Effective Use of Gesture

1. **Warm-up.** On an inhalation, lift your shoulders up to your ears. On the next exhalation, draw the shoulders down and back. Repeat this several times until you begin to feel warmth in the shoulder area. Shake out your arms.

2. **Imagine a marionette.** Lift up through your spine. This length will convey a sense of confidence.

3. **Ground yourself.** Gesturing should be done from the feet up. Think of your feet as being rooted into the floor, like the roots of a tree. Feel the weight balanced evenly between the balls of your feet and your heels.

4. **Find neutral.** Although gesturing is important, it is also important to become comfortable in a neutral physical stance. Allow your arms to rest gently at your sides, palms facing inwards, towards your thighs. Practice speaking in this position when you are talking with friends. It may feel awkward at first, but soon it will feel like second nature.

5. **Start simple.** Choose three words, concepts, or ideas and find a gesture that expresses each one. Practice these gestures while speaking until it becomes natural. Stand in front of a mirror and play with the size of the gesture. What looks constricted? What looks overly theatrical?

6. **Make informed decisions.** How large is the space where you will be presenting or lecturing? Larger spaces demand larger physical gestures; small spaces require a more informal set of gestures. In each space, you will want to create a balance between the two.

7. **Simplicity.** Sometimes individuals have a tendency to gesture excessively. This tendency makes it even more necessary, as you begin, to choose specific spots where you are going to highlight your information with gesture. The rest of the time, consciously come back to neutral.

8. **Move with purpose.** Align the ideas of your presentation or lecture with simple and purposeful movement. For a more intimate thought, move in to your listeners. When encouraging thought, move quietly back. Make use of the space by including the right and left sides of the room.

9. **Stay open.** Keep the gestures open. An open palm is much more inviting than a pointed finger.

10. **Observe others.** When you attend a lecture or presentation, what physical stance and gestures appeal to you? What makes you feel comfortable? Take note of various techniques and then begin practicing them yourself. Through repetition, these gestures will become second nature.