

## Body Language 40

### *The Double Point*

by **Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP**



You don't often see a double point in a professional setting, but when you do it can mean many different things. The usual meaning is that "It must have been someone else: it wasn't me."

In the picture, this man has his arms crossed. If both fingers are pointed in the same direction toward a specific person, it is a sign of "The culprit was definitely him (or you)."

Sometimes a person will double point at herself. In that case, the connotation is a person taking responsibility for something that happened. The message received is that "I have the full responsibility for this mess."

Alternatively, the gesture can be one of wanting the full credit for something good that happened. The accompanying statement might be, "Guess who is responsible for winning the Farnsworth Account."

When the gesture is directed outwardly, as in the accompanying picture, the double point is normally with the index finger. In the case of identifying one's self, the pointing can be either with the fingers, or it is commonly seen with the thumbs doing the pointing.

A single pointing gesture in body language normally is seen as a hostile gesture. Body language experts advise to refrain from pointing when addressing an individual. The reason is that it subtly (or not) puts the other person on the defensive. It is like you are coming at the other person with a weapon.

The preferred hand configuration when wanting to emphasize a point you are making is open palm with the palm facing up. That is a more open and inviting gesture that encourages conversation. It is not considered threatening by most people.

With the double point, what you have is the same connotation as a single point except the gesture is on steroids. When it is done to indicate something positive, it can be a highly welcome sign. If the situation is negative, you are really putting the other person on notice.

Of course, all of these signals will be tempered by the accompanying facial expression. You could double point at a person while saying something quite negative but have the whole meaning reversed with a facial expression indicating that you are joking.

Regardless of the circumstances, when you use the double point gesture, your intended meaning can be easily misconstrued. If you mean something in jest, but the other person takes it literally, then there is often a trust withdrawal.

Be alert for these dangers and use the double point sparingly and with caution. Always double back in some way to check that the meaning received was the one you intended to send. That verification step is good advice for all body language gestures.

*This is a part in a series of articles on “Body Language.” The entire series can be viewed on <https://www.leadergrow.com/articles/categories/35-body-language> or on this blog.*

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