

Business Presentations & Public Speaking in English

A **presentation** is a formal talk to one or more people that "presents" ideas or information in a clear, structured way.

People are sometimes afraid of speaking in public, but if you follow a few simple rules, giving a presentation is actually very easy.

Following are tips from English Club, the world's premier free website for learners and teachers of English. This tutorial guides you through each stage of giving a presentation in English, from the initial preparation to the conclusion and questions and answers.

This tutorial is itself set out like a mini-presentation.

Introduction

All presentations have a common objective.

People give presentations because they want to communicate in order to:

- Inform
- Train
- Persuade
- Sell

A successful presentation is one of the most effective ways of *communicating your message*.

And because English is so widely used in international business, a working knowledge of the vocabulary and techniques used in an English language presentation is a *valuable asset*.

We will start by exploring the importance of preparation.

After that, we will consider what equipment to use.

Then we will look at how to "deliver" a presentation.

After delivery, we will examine the language of presentations, before moving on to the presentation itself.

Finally, we will conclude with a review of what we have covered.

Afterwards, you will be invited to take a test and ask questions.

Preparation

Can you name the 3 most important things when giving any presentation?

Number 1 is . . . **Preparation**

Number 2 is . . . **Preparation!**

Number 3 is . . . **Preparation!!**

Preparation is everything!

With good preparation and planning you will be totally confident and less nervous. And your audience will feel your confidence. Your audience, too, will be confident. They will be confident in you. And this

will give you control. Control of your audience and of your presentation. With control, you will be 'in charge' and your audience will listen positively to your message.

Objective

Before you start to prepare a presentation, you should ask yourself:

Why am I making this presentation?

Do you need to inform, to persuade, to train or to sell?

Your objective should be clear in your mind. If it is not clear in your mind, it cannot possibly be clear to your audience.

Audience

Who am I making this presentation to?

Sometimes this will be obvious, but not always.

You should try to inform yourself.

How many people?

Who are they?

- Business people?

- Professional people?

- Political people?

- Experts or non-experts?

Will it be a small, intimate group of 4 colleagues or a large gathering of 400 competitors?

How much do they know already and what will they expect from you?

Venue

Where am I making this presentation?

In a small hotel meeting-room or a large conference hall?

What facilities and equipment are available?

What are the seating arrangements?

Time and length

When am I making this presentation and how long will it be?

Will it be 5 minutes or 1 hour?

Just before lunch, when your audience will be hungry, or just after lunch, when your audience will be sleepy?

Method

How should I make this presentation?"

What approach should you use? Formal or informal?

Lots of visual aids or only a few?

Will you include some anecdotes and humor for variety?

Content

What should I say?

Now you must decide exactly what you want to say.

First, you should brainstorm your ideas.

You will no doubt discover many ideas that you want to include in your presentation. But you must be selective.

You should include only information that is relevant to your audience and your objective. You should exclude all other ideas.

You also need to create a title for your presentation (if you have not already been given a title). The title will help you to focus on the subject.

And you will prepare your visual aids, if you have decided to use them.

But remember, in general, less is better than more (a little is better than a lot). You can always give additional information during the questions after the presentation.

Structure

A well-organized presentation with a clear structure is easier for the audience to follow. It is therefore more effective.

You should organize the points you wish to make in a logical order.

Most presentations are organized in three parts, followed by questions:

Beginning	<u>Short introduction</u> Welcome your audience Introduce your subject Explain the structure of your presentation Explain rules for questions
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Middle	<u>Body of presentation</u> Present the subject itself
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End	<u>Short conclusion</u> Summarize your presentation Thank your audience Invite questions
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Questions and Answers

Notes

When you give your presentation, you should be - or appear to be - as **spontaneous** as possible.

You should **not read** your presentation! You should be so familiar with your subject and with the information that you want to deliver that you do not need to read a text. Reading a text is boring! Reading a text will make your audience go to sleep!

