

## Get a Grip: Six Handshakes You Need to Know

by Lillian D. Bjorseth

While people may decide 10 things about you within 10 seconds of seeing you, it takes only 1-3 seconds to speak volumes through your handshake. Having a firm handshake is essential in the business world. It's a key ingredient in creating a good first impression.

President and Michelle Obama slipped up when they gave the Queen of England the "sandwich" handshake. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to appear on [Fox TV](#) in Chicago to discuss it!

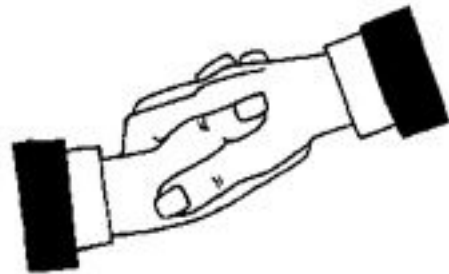
You always shake with your right hand unless you have a disability. If that is the case, immediately offer your left hand so people know to shake it. If arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome makes it painful for you to have your hand shaken, say so to keep others from unknowingly hurting you and making them feel ill at ease when you wince.

I'll discuss (and show) six handshakes that every good communicator needs to know. Even if you don't use them, you need to be aware of what messages others are sending so you can file the information to use during the interaction.

- **Correct way.** Connect with the other person web-to-web. (The web is the area between your thumb and index finger.) Hold the person's hand firmly. Shake three times maximum, no higher than three or four inches. Maintain constant eye contact.



- **Controller.** As soon as your hands are linked, you purposely maneuver your hand onto the top. There's no doubt you want to be in charge! Astute communicators note the message and adjust according to the circumstances, i.e. are you the manager or the employee, the vendor or the purchaser?



- **Sandwich.** You envelope another person's hand such that s/he feels like the filling in a sandwich. This gesture shows more intimacy and is not recommended the first time you meet someone. You are invading the private zone in her/his space bubble by enclosing her/his hand. You can use this handshake to show sincerity and concern after you know someone will appreciate it.



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• **Limp fingers.** This is the most awkward handshake for the other person. You extend only your fingertips, and s/he is not sure how to grasp them or how hard to shake. Occasionally, it happens by accident when two people aim poorly. More often, it signals lack of confidence or self-esteem and is a poor way to start off a business relationship. One solution that lessens the negative impression is to extend your hand its full length even if your handshake is weak so that the other person can grasp the entire hand rather than just fingertips.



• **Dead fish.** This is the slippery, damp hand you extend ... and others can't wait to get it over with. If you are nervous and perspire, carry a handkerchief or wipe your hand on your clothes. What you spend in cleaning bills will be paid for quickly in a better impression. You may unwittingly offer this handshake when you hold a cold beverage in your right hand and then switch it to your left to shake hands. The condensation is bound to remain on your right hand. Suggestions: Hold beverages in your left hand, set them on a table after you have taken a drink or don't indulge.



• **Bone crusher.** Given accidentally (and sometimes on purpose), this one is practiced mostly by men. It can be painful when given by someone with a big hand and strong grip to someone with a smaller, more delicate hand. The hurt is enhanced if the person wears a ring on the right hand and the stone happens to be askew. If I know the person well, I'll smile and say, "Hey, I need to use this hand again." If I don't know her/him, I'll remove my hand as **quickly as is feasible**. If any firm handshake can make you wince because you have arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, etc. do not



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extend your hand. If you think further explanation is needed then add that it can be painful for you to shake hands and, therefore, you don't. There is no ideal way to counter the bone crusher. My comfort is that with the myriad hands I shake, I am rarely "accosted" by it.

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**Lillian Bjorseth helps you build a new kind of wealth – social capital – by improving your networking and communication skills. She's a Chicago-based speaker, trainer, skills coach and prolific author. [www.duoforce.com](http://www.duoforce.com), [www.greaterchicagonetworking.com](http://www.greaterchicagonetworking.com), [lilianspeaks@duoforce.com](mailto:lilianspeaks@duoforce.com)**



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