

# Personal space assignment



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Proxemics is the study of how people perceive the physical spaces around them. It takes into account body spacing and postures as involuntary reactions. The physical distance between two people can be linked to the relationship they share, personal or social. There are four proxemic distances: intimate, personal, social, and public distances. Intimate distances can range from actually touching to six through eighteen inches. The individuals are so close together that it is not considered proper for strangers in public. Your personal space allows you to stay protected and untouched by others.

Personal distance ranges from eighteen inches through about four feet. Social distances range from four to twelve feet. This is the distance at which you conduct impersonal business or interact at a social gathering. Public distances can range anywhere from twelve feet to twenty-five feet. Although you lose the fine details of the face and eyes, you are still close enough to see what is happening. You see others not as separate individuals but as part of the whole setting. Territoriality is a possessive reaction to an area or to particular objects.

We interact in three types of territories: primary, secondary, and public territories. Primary areas are those that you call your own. These areas include your room, desk, or office. Secondary territories are areas that do not belong to you but that you have occupied. These areas include your regular classroom or cafeteria seat. Public areas, or territories, are open to all people. They are used by everyone but owned by an individual or organization. These places include malls, movie theaters, and restaurants.

Beth's disconfirming messages are rooted in her ignoring of Conrad.

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She denies his problems, denies his presence, and denies her feelings toward him. Beth walks past Conrad's bedroom without speaking to him and plans family vacations that do not include him. More significantly, she failed to visit him when he was in the hospital after attempting suicide. As is portrayed in the movie, Conrad is the stain on her towels and the broken plate in her china cabinet, and she would rather throw him away than invest in getting him "cleaned" or "repaired." Many of Beth's responses to Conrad are solid or almost irrelevant.

An example is when they are in the hall talking about Conrad's trigonometry test. When Conrad tells of his difficulty with trig, Beth indicates that she was never very good at trig, either. The near-empathetic response brightens Conrad's eyes and he asks, "You took trig?" Beth awkwardly responds, "Did I take trig?" She pauses, and then quickly ends the discussion by saying, "I bought you two shirts—they're on your bed." She then goes into her room and shuts the door. On another occasion, Conrad and Beth are in the backyard when Conrad reminds her that Buck, the beloved son, always wanted a pet dog.

Beth stands up quickly, makes a minor comment about the neighbor's dog, then goes inside. While Conrad learns to voice his feelings and send consistent messages, Beth does not. In a telling and painful scene, her discomfort in standing next to Conrad for a photograph is obvious. She smiles for the picture while begging her husband to hurry. When Conrad erupts over the proxemic rejection he feels, she scolds him for his language. Then Beth returns to business as usual. She avoids touching Conrad

throughout the movie, and when he attempts to hug her near the end of the story, she remains motionless and does not return the embrace.