

HOW TO GESTURE

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How to Gesture by Edward Amherst Ott

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EDWARD AMHERST OTT

**HOW TO
GESTURE**



CHRIST AND THE DOCTORS.
A Study in Earnestness.

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How to Gesture

BY

EDWARD AMHERST OTT

PRESIDENT OF OTT'S SCHOOLS OF EXPRESSION, CHICAGO, ILL.
AUTHOR OF "HOW TO USE THE VOICE IN READING AND SPEAKING"

Revised and Illustrated Edition

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PREFACE

THIS book is designed to help those who wish simply to become good speakers, as well as ambitious students of oratory. While not written for the theorist, the author believes it to be scientific. It goes only so far into the ideal in oratory as is consistent with utility. It employs the method of teaching gesture by using symbols with typical sentences, a method whose usefulness has been amply demonstrated by its many successes.

The author does not claim originality. The method is used by many teachers East and West. One feature, however, should particularly commend it,—the practice work employs quotations so familiar that every one will recognize them and all should memorize them. Thus the student acquires, apparently without effort, hundreds of maxims, apt ideas well put; and, better still, he comes under the reflex influence of the many good thoughts well expressed. This feature alone, simply by imparting a certain facility in smoothness of phrase, should render the work invaluable to every interested student of the art of public speaking.

E. A. O.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS,
September 1, 1902.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii
CHAPTER	
I. EXHORTATION	1
II. BEGINNINGS	6
III. PRESENCE	8
IV. LEGS AND FEET	13
V. THE ARMS AND HANDS AS A UNIT	18
VI. THE ELBOWS AND HANDS	26
VII. SHOULDERS, CHEST, AND HEAD	31
VIII. WALKING THE PLATFORM	35
IX. PICTURES ON THE PLATFORM	43
X. DESCRIPTIVE ACTION	50
XI. THE WILL IN EXPRESSION	54
XII. TRANSITION	58
XIII. GESTURES MADE WITH BOTH HANDS	63
XIV. GESTURES IN WHICH THE PREPARATION IS LONG CON- TINUED	67
XV. EXERCISES FOR REVIEW PRACTICE	71
XVI. ALTERNATE GESTURES	76
XVII. SPECIAL MOTIONS AND POSITIONS	79
XVIII. ATTITUDES	84
XIX. JUDGMENT IN GESTURE	90
XX. GENERAL RULES AND SUGGESTIONS	95
XXI. QUOTATIONS	100
XXII. QUOTATIONS FROM THE BIBLE	102
XXIII. QUOTATIONS FROM THE LATIN	105
XXIV. QUOTATIONS AND STUDIES FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS	109
XXV. MISCELLANEOUS QUOTATIONS AND STUDIES	124

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Christ and the Doctors (<i>A Study in Earnestness</i>)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	PAGE
Abraham Lincoln (<i>A Study of Poise and Dignity</i>)	8 (a)
Christopher Columbus Before the Court of Isabella (<i>A Study of Grouping and Poise</i>)	10 (a)
The Quarrel (<i>A Lesson in Feet Position</i>)	18 (a)
Tullia Passes over the Corpse of her Father (<i>Gesture Lesson</i>)	26 (a)
The Hiding Model (<i>A Lesson in Grouping and Attitudes</i>)	36 (a)
A Domestic Scene (<i>A Study in Impersonation</i>)	44 (a)
The Wine Cellar (<i>A Lesson in Extravagant Action</i>)	52 (a)
The Strike (<i>A Lesson in the Expression of Intense Moods</i>)	60 (a)
A Cavalry Encounter	68 (a)
A Wonderful Story (<i>A Lesson in Listening</i>)	76 (a)
A Labor of Love (<i>A Study in the Expression of the Hands</i>)	84 (a)
The Last Hope	92 (a)
Saved (<i>A Lesson in the Walk, and Expression of the Arms and Hands</i>)	100 (a)
Listening (<i>A Lesson in Attitude and Grouping</i>)	106 (a)
A Bashful Man (<i>A Study of Eccentric Types</i>)	114 (a)
Reading from Homer (<i>A Lesson in Listening</i>)	122 (a)

INTRODUCTION

THIS book does not aim at presenting a philosophy of expression. Its design is, by a method of practice, to teach how to gesture. The method involved has grown out of studies founded on the expression of the emotions of men and animals as illustrated by the most successful scientists and artists. It is thus really a book on bodily expression.

Gesture is a term which, in its widest sense, covers all of the bodily movements by which man expresses thought and emotion. Distinction has been made between gesture and facial expression. The latter is not touched upon in this text. Gymnastic drills also are omitted from the discussion.

Physical culture should help the student materially in his work of expression. The two studies should correlate; yet it would be better, perhaps, if physical culture drills that do not lead to expression, were not allowed in our school gymnasiums. However, all purely physical culture drills are omitted from our text, and the student must get them either from his teacher or from hand-books on the subject.

It does not seem best to formulate a theory of acting or of oratory, but to embody our method in the drills

laid down. If to satisfy the mind, a student is desirous of having a philosophic basis for his work, he may read to advantage Darwin's book, *The Expression of the Emotions of Men and Animals*, and kindred books. The best advice, however, that can be given to one really ambitious to appear well upon the platform, who desires to make useful and effective gestures, is to practice much and theorize little. The anxious theorist rarely speaks well. An art cannot be read; it must be experienced; it must be practiced. A man of the philosophic school is in the author's mind; he knows why a man winks, why a dog barks or wags its tail, but he was never known to make an effective speech. The world gives him no credit as an artist, nor should it. He studies the science of oratory, but does not practice its art. He is not a success as an orator.

Gesture is that subtle language which conveys impressions which words are powerless to express. Graceful and expressive motions are a delight in themselves. Who has not been thrilled by the pantomimic work of some consummate actor, who filled his dramatic pauses with motions so grand and effective that every hearer felt his touch and breathed his inspiration? An instrument so powerful should be understood. A mob has been hushed to awe by a single sweep of the arm. Wendell Phillips mastered the storm of Faneuil Hall by presenting his palm. A look, a wave of the arm, and all was still; Boston was ready to listen. How was it done? Learn.