So if you don't have a text to read, how can you remember to say everything you need to say? With notes. You can create your own system of notes. Some people make notes on small, A6 cards. Some people write down just the title of each section of their talk. Some people write down keywords to remind them. The notes will give you confidence, but because you will have prepared your presentation fully, you may not even need them!

Rehearsal

Rehearsal is a vital part of preparation. You should leave time to practice your presentation two or three times. This will have the following benefits:

You will become more familiar with what you want to say
You will identify weaknesses in your presentation
You will be able to practise difficult pronunciations
You will be able to check the time that your presentation takes and make any necessary modifications

So prepare, prepare, prepare!

Prepare everything: words, visual aids, timing, equipment.

Rehearse your presentation several times and time it. Is it the right length?

Are you completely familiar with all your illustrations?

Are they in the right order?

Do you know who the audience is?

How many people?

How will you answer difficult questions?

Do you know the room?

Are you confident about the equipment?

When you have answered all these questions, you will be a confident, enthusiastic presenter ready to communicate the subject of your presentation to an eager audience.

Equipment

--> Easily your most important piece of equipment is...YOU!

Make sure you're in full working order, and check your personal presentation carefully - if you don't, your audience will! Your most important equipment is YOU

--> The overhead projector (OHP) displays overhead transparencies (OHTs or OHPTs).

It has several advantages over the 35mm slide projector:

- it can be used in daylight

- the user can face the audience

- the user can write or draw directly on the transparency while in use

--> The whiteboard (more rarely blackboard or greenboard) is a useful device for spontaneous writing - as in brainstorming, for example. For prepared material, the OHP might be more suitable.

--> The duster is used for cleaning the whiteboard. It is essential that the duster be clean to start with. You may consider carrying your own duster just in case.

--> Markers are used for writing on the whiteboard (delible - you can remove the ink) or flipchart (indelible - you cannot remove the ink). They are usually available in blue, red, black and green. Again, it's a good idea to carry a spare set of markers in case you are given some used ones which do not write well.

!!! "A good workman never blames his tools."

--> The flipchart or paper-board consists of several leaves of paper that you 'flip' or turn over. Some people prefer the flipchart to the whiteboard, but its use is limited to smaller presentations.

--> The Slide projector - which must be used in a darkened room - adds a certain drama. Some slide projectors can be synchronized with audio for audio-visual (AV) presentations. These projectors are typically used for larger presentations. The majority takes 35mm slides or transparencies, but projectors for 6x6cm slides are also available.

--> Transparencies are projected by an overhead projector or a slide projector onto a screen - in this case a folding screen which can be packed up and transported.

--> The notebook computer, iPad, tablet, smartphone, ... is increasingly being used to display graphics during presentations. It is often used in conjunction with an overhead projector, which actually projects the image from the computer screen onto the wall screen.

--> Handouts are any documents or samples that you 'hand out' or distribute to your audience. Note that it is not usually a good idea to distribute handouts before your presentation. The audience will read the handouts instead of listening to you.

Delivery

'Delivery' refers to the way in which you actually deliver or perform or give your presentation. Delivery is a vital aspect of all presentations. Delivery is at least as important as content, especially in a multi-cultural context.

Nerves

Most speakers are a little nervous at the beginning of a presentation. So it is normal if you are nervous. The answer is to pay special attention to the beginning of your presentation. First impressions count. This is the time when you establish a rapport with your audience. During this time, try to speak slowly and calmly. You should perhaps learn your introduction by heart. After a few moments, you will relax and gain confidence.

Audience Rapport

You need to build a warm and friendly relationship with your audience. Enthusiasm is contagious. If you are enthusiastic your audience will be enthusiastic too. And be careful to establish eye contact with each member of your audience. Each person should feel that you are speaking directly to him or her. This means that you must look at each person in turn - in as natural a way as possible. This will also give you the opportunity to detect signs of boredom, disinterest or even disagreement, allowing you to modify your presentation as appropriate.

!!! Your objective is to communicate!

Body Language

What you do not say is at least as important as what you do say. Your body is speaking to your audience even before you open your mouth. Your clothes, your walk, your glasses, your haircut, your expression - it is from these that your audience forms its first impression as you enter the room. Generally speaking, it is better to stand rather than sit when making a presentation. Be aware of and avoid any repetitive and irritating gestures. Be aware, too, that the movement of your body is one of your methods of control. When you move to or from the whiteboard, for example, you can move fast or slowly, raising or reducing

the dynamism within the audience. You can stand very still while talking or you can stroll from side to side. What effect do you think these two different approaches would have on an audience?

Cultural Considerations

Because English is so widely used around the world, it is quite possible that many members of your audience will not be native English-speakers. In other words, they will not have an Anglo-Saxon culture. Even within the Anglo-Saxon world, there are many differences in culture. If we hypothetically imagine a German working for an Israeli company making a presentation in English to a Japanese audience in Korea, we can see that there are even more possibilities for cultural misunderstanding. You should try to learn about any particular cultural matters that may affect your audience. This is one reason why preparation for your presentation is so important. Cultural differences can also be seen in body language, which we have just discussed. To a Latin from Southern France or Italy, a presenter who uses his hands and arms when speaking may seem dynamic and friendly. To an Englishman, the same presenter may seem unsure of his words and lacking in self-confidence.

Voice quality

It is, of course, important that your audience be able to hear you clearly throughout your presentation. Remember that if you turn away from your audience, for example towards the whiteboard, you need to speak a little more loudly. In general, you should try to vary your voice. Your voice will then be more interesting for your audience.

You can vary your voice in at least three ways:

Speed: you can speak at normal speed, you can speak faster, you can speak more slowly - and you can stop completely! You can pause. This is a very good technique for gaining your audience's attention.

Intonation: you can change the pitch of your voice. You can speak in a high tone. You can speak in a low tone.

Volume: you can speak at normal volume, you can speak loudly and you can speak quietly. Lowering your voice and speaking quietly can again attract your audience's interest.

The important point is not to speak in the same, flat, monotonous voice throughout your presentation - this is the voice that hypnotists use to put their patients' into trance!

Visual aids

Of all the information that enters our brains, the vast majority of it enters through the eyes. 80% of what your audience learn during your presentation is learned **visually** (what they see) and only 20% is learned **aurally** (what they hear).

The significance of this is obvious:

- Visual aids are an extremely effective means of communication
- Non-native English speakers need not worry so much about spoken English - they can rely more heavily on visual aids

It is well worth spending time in the creation of good visual aids. But it is equally important not to overload your audience's brains. Keep the information on each visual aid to a minimum - and give your audience time to look at and absorb this information. Remember, your audience has never seen these visual aids before. They need time to study and to understand them. Without understanding there is no communication.

Apart from photographs and drawings, some of the most useful visual aids are **charts** and **graphs**, like the 3-dimensional ones shown here:

3D piechart

Piecharts are circular in shape (like a pie).

3D barchart

Barcharts can be vertical or horizontal.

3D graph

Graphs can rise and fall.

Audience Reaction

Remain calm and polite if you receive difficult or even hostile questions during your presentation. If you receive particularly awkward (=embarrassant) questions, you might suggest that the questioners ask their questions after your presentation.

Language

!!! Say what you are going to say,

Simplicity and Clarity

If you want your audience to understand your message, your language must be simple and clear.

Use short words and short sentences.

Do not use jargon, unless you are certain that your audience understands it.

In general, talk about concrete facts rather than abstract ideas.

Use active verbs instead of passive verbs. Active verbs are much easier to understand. They are much more powerful. Consider these two sentences, which say the same thing:

1. Toyota sold two million cars last year.
2. Two million cars were sold by Toyota last year.

Which is easier to understand?

Which is more immediate?

Which is more powerful?

#1 is active and #2 is passive.

