

MODULE

17

Posture

Feet, hands, podiums and microphones —
the most underrated hurdle

WHAT THIS MODULE COVERS

Posture is the most underrated component of clearing the credibility hurdle, and the reason is simple: nobody has ever told people what to actually do.

The most common question Steve gets in training is: what do I do with my hands? Pockets? Behind my back? Crossed?

Start with the feet. About **76% of people** stand with their legs shoulder-width apart and their toes even. It feels comfortable, and it is exactly the stance that lets you rock. If you are at all nervous you will sway, and audiences notice — they ask why Jarding is moving, whether he is nervous, whether he wants to be there.

What tested best: **one foot about four inches ahead of the other, about four inches apart**. Either foot. Try to sway from that position and you would fall over. It fixes the problem the same day. It also lifts your shoulders slightly and straightens the torso — subtle, but audiences read the shoulder-width stance as less professional.

To work the room from there, do not pick your feet up. Slide them. Steve's company calls it the **five-inch pivot**, or the oscillating fan. A couple of inches this way, a couple that way, keeping everything in the communication box.

Then the hands. When you are not gesturing, bring them to the bottom of the communication and gesture box — your belly button. Cupped hands are a problem: about **11% of people** fidget when they cup, and once they do, that is all the audience sees. Intertwined fingers become a crutch, and people try to gesture without letting go. What tested best is placing the thumb of one hand between the thumb and forefinger of the other. It is not a natural position to fidget from, so you leave it alone.

76%

stand in the stance
that lets them sway

4 in

ahead, and four apart —
the fix

11%

fidget when they cup
their hands

5 in

the pivot, not a step

KEY CONCEPTS

The five-inch pivot

Also called the oscillating fan. Slide, do not step. It lets you work the whole room while keeping every eye inside the communication box.

The thumb tuck

Thumb of one hand between thumb and forefinger of the other, at the belly button. The resting position that makes fidgeting almost impossible.

Do not grip the podium

Gripping locks up your gestures. Stand back about six inches so you cannot reach it without leaning, which also opens your gesture box to the room.

Podium height

The front of the podium should come no higher than your belly button, or it closes your gesture box. Always ask whether it is adjustable. When Queen Elizabeth visited during the H. W. Bush presidency, an advance team left a fixed podium so tall that all the audience could see was her pink hat bobbing above it.

Microphones, worst to best

The **handheld** is worst — it removes one hand, and we gesture symmetrically, not one-handed. The **podium mic** is next: your hands are free but you are anchored in one place. The **lavalier** is best — hands free and you can move. One caution: women wearing a high-necked dress with no lapel often clip it near the throat, which muffles the sound. What you wear matters when you know a lavalier is coming.

REMEMBER

- One foot four inches ahead, four inches apart. Swaying stops that day.
- Slide, do not step. Five-inch pivot only.
- Hands to the belly button, thumb tucked, whenever you are not gesturing.

- Check the podium and ask for a lavalier before you ever walk up.

PRACTICE

Exercises

Type directly into the shaded boxes below and save the file. Come back to your answers after you have practised — this is your record of what changed.

EXERCISE 1

Fix your stance

This is the fastest visible improvement available to you in this entire course.

Film thirty seconds standing the way you normally do. Then thirty seconds with one foot four inches ahead. Watch both back. What is different?

Did you sway in the first one? Could you sway in the second even if you tried?

What happened to your shoulders between the two takes?

Tick each one once you have done it:

☐ Filmed both stances

- ☐ Confirmed I cannot sway in the new one
- ☐ Practised the five-inch pivot
- ☐ Practised the thumb tuck

EXERCISE 2

Find your hand default

Everyone has one, and most of them are on the list of things that cost you people.

Watch your baseline recording. Where do your hands go when you are not gesturing?
Pockets, behind your back, fig leaf, cupped, intertwined?

Practise the thumb tuck twenty times. How long before it stopped feeling strange?

EXERCISE 3

Run the room check

Do this before every speech from now on. It takes two minutes.

For your next speaking engagement — is there a podium? Is it adjustable? Does the front come above your belly button?

What microphone will you have? If it is handheld, can you ask for a lavalier instead?

If you are wearing something without a lapel or collar, where will the lavalier clip?

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

One thing from this module I will use the next time I speak:

When and where I will use it: