

3. Body Language of Dominance

There is plenty of good quality information on body language, so I wasn't sure whether to have a dedicated lesson on it.

But since it's such an important topic, I finally decided on an intensive, dedicated lesson.

Consider this to be a primer on the body language literature of dominance.

Please note this is a lesson on how the body language of dominance *looks like*. This is NOT a lesson on how you *should* behave.

Some of these poses are exaggerated for many social situations, including environments with lots of high-quality people.

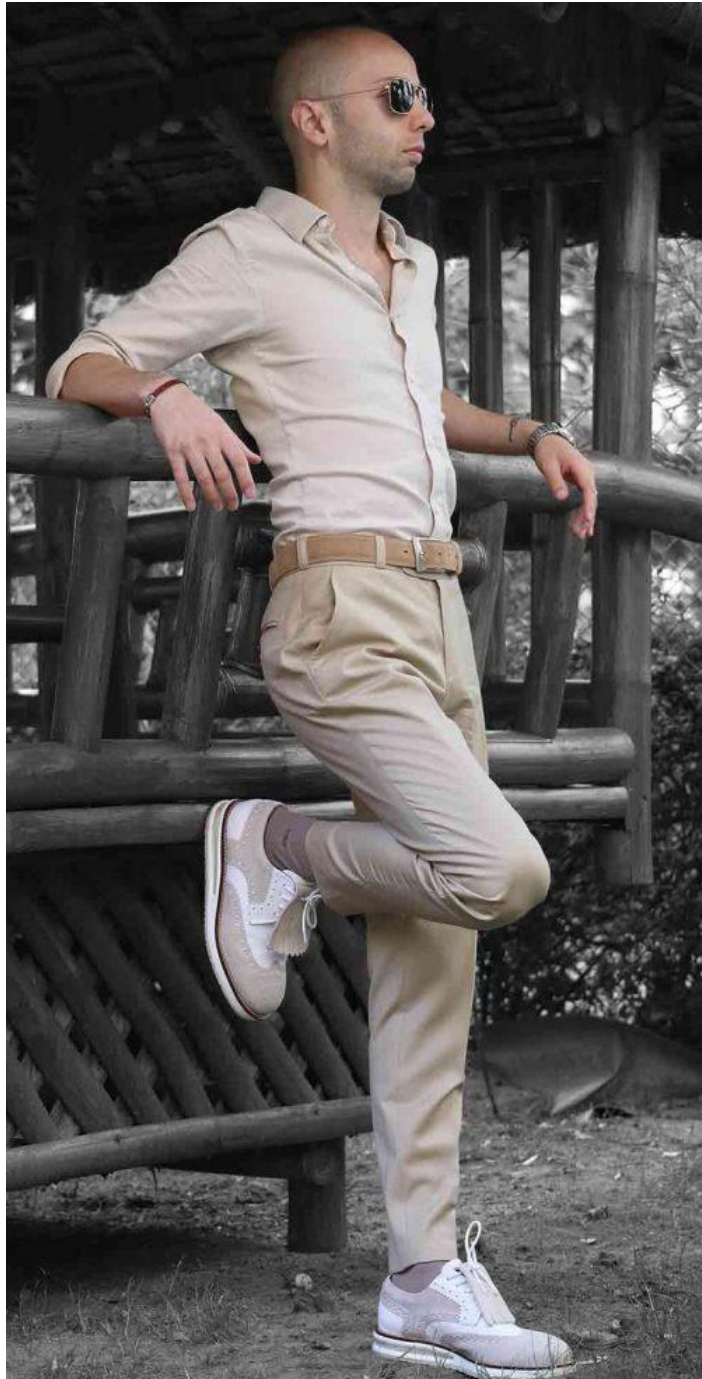
On average, the higher up you move socially, the more refined the people tend to look and the less obvious the poses and movements become.

As a rule of thumb: avoid anything that looks too obvious.

#1. Taking Up Space

Dominant individuals take up space while submissive ones make themselves smaller.

Sit comfortably, don't keep your legs too close together and, if there is enough space feel free to spread your arms on the back of the couch.



For Women

Avoid spreading out unless you're doing it with a specific goal in mind. Women who spread out too much tend to be branded as less feminine, lower quality women.

A woman who “closes up” in new environments or in environments with many men, on the other hand, is seen as more defensive. You might want to avoid it at work, where you want to keep a neutral stance.

But outside of the office, that’s not necessarily bad.

In the Madonna-Whore dichotomy, she comes to be seen as more Madonna-like and more relationship-worthy by men, and it also evokes feelings of protection.

Legs can be an exception here *if you’re doing it consciously and in specific situations*.

Sitting with your legs open can send a powerful, primal invitation to sex. Some men will be attracted in a kind of “gonna ravish her like there is no tomorrow” kind of way.

More experienced men or men who are more looking to settle down might still brand it as “attention-seeking whoring” though and be turned off.