Signposting

When you drive on the roads, you know where you are on those roads. Each road has a name or number. Each town has a name. And each house has a number. If you are at house #100, you can go back to #50 or forward to N#150. You can look at the signposts for directions. And you can look at your atlas for the structure of the roads in detail. In other words, it is easy to navigate the roads. You cannot get lost. But when you give a presentation, how can your audience know where they are? How can they know the structure of your presentation? How can they know what is coming next? They know because you tell them. Because you put up signposts for them, at the beginning and all along the route. This technique is called 'signposting' (or 'signaling').

During your introduction, you should tell your audience what the structure of your presentation will be.

You might say something like this:

"I'll start by describing the current position in Europe.

Then, I'll move on to some of the achievements we've made in Asia.

After that, I'll consider the opportunities we see for further expansion in Africa.

Lastly, I'll quickly recap before concluding with some recommendations."

A member of the audience can now visualize your presentation like this:

Introduction

Welcome
Explanation of structure (now)

Body

Europe
Asia
Africa

Conclusion

Summing up
Recommendations

He will keep this image in his head during the presentation. He may even write it down. And throughout your presentation, you will put up signposts telling him which point you have reached and where you are going now.

When you finish Europe and want to start Asia, you might say:

"That's all I have to say about Europe. Let's turn now to Asia."

When you have finished Africa and want to sum up, you might say:

"Well, we've looked at the three continents Europe, Asia and Africa. I'd like to sum up now."

And when you finish summing up and want to give your recommendations, you might say:

"What does all this mean for us? Well, firstly I recommend..."

The table below lists useful expressions that you can use to signpost the various parts of your presentation.

Function

Introducing the subject

Language

I'd like to start by...
Let's begin by...
First of all, I'll...
Starting with...
I'll begin by...

Finishing one subject...

Well, I've told you about...
That's all I have to say about...
We've looked at...
So much for...

...and starting another

Now we'll move on to...
Let me turn now to...
Next...
Turning to...
I'd like now to discuss...
Let's look now at...

Analyzing a point and giving
recommendations

Where does that lead us?
Let's consider this in more detail...
What does this mean for ABC?
Translated into real terms...

Giving an example

For example,...
A good example of this is...
As an illustration,...
To give you an example,...
To illustrate this point...

Dealing with questions

We'll be examining this point in more detail later on...
I'd like to deal with this question later, if I may...
I'll come back to this question later in my talk...
Perhaps you'd like to raise this point at the end...
I won't comment on this now...

Summarizing and concluding

In conclusion,...
Right, let's sum up, shall we?
I'd like now to recap...
Let's summarize briefly what we've looked at...
Finally, let me remind you of some of the issues we've covered...
If I can just sum up the main points...

Ordering

Firstly...secondly...thirdly...lastly...
First of all...then...next...after that...finally...
To start with...later...to finish up...

The Presentation

!!! ...say it,

Most presentations are divided into 3 main parts (+ questions):

1. INTRODUCTION (Questions)
 2. BODY (Questions)
 3. CONCLUSION (Questions)
- QUESTIONS

As a general rule in communication, repetition is valuable.

In presentations, there is a golden rule about repetition:

1. Say what you are going to say,
2. Say it,
3. Then say what you have just said.

In other words, use the three parts of your presentation to reinforce your message.

In the introduction, you tell your audience what your message is going to be.

In the body, you tell your audience your real message.

In the conclusion, you summarize what your message was.

We will now consider each of these parts in more detail.

Introduction

The introduction is a very important - perhaps the most important - part of your presentation.
This is the first impression that your audience has of you.
You should concentrate on getting your introduction right.
You should use the introduction to:

- Welcome your audience
- Introduce your subject
- Outline the structure of your presentation
- Give instructions about questions

The following table shows examples of language for each of these functions.
You may need to modify the language as appropriate.

