



Strategies for Eliciting Information in Interrogations

In many cases, the best approach is an empathetic one.

- Place the suspect at ease. Establish an emotional bond by sharing a common experience. Smile, if appropriate, and speak in a conciliatory tone.
- Encourage the flow of the conversation with reinforcing comments like “I see,” “uh-huh,” “...and then?” Look them in the eyes to make human contact, but don’t stare.
- Use gentle, open hand gestures. Latinos communicate with their hands, so talking with your hands still, down, crossed, or tucked into your pockets will seem disingenuous.
- You cannot intimidate by violating personal space since Latinos feel comfortable standing and sitting close together.
- Use a mirroring strategy with the words you choose.
- If the suspect is illiterate or uneducated, simplify your statements. Clarify that they understand each statement.
- Minimize their shame using empathy, as well. Try to identify with the suspect’s situation. Don’t judge; remain neutral. Don’t forget to ask the “Why?” so they can explain their point of view.
- If the suspect is machista, leverage their bravado to elicit a confession.
- Watch for verbal clues like fast talking, vacillation and silences. You know to be suspicious of suspects who are extremely eager to please and overly friendly.

Employ, observe and interpret non-verbal cues.

- Get a baseline ‘read’ of the suspect’s normal behaviors with small talk before your interrogation. Any changes from their normal behavior will give you clues to your suspects’ real thoughts.
- Turning your torso toward the suspect at a slight angle is less intimidating. Relax your body to normal size, point your feet toward the subject, and lean in attentively.
- The opposite is also true. To intimidate, face the suspect full-on. Stand tall and splay your legs to occupy more territory.

- Steepling the fingers in an upward direction, gesticulating with the thumbs turned upward, and speaking in a low tone projects confidence.
- For a gregarious Latino, look for expansive movements. For indigenous groups, look for quiet restrictive postures (eyes down, arms at sides, hunched shoulders). If these natural stances change, it's a sign of stress.
- Feet pointed toward an exit means the suspect is uncomfortable and wants to leave.
- The “prayer” gesture is an indication the suspect is ‘begging’ for something—for cooperation, or to be believed, for example. The speaker is most likely being sincere; he or she may also be desperate to be believed.
- Watch for changes in posture; movements of the legs, feet, arms and hands; facial expressions; eye movement; and involuntary physical responses like sweating, blushing and blanching.
- Jiggling or rocking back and forth may be an ordinary release of nervous energy, or a sign of undue tension.
- Placing a barrier between themselves and the interrogator with crossed legs, arms, or random items lying on the table, could indicate the suspect craves protection from your questions.
- Watch for possible signs of deceptive or contrived reactions: a smile that lingers too long or rambling on with non-stop chatter without saying anything valuable. This may be to give the (false) impression that the suspect is being cooperative.
- Watch small facial gestures for signs of anger. A sneer, eye roll, squinting, flared nostrils and clenched jaws can be slight, and fleeting, but are often unconscious reactions displayed before the suspect has a chance to control his or her behavior. Pupil constriction can betray an otherwise controlled stress reaction.
- Rely on micro-expressions to read the suspect’s true feelings—furtive looks toward the exit, a fleeting squint or sneer, inconsistencies between body reactions and words like nodding while denying an accusation.