So use with caution.

There are no exceptions for arms: avoid spreading out your arms on the bar or on the back of a couch.

#2. Touching Others

Several studies have shown that people who touch others while speaking are perceived as more dominant.

Touching others means indeed you are comfortable and not afraid of entering other people’s personal space.

Of course, always adapt to the culture and situation.

For example, an experiment found out that in Rome people touch each other hundreds of times while people barely touched each other in UK.

So if you're in Rome and not touching at all, you look like a prude. If you're in the UK and put your hands all over people, you come across as overbearing.

When you're outside partying and socializing with drinks flowing it's likely that "no touching" cultures also loosen up. There you can ramp up your touching.

Exception: Not touching someone at all can make you look distant and "superior". If you are already the most powerful man in the room, it's possible to strategically use "no touches" to look even more powerful.

For Women

Women's touch to men is interpreted by most men as a strong indicator of sexual interest.

Women can use touch for seduction purposes. Fleeting touches below the waistline, for example on the side of the leg, can be supremely arousing for men.

Outside of seduction purposes, women should avoid touching strangers too much or they come across as masculine and overbearing.

#3. Not Moving For Others

Dominant individuals tend to move less while having others move for them.

For example, if you meet an acquaintance and they come to you instead of you going to them, that puts power on your side.

If your group needs something and others volunteer to go fetch it and not you, then you look more powerful.

And if you schedule a meeting and you meet at *your* office, that shows you have more power than the person visiting.

This is not only true for assigning tasks and having people bring you stuff, but also for how bodies move during normal socialization.

Among primates, the lower status males move to give space to the alpha male.

Here is an example:

<https://youtu.be/vd2NTQPI7D8>

It's really not that different in humans.

We tend to move out of the way of the CEO, and when there is no obvious rank yet, there is a tendency to move out for the guy who looks and behaves more dominantly.

If we are not sure about dominance levels, we tend to move out of the way of bigger people.

I encourage you to become more aware of these body movements and, if needed to, to correct the way you move.

PRO Tip: Nudge Instead of Moving

You don't want to push people out of your way.

However, you can still use something similar when others are obviously in the wrong.

A typical example happens in supermarket, where people are pushing their cart without looking where they are going.
in this case, they are obviously in the wrong.
Instead of moving out of the way, take your arm out and block the cart.

Or you can partially move and partially deflect them. When they will feel the impact 99% of the times they will “wake up” and correct their behavior.

This can be better than going out of your way to jump out of their way.

Reclaiming Your Space

If walking down the street you get out of the way of bigger guys, start resisting that temptation.

Wait for them to move first, or only take one small step out the way while expecting them to do the same on their part.
If not, feel free to bump into them.

I know what's the fear: I'm smaller, I'll fall.

Here is a great technique then: if they don't move, right before you are almost hitting them, stop. Stop right in front of them and expect them to swerve.

Even if they will brush you or hit you, you won't fall while standing still.

Of course: balance.

The goal here is to avoid being the guy who submits to everyone, *not* to be the idiot who runs into others.

The Non-Written Rule of People's Movement

And keep in mind the non-written law of people's movement, which is this: the one who moves quickest is the one who must avoid others (because *he* needs to go somewhere).

#4. Eye Contact: Don't Look Down

On average socially experienced individuals tend to be more comfortable with holding eye contact.

The [direction of breaking eye contact](#) is also an important indicator of social power.

Looking up is a dismissive signal. Looking sideways is neutral.

Looking down is submissive.

This has also implications in dating and seduction settings.

A woman breaking eye contact with a man looking down and then back up again is a strong indicator that she likes him ([here is a video example](#)).

#5. Make Yourself Comfortable

The person who looks comfortable and at ease communicates he is on top of the situation and has nothing to fear.

The person who looks nervous and on edge communicates fear and discomfort.

And that's one of the reasons why the slow and calm style of dominance tends to be more powerful.

While the high energy guys could more easily hide fear and discomfort, the slow-moving person is *obviously* relaxed.

Slow and flowing movements also have a soothing effect on others: they make people around feel safer and more comfortable.

Locking In

Locking in means that when you're talking to someone, you take the most comfortable position. Reclining against the bar, sitting on a stool, half sitting on a desk etc.

Locking in is an old pick-up artist concept and, contrary to much old PUA concepts, this one is true and effective.

#6. Open Body Language

Socially powerful people tend to adopt more open body poses.

Open VS closed body language is one of the most important concepts of body language.

Closed body language is defensive, while open body language communicates we are not afraid to open up.

Opening up means that we can "allow" ourselves to be open and/or that we accept and want to create rapport with the people around.