Function	Possible language
<u>Welcoming your audience</u>	Good morning, ladies and gentlemen Good morning, gentlemen Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman Good afternoon, everybody
<u>Introducing your subject</u>	I am going to talk today about... The purpose of my presentation is to introduce our new range of...
<u>Outlining your structure</u>	<i>To start with</i> , I'll describe the progress made this year. <i>Then</i> , I'll mention some of the problems we've encountered and how we overcame them. <i>After that</i> , I'll consider the possibilities for further growth next year. Finally, I'll summarize my presentation (before concluding with some recommendations).
<u>Giving instructions about questions</u>	Do feel free to interrupt me if you have any questions. I'll try to answer all of your questions after the presentation. I plan to keep some time for questions after the presentation.

Body

The body is the 'real' presentation. If the introduction was well prepared and delivered, you will now be 'in control'. You will be relaxed and confident.

The body should be well structured, divided up logically, with plenty of carefully spaced visuals.

Remember these key points while delivering the body of your presentation:

- Do not hurry
- Be enthusiastic
- Give time on visuals
- Maintain eye contact
- Modulate your voice
- Look friendly
- Keep to your structure
- Use your notes
- Signpost throughout
- Remain polite when dealing with difficult questions

Conclusion

Use the conclusion to:

- Sum up
- (Give recommendations if appropriate)
- Thank your audience
- Invite questions

The following table shows examples of language for each of these functions. You may need to modify the language as appropriate.

Function	Possible language
<u>Summing up</u>	To conclude ... In conclusion ... Now, to sum up ... So let me summarize/recap what I've said. Finally, may I remind you of some of the main points we've considered.
<u>Giving recommendations</u>	In conclusion, my recommendations are... I therefore suggest/propose/recommend the following strategy.
<u>Thanking your audience</u>	Many thanks for your attention. May I thank you all for being such an attentive audience.
<u>Inviting questions</u>	Now, I'll try to answer any questions you may have. Can I answer any questions? Are there any questions? Do you have any questions? Are there any final questions?

Questions

Questions are a good opportunity for you to interact with your audience. It may be helpful for you to try to predict what questions will be asked so that you can prepare your response in advance. You may wish to accept questions at any time during your presentation, or to keep a time for questions after your presentation. Normally, it's your decision, and you should make it clear during the introduction. Be polite with all questioners, even if they ask difficult questions. They are showing interest in what you have to say and they deserve attention. Sometimes you can reformulate a question. Or answer the question with another question. Or even ask for comment from the rest of the audience.

Review

!!! ...then say what you have just said.

In these lessons, you have learned to:

Allow plenty of time for preparation

Ask the all-important question-words, why? who? where? when? how? and what?
Structure your presentation into introduction, body, conclusion and questions
Write notes based on keywords
Rehearse your presentation several times and modify it as necessary
Select the right equipment for the job
Use equipment effectively
Make use of clear, powerful visual aids that do not overload your audience
Use clear, simple language, avoiding jargon
Use active verbs and concrete facts
Explain the structure of your presentation at the beginning so that your listeners know what to expect
Link each section of your presentation
Signpost your presentation from beginning to end so that your listeners know where they are
Say what you are going to say, say it, and say what you have just said
Overcome your nerves
Establish audience rapport
Be aware of your body language
Understand cultural differences
Control the quality of your voice
Maintain interest by varying the speed, volume and pitch of your voice
Deal with listeners' questions politely
Respond to your audience positively

More language and phrases to make presentation

The sentences and phrases below from speakspeak.com follow the logical progression of a well-balanced presentation.

Welcoming

- Good morning and welcome to [name of company, name of conference hall, hotel, etc.].
- Thank you all very much for coming today.
- I hope you all had a pleasant journey here today.

Introducing yourself

- My name is Mark Watson and I am responsible for ...
- My name is Mark Watson from [name of company], where I am responsible for ...
- Let me introduce myself; my name is Mark Watson and I am responsible for ...

