Offering someone a hand. Giving someone a hand. Extending your hand to someone.

*Meaning and context of use* This is an offer to someone to take your hand when he or she needs help standing up, or balancing, or climbing. We say that you’re “giving someone a hand” whenever you come to their aid.

Only the context distinguishes this from *Offering your hand to walk hand-in-hand*.

*Description of movement* The hand is extended with the palm ready to be grasped by the other person, with the expectation that the other person will take the offered hand with his or her hand.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

*Homonyms* *Offering your hand to walk hand-in-hand*

*Extending your hand in friendship*

*Related in meaning* *Extending your hand in friendship* *Go that way–palm*

*Related in form* *Go that way–palm*

*Refusal*

*Active refusal* or *Strong rejection refusal* indicates not only that you don’t need the other person’s help but that you don’t want any help from that person—now or ever.

## Offering an object

### HEAD SHOT

*Words spoken* None. “Go ahead, take it.” “For you.”

*Name* Offering someone something.

*Meaning and context of use* This is how we offer an object to someone.

*Description of movement* The object is held in one hand that is extended toward the other person, with the expectation that the other person will take the object with his or her hand. The hand is usually under or on the side of the object. Two hands can be used for a large object.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

*Refusal*

*Active refusal* or *Strong rejection refusal* indicates that you don't want anything from that person or that you think that what is being offered is no good.

## **Offering something—hand point**

### **HEAD SHOT**

*Words spoken* None.

*Name* None.

*Meaning and context of use* This is a form of pointing with your hand that amounts to an offering. Thus, we can offer someone a piece of pie, or a place to sit by pointing to the thing or place.

We also introduce people this way, as if offering the other person to them. This is listed separately as *Introducing someone*.

We can also offer to let someone go first by pointing to the direction both of us want to go, which is the gesture *After you*.

*Description of movement* The hand is open and the fingers are together. Depending on context the palm is tilted slightly upwards or faces entirely upwards. The direction of the hand from wrist to fingertips points to what is being offered.

### **CONTEXT CARTOON 1 Offering a piece of pie**

### **CONTEXT CARTOON 2 Offering someone a seat**

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Quizzical look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Homonyms *After you* *Introducing someone* *Go that way—palm*

Related in meaning *After you* *Introducing someone* *Go that way—palm*

## “Voila!”

### HEAD SHOT show flourish on hand

*Words spoken* “Voila!”

*Name* None, but saying “Voila!” elicits the image of the movement.

*Meaning and context of use* See! Here it is! Like a magician pulling a rabbit from a hat, here is something you weren’t prepared for.

*Description of movement* This differs from *After you* and *Offering something—hand point* by the flourish at the end of the hand movement and the head is held high facing in the direction of the other person or the audience rather than at the thing being offered or introduced.

### CONTEXT CARTOON

*Combinable gestures with it*

+ *Yes*

+ *Intense look*

+ *Smile*

*Related gestures*

Related in meaning *Introducing someone*

Related in form *Go that way—palm* *Introducing someone* *After you*

