



**Calibre Press**

The Calibre Column

# 10 non-verbal signs all officers should be able to recognize and interpret

One of the most obvious signs of potential trouble is a subject paying repeated visual attention to an officer's gun

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**Editor's Note:**

In recognition of the release of "[Street Survival II: Tactics for Deadly Encounters](#)," co-author and PoliceOne columnist Dan Marcou is writing a series of articles on street survival in which he shares the tactics acquired during a career dedicated not only to ensuring his own personal survival but assisting other officers in their quest to survive as well. Click [here](#) to access.

Provided by [Calibre Press](#)

When it comes to securing and maintaining your tactical advantage, the ability to recognize and interpret non-verbal communication when dealing with potentially troublesome subjects is one of the most powerful officer safety tools you have.

In their recently released book, "Street Survival II" from [Calibre Press](#), authors Jim Glennon, Dan Marcou and Chuck Remsberg list 10 non-verbal, pre-attack indicators all officers should be aware of, understand and watch for.





## 2. MICRO-EXPRESSIONS

While overt expressions like smiling or frowning may *seem* to reflect the true emotion of the person you're dealing with, "micro-expressions" – quick, fleeting reflections of emotions that may or may not sync with the more overt demonstration of emotion you see – can tip you off to the *real* intent, thoughts, motivation and mood of the individual you're dealing with.

Stay intently alert for signs of clenched teeth, furrowed brow, pursed lips, bared teeth and wide, non-blinking eyes. If you see these, even for a fleeting moment, don't disregard them.

## 3. GROOMING

Watch for things like wiping off imaginary lint, hair straightening and clothing adjustments that come at inappropriate times. These could be unconscious signs of an attempt to distract you or an outlet for nervous energy.

## 4. STRETCHING

The timing of a stretch can be revealing and a tactically valuable message. While it may not be a big deal if a person you pulled over starts stretching after getting out of the car, take note if they stretch after you start asking some key questions such as, "Do you mind if I search your vehicle?"

## 5. THE TARGET GLANCE

This is a term used to describe a subject's obvious preoccupation with a particular area of an officer's body or with a particular weapon the officer is carrying. This can be represented by staring directly at or repeatedly glancing at the intended target.

One of the most obvious signs of potential trouble is paying repeated visual attention to an officer's gun, which [could flag a gun grab](#), but other targets of focus, like the chin, nose, throat or eyes, can be early warning signs of an attack.

## 6. CLENCHING

Pre-fight tension can cause jaw muscles to bulge, fists to close and facial muscles to contract. If you pay close attention, you may also see the trapezius muscles that cover the back of the neck and shoulders rise as large muscles of the body constrict in prep for an assault.

## 7. THE "FIGHTING STANCE"

This bladed, quite obviously combative stance almost always signals that a fight is likely brewing. When you see this – clenched fists, tightened face, flaring nostrils and dropping one side (usually the strong side) behind the other – take serious note. Also note lots of body position shifting that can be indicative of nervous energy and fight positioning.

## 8. RAPID EYE BLINKING

Under significant stress, eye blink rates can noticeably alter in one of two ways. The rate can either increase dramatically (e.g., an increase from the "typical" rate 6-20 blinks per minute to 40-60 blinks p/m) or decrease (e.g., 2-4 blinks p/m), which is often referred to as the "thousand-yard stare."

## 9. FLANKING

This strategic positioning to the side or sliding behind an officer generally occurs when there are multiple suspects. Stay alert for this surrounding-type positioning and be prepared to tactically reposition quickly and definitively if you spot such behavior.

## 10. THE MISCELLANEOUS OTHERS

There are myriad additional non-verbal signs that can [indicate a pending attack](#) – dilated pupils, hidden hands, dipping to the strong side as though grabbing something, mouth breathing/panting, hands defiantly on hips, contemptuous spitting, pacing, etc. Learn them, remember them and watch for them!

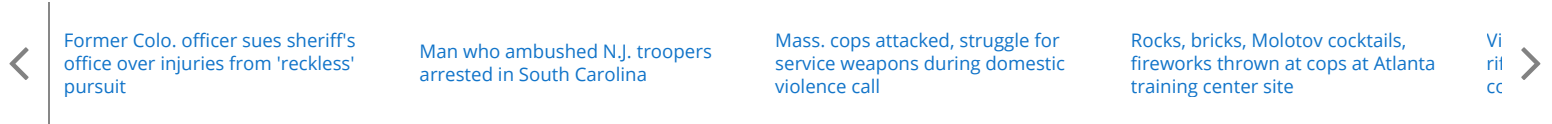
## About the author

The Calibre Column is provided by Calibre Press, Inc., one of the most recognized and respected law enforcement training organizations in the industry. Offering hundreds of courses each year on topics ranging from *Street Survival*®, Active Threat Engagement and Assault Detection & Response to Highway Patrol Tactics, Emotional Survival, and Leadership, Calibre Press has trained more than one million officers nationwide over its 40-year history. In addition to on-site courses, Calibre also offers an increasing collection of training-focused videos available through [www.calibrepress.com](http://www.calibrepress.com).

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