

- a) Should we continue to watch the world suffer and do nothing?
- b) We should not continue to watch the world suffer and do nothing.

As these examples demonstrate, the declarative is much stronger than the interrogative. The interrogative is not a steadfast position of advocacy, whereas the declarative is a committed statement. Interrogatives have less force than declaratives because their purpose is interpretive in nature, not descriptive.¹⁰ Interrogatives ask the audience to consider the question, whereas a declarative statement *proclaims* the position intended for the audience.

NONVERBAL STYLE

Nonverbal messages modify our speech; thus a good debater will use them to maximize his persuasive capabilities.¹¹ Facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact are all integral parts of good public speaking.

Facial expressions communicate a variety of different messages: happiness, disappointment, confusion, surprise, etc. Some of our expressions are instinctive, but some are conscious. All accentuate the verbal messages you send when debating. When you peer at the ground during the cross-examination because you do not know the answer to the question, you communicate lack of preparation and knowledge of the material. When you raise your eyebrows in response to an opponent's ridiculous claim, you convey to the judge how you feel. Work on knowing both your own facial expressions and those of your opponent.

Gestures also modify or complement verbal messages. Attitudinal gestures include facing or leaning toward another person, bowing, shaking of hands, etc. Emotional gestures include fiddling with items in your pockets, tapping your fingers, twisting your hair, etc. Controlling gestures may include patting someone on the back, pointing, pounding on a desk or podium, etc.

Debaters need to control and plan their gestures as much as possible. Inadvertent gestures, particularly emotional gestures, can be distracting or annoying and can signal nervousness or underpreparation. Use gestures to reinforce or emphasize what is being said. Movement can even mirror the structure of a speech: you could take a step or two in one direction while making your first contention, then move in the other direction for your second. But movement will be effective only if it seems natural. Listeners are unlikely to be persuaded by debaters who seem to be executing a choreographic routine.

Eye contact is perhaps more culturally relevant than some other forms of nonverbal communication. In the United States and many European cultures, eye contact is used to show degree of interest, emotion, power or status, and regulation of interpersonal interactions. In many Asian cultures, however, eye contact may indicate disrespect. Know your audience! Understanding how various cultures perceive eye contact can influence the effectiveness of your communication.

The audience wants to feel that the speakers are addressing them. You cannot afford, then, to concentrate your attention on your teammates, or the opposing team, or the ceiling. You must make eye contact with the audience.