

1. Deliver a performance, rather than a speech.

A speech is primarily about the words that you speak, but a performance is so much more. It’s inflection, gesture, tension, resolution and suspense. Don’t believe me? Go see a one-man (or woman) play, and you’ll instantly understand what I mean. Performers work hard at capturing and keeping an audience’s attention, and words are only one tool in their arsenals. Don’t stop crafting your performance once you’ve written the text of your speech.

2. Use the power of eye contact.

Bill Clinton was [a master of eye contact](#)—watch any of his speeches, and you’ll see the master at work. Your audience is made up of individuals, and you should make an effort to make eye contact with each of them. Eye contact makes a person feel personally engaged in a speech, and engaged listeners are much more likely to be persuaded.

3. Don’t hide behind the lectern.

The lectern is a crutch—a structure built to conceal knocking knees and shaking hands. It’s a barrier between you and your audience, and you must step out from behind it. Not only will your movement keep folks from falling asleep, but they’ll perceive you as more open and accessible if you’re out in the open rather than hiding behind a big wooden barrier.

4. Posture matters.

Don’t ever, ever [slouch](#). It looks weak, and your message will inevitably be diluted by what your audience perceives as a lack of confidence. Stand up straight, and keep your shoulders back. Also, never let ‘em see you sweat. Even if there are lights on that make the stage feel like an oven, pit stains on your shirt are distracting. Make sure you wear clothing that will conceal any signs of nervousness. Project confidence. Always.

5. Tell compelling stories.

The power of storytelling lies in the images that your audience will create in their heads as you spin your yarn. Rather than just loading folks up with information, if you tell a story, you’re making them active participants in your performance. Stories—brief, relevant stories—are a powerful tool.

6. Vary your cadence.

Deliberately mixing it up in terms of your speech patterns—volume, speed and tone—keeps your audience from being lulled to sleep by a monotone. With regard to speed, slower is always better than fast. When in doubt, slow down and let the tortoise mind catch up to the rabbit speaker.

If you know you’re naturally a quick talker, you can build pauses into your speech by saying things like, “Now think about that for a moment” or “Let that sink in.” It takes an audience more time to process your points than it will take for you to articulate them. Give them time to ponder your brilliant message.

7. Speak about what you know and care about.

Passion translates into energy and authenticity, and that matters to your audience. If you’re not invested and engaged with your subject, why on earth would your audience care? Emotion pulls the audience in and gets them involved in the process. If you find you’re not moved by your topic, modify it until it matters to you. If you’re going to invest the energy in writing and delivering a speech, it should be on a subject that’s important to you.

1. Respect your audience!

This rule applies before and during your speech. Facing your audience with the best of intentions will ensure those intentions to be successfully translated to them. Whether or not you realize it, respecting your audience will allow for your speech to be interesting, engaging, and stimulating as you will truly want to connect with them. Respect your audience for simply being there to hear what you have to say. This will automatically prompt you to give them their money’s worth. You will stand in front of them, motivated to reach them, and will ultimately connect with them even more than you’d expected.

Always start from the least knowledgeable members of the audience, when faced with a mix of people. Bring the topic of your speech closer to them by keeping it simple and working your way up to the complicated points you want to make. That way, everyone will understand you even better.

2. Locate your feelings.

Your feelings about the topic of your speech can and will influence your vocal projection. Your voice is an instrument that can evoke emotion in the members of your audience by conveying your own. Knowing how you feel about the topic of your speech and what you want to achieve with it precedes your vocal projection. Is the topic of your speech a learning experience? An experience with illness? Are you accepting an award and giving credits to those who helped you along the way? In keeping with your topic, is it your goal to inform others, raise awareness, or express gratitude? Whatever it may be, your goal and tone should align. You don’t want to give an emotionless speech!

3. Be proud of yourself!

Everyone knows that the art of public speaking simply demands confidence; however, being proud of yourself for giving this speech in the first place will boost your confidence to a new level. You have been given an opportunity to convey a message to an audience who could remember your words for a long time to come if you make it powerful. Besides, isn’t that what you really want?

4. Match your appearance to your attitude.

Whether you like it or not, your appearance can help or hinder the point you are trying to make with your speech. You're trying to sell a conclusion. If you look great, you will feel amazing. If you manage to look appealing, tastefully striking, fresh, or styled to perfection, you will experience another confidence boost. Wowing others with your appearance, especially when standing up in front of them to speak, can only be a good thing.

5. Be comfortable with your material.

Although it sounds self-explanatory, the importance of this particular point could not be overemphasized. You must believe in the quality of your material. If you do, your audience will agree, even if they relate to your speech in the ways you never imagined.

However, what does that mean regarding the nature of your speech? If you're giving a presentation, organize your notes as well as you can and remember every relevant piece of information. If you're talking about yourself, be as honest as you feel comfortable being. You will achieve the desired connection with your audience in this way.

6. Relax!

Your confidence can lead to relaxation and vice versa. Use one to find the other or just enjoy them both. Relaxation leads to spontaneity when you know your lines, so to speak. Spontaneity can also add great quality to your speech. A relaxed approach will engage your audience more than you might realize before starting your speech. If you are relaxed, they will be too. They will develop an interest in the topic you are presenting and immediately have questions to ask.

7. Pick a quote.

Choosing (and using) a quote that applies to your presentation in a way that speaks to you will convey the message to your audience. Using someone else's quote that relates to your material (or yourself) will be a striking addition to your speech.

8. Be yourself!

This pivotal idea is just as important to your public speaking as it is in your life. When it comes to public speaking, you have to know what makes you effective. Also, you must assume that you are qualified to make the speech you are about to make. Wondering if you're good enough will only lead to more wondering instead of enjoying the speech as much as you want your audience to. Take the approach you believe in.