Introducing your presentation

- The purpose of today's presentation is to ...
- The purpose of my presentation today is to ...
- In today's presentation I'd like to ... show you ... / explain to you how ...
- In today's presentation I'm hoping to ... give you an update on... / give you an overview of ...
- In today's presentation I'm planning to ... look at ... / explain ...

You can also outline your presentation to give the audience a clear overview of what they can expect:

In today's presentation I'm hoping to cover three points:

Firstly ...

After that we will look at ...

And finally I'll ...

In today's presentation I'd like to cover three points:

Firstly ...

Secondly ...

And finally

Explaining that there will be time for questions at the end

If you have any questions you'd like to ask, please leave them until the end, when I'll be happy to answer them.

If there are any questions you'd like to ask, please leave them until the end, when I'll do my best to answer them.

Starting the presentation

To begin with ...

To start with ...

Let's start by looking at ...

Let's start by looking at ...

I'd like to start by looking at ...

Let's start with / start by looking at ...

Closing a section of the presentation

So, that concludes [title of the section] ...

So, that's an overview of ...

I think that just about covers ...

Beginning a new section of the presentation

Now let's move on to ...

Now let's take a look at ...

Now I'd like to move on to ...

Next I'd like to take a look at ...

Moving on to the next part, I'd like to ...

Moving on to the next section, let's take a look at ...

Concluding and summarizing the presentation

Well, that brings us to the end of the final section. Now, I'd like to summarize by ...

That brings us to the end of the final section. Now, if I can just summarize the main points again.

That concludes my presentation. Now, if I can just summarize the main points.

That's an overview of ... Now, just to summarize, let's quickly look at the main points again.

Finishing and thanking

Thank you for your attention.

That brings the presentation to an end.

That brings us to the end of my presentation.

Finally, I'd like to finish by thanking you (all) for your attention.

Finally, I'd like to end by thanking you (all) for coming today.

I'd like to thank you (all) for your attention and interest.

Inviting questions

If anyone has any questions, I'll be pleased to answer them.

If anyone has any questions, I'll do my best to answer them.

If anyone has any questions, please feel free to ask them now.

If anyone has any questions, please feel free to ask them and I'll do my best to answer.

Referring to a previous point made

As I mentioned earlier ...

As we saw earlier ...

You may recall that we said ...

You may recall that I explained ...

Dealing with (difficult) questions

I'll come back to that question later if I may.

I'll / We'll come back to that question later in my presentation.

I'll / We'll look at that point in more detail later on.

Perhaps we can look at that point at the end / a little later.

Other phrases and key presentation language

Word / Phrase	Meaning / Function
briefly	'very quickly'
take a look at	'look at'
take a brief look at	'quickly look at'
return to	'go back', 'explain again'
I'll outline	'I will explain'
here we can see	to draw attention to a specific point on a slide
as you can see here	to draw attention to a specific point on a slide
(let's) move on to	to start a new subject
(let's) continue with	to start a new subject
(let's) continue by looking at	to start a new subject
to illustrate this point	when giving an example
let's, we can, we will	using 'we' and 'us' instead of 'I' connects you to your audience

Do you dread (=craindre) public speaking? Join the club. Along with death and spiders, it's what people fear most. However, being an effective presenter is critical for anyone who is (or aspires to be) in a leadership position. In fact, certain presentations can be downright career defining. Instead of leaving your speaking success to chance, take some cues from the pros.

1. Begin with the end in mind

Before you start working on your script or presentation, get clear on its purpose.

- What are you trying to accomplish?
- What impact do you want to have on your audience?
- Are you looking to inform? Inspire? Persuade?

Knowing your ultimate purpose and desired outcome will help you stay focused through the preparation process.

2. Simplify your messages

You are where you are because of the depth and breadth of your expertise. Your natural inclination will be to impart lots of that knowledge onto your audience. Resist it! Otherwise, you'll bore and overwhelm your listeners with details they'll never retain. Focus on conveying a few powerful ideas that they'll remember. Think of yourself as Master Distiller of Information – boil it down and go from there.

