

Waving your arms about

Tricky, this bit. Conventional wisdom has it that you should gesture broadly – and indeed you should. If you are the gesturing type.

Some people are arm-wavers; many are not. So it all comes back to being true to yourself. But some gestures are needed to ‘make contact’. You are, after all, separated from your listeners. You may not actually be on a stage, but that is the impression. Therefore any gestures you do make will benefit from being exaggerated. So, for example, if you are illustrating ‘the whole world’, show them the whole world – arms pretty well straight above your head, coming down full (comfortable) stretch to the sides and finishing around the thighs.

As with most things, rehearsal will help. Try your gestures out in front of the mirror to gauge how appropriate they are.

But what about your hands?

Hands never seem to be a problem until you stand up in front of the group, do they? They then magically grow to the size of (big) bananas and get in the way of everything you do! Just think of poor old Chris Tarrant on ‘Who wants to be a Millionaire’. What problems he had! So how do you cope with hands?

Consider singers and actors. No, I don’t expect you to become either. But you will notice, if you look, that hands not actively engaged in relevant gestures almost invariably hang naturally by the sides. Notice I say ‘naturally’. It does not feel natural, not at first. It does, however, look natural. If you are able to stop your fingers intertwining, your hands rubbing together and your forearms flapping like penguin flippers, people will not even notice that you have hands!

DO NOT clasp your hands in front (the ‘fig leaf’) or behind (the ‘Duke of Edinburgh’).

DO aim for 'open palm' gestures from time to time. Audiences find that kind of thing comforting and relaxing – and so will you.

These will all take practice and it will pay off in helping you to appear relaxed and in control. And the appearance will lead to the actuality in time.