

What's Your Character's Signature Gesture?

Tip Sheet

What is a signature gesture?

- It's a nonverbal, repeated movement your character is known for, that you perform in a particular way that is unique and identifiable.
- Common, well-known gestures include the thumbs-up/thumbs-down, the peace sign, air quotes, shrugging, pointing, eye rolling, saluting, and tipping your hat.

Why should you create a signature gesture for your character?

- Creates an interesting physical layer to your character.
- Helps to identify your character from all the rest through his or her unique movement.
- Defines your character as someone different from you, the actor.
- Shows off your character's personality.
- Give the audience something to look forward to; creates a sense of familiarity and fun.

When should you use a signature gesture?

- Significant moments in the show, to make your point stronger – such as a funny comment, a fit of anger, or as an exclamation at the end of a sentence.
- On a repeated phrase or joke.
- On the “button” at the very end of a song, where the music finishes.

How can you find your character's signature gesture?

- Explore during your rehearsal period and on your own time.
- Try different gestures to see what works for your character.
- Work with your fellow actors to ensure you are the only one doing your signature gesture, to keep your movement unique to your character.
- Do some research:
 - Look at photos of past productions of the same play.
 - Watch the film version.
 - Work through your script and note important or significant moments where your signature gesture could improve or emphasize what you are saying or doing.
- Ask for feedback from your director, to ensure that your signature gesture works for your character and doesn't upstage you or the other performers.
- **TASK:** For your next rehearsal, come up with three possible signature gestures to show your director. Try using them during rehearsal. See what feels most natural, and/or what looks best onstage.