3. Avoid the perils of Powerpoint

It's called "death by Powerpoint" for a reason. Those "eye charts" crammed with words in 8-point type are dreaded by audiences everywhere. Lose them! Your job is to hold the attention in the room. All eyes should be on you, not the screen. If you use slides, make them impactful and use them sparingly. They should be simple, compelling and graphically appealing. Also remember that when you're reliant on slides, you run the risk of a technology problem and a presentation disaster. By reducing or eliminating slides, you minimize risk.

4. Connect with your audience

One mistake speakers often make is trying to prove they're smart. Remember that you're at the podium for a reason. Your credentials speak for themselves. When you stand in front of an audience, there is already a gap — you're the expert, they're not. By trying to impress your audience with your intellect, you create more distance and could come across as arrogant. Your job is to close the gap, not widen it. By being self-effacing (=modeste), humorous and real, you become approachable and it's easier to win over your audience. In turn, the more connected the audience feels to you, the more they'll pay attention to what you have to say.

5. Tell personal stories

Storytelling puts an audience at ease, humanizes you as a speaker, and makes your messages more memorable. It is the most powerful tool in a speaker's toolkit. To find your stories, you simply have to mine your own life experiences and pull out the gems. Audiences will remember your stories more easily than facts and figures, and they're more likely to enjoy your presentation. Another benefit is that personal stories are easier for you to remember when you're at the podium.

6. Prepare and practice

If you're giving a high-stakes (=enjeux) presentation, don't leave anything to chance. "Off the Cuff" and "Winging It" are high-risk strategies and very few people can pull it off. Have a very clear roadmap of what you're going to say, and rehearse. If you want to ad-lib a couple of stories, that's fine, but be sure you know the key points so you don't meander. Having your material down cold will enable you to have more fun with your audience and avoid the nervousness associated with being not quite ready.

7. Watch yourself

Few tools are as instructive as video playback. People can tell you that you wander the stage, over-gesture, slouch, have an incessantly grim facial expression or use a repetitive speech pattern, but once you see it on tape, it will be much easier for you to grasp and change. If you prefer to rehearse in private, use your iPad or hand-held device's video feature. Stand in front of it and let it roll!

8. Avoid sameness

It is said that sameness is the enemy of speaking. If you follow the same cadence, vocal rhythm, pitch, tone and gesture patterns throughout your presentation, your audience will tune you out. Think about what puts a baby to sleep. You need to change it up; keep enough variety in your delivery so it holds the audience's interest.

9. Message your body

Remember that 90% of communication is nonverbal. Your audience will read your facial expressions, the tone of your voice, the way you use your hands, how you stand and move. A warm, easy smile and calm body immediately tell the audience that you're comfortable and confident. And when the speaker is comfortable, the audience is, too. The opposite is also true.

10. Let your passion show

There is no substitute for authentic passion at the podium. When you believe in your message and have energy around your topic, it will translate to your audience. Above all else, be yourself up there!

11. De-risk the logistics

Take some extra steps beforehand to ensure a smooth experience.

- If you're vertically challenged, make sure there's a step riser behind the podium so you're not struggling to be seen or to reach the microphone.
- If you're being introduced by someone else, send them your own brief intro in advance with phonetic spelling of any complicated words (ethnic last names, etc.).
- If you've been given a specific timeslot for your presentation, make sure you know who's before you and who follows you, and clarify when you will get "wired for sound." And be sure to speak within the time parameters you've been given.
- If you're using slides, bring a second set on a thumb drive in case there's an issue with the original file, and try to get into the room ahead of time to get comfortable with the clicker, pointer and other gadgets.

The goal is that once you step on stage, everything goes like clockwork. Of course, having a coach to help you master these techniques can pay dividends down the road. By taking steps to elevate your presentation game, you'll begin to overcome the all-too-common fear of public speaking while positioning yourself to be a more effective, more successful leader.