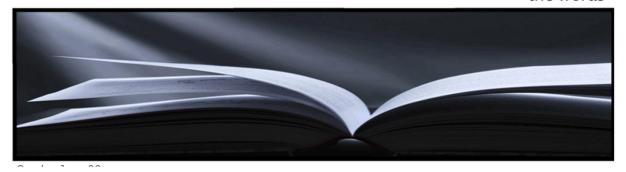
THE EDITOR'S BLOG



Habits, Motions, and Common Actions of Fictional Characters

Beth Hill

Head/Neck/Shoulders

brush hair, twirl hair, pull out hair

crack neck, crane neck

lean forward, lean back or away, lean sideways

lift or lower head or face or chin

lift shoulders, relax shoulders, roll shoulders

roll head, cock head, turn head, tilt head

rub neck

shrug

touch (drop) chin to chest

Face

```
adjust glasses, push up glasses, pull down glasses
blink eyes, cross eyes, bat eyes, roll eyes
blot makeup, blot sweat, wipe off sweat
blow nose, pick nose, wipe nose, hold nose
massage forehead, rub temples
pick at blemish
play with beard or mustache
pull (tug) on ear, pick at ear, clean out ear
raise eyebrow(s)
rub eyes, massage eyes
scratch nose or chin or head or ear
smooth eyebrows, pluck at eyebrows
wink
wipe away tears
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Mouth

```
apply lipstick or ChapStick
bite lip, bite tongue
bite the end of a pen or pencil
blow bubbles (with gum, spit, water)
chew (pop) gum, chew tobacco
chew ice
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choke
frown, grimace
gargle, gurgle
grind teeth; tense, tighten, or grip jaw
gulp, swallow
lick lips, smack lips, chew lips
pick at chapped lips
play with food
purse lips, squeeze lips together with fingers
put finger to lips (in thought or to shush someone)
sing
sip tea or coffee (other drinks), gulp down alcoholic drinks
smile
smoke, fiddle with cigarette
spit
spit out food, spit out water
stick tongue out
stuff mouth
suck on candy
tap teeth, pick teeth, bite nails
throw up (hurl, vomit, spew, upchuck, get sick, toss cookies, lose dinner,
regurgitate)
touch tongue to lips
```

whistle, hum, make sounds with mouth yawn

Hair

braid hair

chew hair

pull at curls, push hair behind ears, mess with barrettes or ribbons or hats push hair off face (own face or the face of others)

Hands/Fingers

crack knuckles

cut nails, clean nails, paint nails, bite nails

hold someone's hand

massage thumb or finger, massage (rub) wrist or sore joints

pick at nails/cuticles

pick at scab, push at bruise

play with cups, dinnerware, napkins, salt and pepper shakers, anything on a dinner table

roll a coin or pencil between fingers

rub hands together

rub hands up and down arms, up and down legs

snap fingers

suck thumb or finger

```
tap or drum fingers on self or object
toss ball (or other object) hand to hand, juggle objects
trace scars or injuries
wag, shake, or point finger
wrap arms around own body
wring hands
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General

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bounce (kick) foot
check watch, check e-mail, check current devices
clean glasses (on cloth, under water, on clothes, with spit)
cross and uncross legs
dance (hop or bounce) from foot to foot
doodle
draw
fiddle with radio or music device
fiddle (play) with rings, bracelets, necklace, earrings; twirl them; take them off,
put them on; play with jewelry clasps
freeze (cease moving)
hold and stroke pets
laugh, cry, smile, sniffle
shudder, tremble, quiver, twitch, shake, wiggle, wriggle through
sigh, hold breath
sneeze
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squirm (in seat)

talk to self

take notes

tap on phone (or other communication devices)

tilt (tip) chair back
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Beyond these kinds of motions, there are also simple body motions. Go for variety in these common movements as well. Yes, sometimes a character simply walks. But you don't want to find you have that character walking across a room 100 times. Rather

study.

Be exact in your word choice, yet make sure the words sound natural in context. You want the reader to accept your word choice without wondering if you chose a word from a thesaurus.

than use walk, try saunter. Rather than simply say turn, try pivot. Rather than look, try

A few examples to get you started with these everyday motions—

Cry: wail, blubber, howl, weep, sob, simper, snivel

Look: study, examine, scrutinize, see, watch, peer, peek, peruse, check out, stare, gaze, focus on

Run: race, lunge, move, gallop, dash, sprint, bolt, jog

Touch: stroke, finger, caress, trace, rub, tap, pat

Turn: rotate, whirl around, twirl, pivot, change (reverse) direction, back up

Walk: step, run, race, cross (a room), ease (over or into or across), move, saunter, stalk, stomp, stamp, pace

Source: http://theeditorsblog.net/2014/07/02/habits-motions-and-common-actions-of-fictional-characters/