Closed body language is:

1. Momentarily closing our body

Arms crossed

Touching the tie (covers the body with our arm)

Checking the time (covers the body with our arm)

Legs pressed against each other

2. Permanently collapsing our body

Scrunched posture

Hunched head (covers carotids)

Rounded shoulders

Arched back

Dangers of Bad Posture: the “temporary VS permanent” is an important distinction. People who go about their lives too submissive for too long can end up with *permanently* closed body language and terrible posture.

We will have a video lesson on adjusting posture.

#7. Relaxed Body Language

“Signs of comfort” VS “signs of discomfort” -also called “displacement signals” and the second most important cluster of body language.

Displacement signals are signs such as:

- Touching the back of the neck
- Scratching itches
- Touching the face
- Wringing hands
- Playing with jewelry
- Opening up the collar of a shirt

Consciously avoid displacement body language until it becomes natural.

#8. Proper Posture

The rule of thumb is that good posture commands respect and projects confidence and power.

Some of the most common posture-related issues are:

1. rounded shoulders
2. head leaning in
3. hunched back posture.

But watch out for the common pitfall of “fixing” body language: going way too back with the spine (swayback posture) or pulling up the chest way too much and looking like a Popeye’s caricature.

There is a good video on posture on this course, just keep going for now.



Proper posture can run against the “make yourself comfortable” rule because sometimes making yourself comfortable means slouching.

When in doubt, I recommend taking the most comfortable position because the perfect posture can make you look try-hard.

Justin Bieber was going for perfectly straight posture during his roast and it often looked like he was trying too hard.

It made him stick out, and not necessarily in a good way, more like a sore thumb:

<https://youtu.be/ZhFFLTDNB94>

#9. Powerful Walk

There is some debate on whether a powerful and dominant walk is quick or slow.

My opinion is that slow is more powerful than quick as long as you've already "made it".

If you're still working hard and adopt the slow walk and slow moves, then you risk looking lazy and "just slow" instead of "powerfully slow".

Different Walk for Genders

A male walk spread its legs and show a shoulder swag, while a female powerful walk will take long strides, feet parallel and one in front of each almost on the same line.

I personally walk with mostly parallel feet, but men are allowed to "open up" their feet.

Opening up though should be in "always open" mode rather than opening up after you raise your foot.

You have no idea what I'm talking about?

[Here is one example of "bad" opening up.](#)

And this is the "good, "always open" way, which is also a great example of overall dominant stride:



Women should avoid opening up their feet because parallel feet looks more “regal” (example above, she’s walking with parallel feet).

If it's not possible because of bones' structure, that's OK.
A touch of open feet can also be primordially attractive the same way that sitting with open legs is.

Finally some women, especially Asian women, sometimes “shuffle” their feet while walking, rubbing the sole of their feet on the ground ([one example here](#)).

Avoid it: it's childish and looks insecure.

#10. Nodding Up

Nodding down is a sign of submissiveness.
Some of the most dominant men nod up instead of down.

McGregor nods up, but he comes across as a bit too confrontational and juvenile when he does it. Dominant yes, but a bit socially “rough”. Here is an equally powerful but more polished way of doing it from Brad Pitt:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSM4x6wtMlw>

“thanks Charlie” and nodding up. Friendly and accommodating words with a smile + dominant and powerful nonverbal.
Perfect mix.

#11. Center Of Attention

On average, the more powerful people in the room tend to have others all around them.

This goes partly back to the fundamental of “dependence”. Having people around you communicates they need you and want you.

They want to talk to you, be around you, get your opinion, your approval, fuck you or be seen with you.

Notice how Trump leverages this principle at the end of the presidential debate:

<https://youtu.be/9L0tpJkiVXo>

Hillary bolts off the stage like a schoolkid, while he stays grounded and lets everyone else come to him. Who looks presidential? I'm pretty confident that was rehearsed and done on purpose, and it was a *great* power move.

... And Women?

There is some overlap and some “good for both genders” body language of course.

Good posture is a must for both genders. And locking in will make women look more powerful just like it does for men.

As we have mentioned before, “gender-neutral” places like the workplace will see men and women converge. Since expressions of power body language don't come with gender labels, women who want to look powerful *can* mimic the power body language of men. However, keep in mind that comes at the cost of losing likability, femininity and, potentially, long term power.

People indeed don't usually like to be around -and be influenced- by people who operate outside of their genders (“gender deviant”), and that's also true for genders. Some men might also resent and rebel against a female leader who mimics a man too much.

My recommendation for women looking to leadership positions then is to eliminate all the signs of insecure and defensive body language. But also to avoid more masculine expressions.

We have a lesson just for women later.

Dating & Body Language of Power

We've already said it but it bears repeating: women who resemble dominant men too closely lose out big when it comes to dating and attraction.

The purely feminine can find its own way to power *and* major dating success by leveraging femininity and sending out coy, shy and "protect me" signals.

Angelina Jolie does it a lot and well.

Here again:

<https://youtu.be/L7DKK4I2Chs>