

PUBLIC SPEAKING

10 Tips for Public Speaking



Feeling some nervousness before giving a speech is natural and even beneficial, but too much nervousness can be detrimental. Here are some proven tips on how to control your butterflies and give better presentations:

1. **Know your material.**
Pick a topic you are interested in. Know more about it than you include in your speech. Use humor, personal stories and conversational language – that way you won't easily forget what to say.
2. **Practice. Practice. Practice!**
Rehearse out loud with all equipment you plan on using. Revise as necessary. Work to control filler words; Practice, pause and breathe. Practice with a timer and allow time for the unexpected.
3. **Know the audience.**
Greet some of the audience members as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to strangers.
4. **Know the room.**
Arrive early, walk around the speaking area and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.
5. **Relax.**
Begin by addressing the audience. It buys you time and calms your nerves. Pause, smile and count to three before saying anything. ("One one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-thousand. Pause. Begin.") Transform nervous energy into enthusiasm.
6. **Visualize yourself giving your speech.**
Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear and confident. Visualize the audience clapping – it will boost your confidence.
7. **Realize that people want you to succeed.**
Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They're rooting for you.

8. Don't apologize.

Don't apologize for any nervousness or problem – the audience probably never noticed it.

9. Concentrate on the message – not the medium.

Focus your attention away from your own anxieties and concentrate on your message and your audience.

10. Gain experience.

Mainly, your speech should represent you — as an authority and as a person. Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking. A Toastmasters club can provide the experience you need in a safe and friendly environment.

How to Be an Effective Public Speaker?

1) Know your audience – knowing your audience makes the experience easier. Knowing as much as you can about their knowledge, their age, the number of people you will be lecturing or speaking to. If you get some idea of what they hope to achieve from the speech, then that will help you to prepare in a more effective way.

2) If you have been asked to speak on a particular subject, for example “The Roman Gladiator” it is essential to know whether the people you will be lecturing to are novices in the subject, or experts. This will obviously affect your research and delivery. If they are beginners you do not want to talk over their heads, and if experts you do not want to tell them what they already know.

3) The tone of your speech will also differ for small groups. A large group lecture (50+) will be far more formal than a small group. For small groups you can include them in the speech, by asking questions or involving them.

4) Sometimes it is not always possible to find out all this information before the lecture so you need to try to be adaptable. For example I was expecting to lecture to 50-70 people with a great deal of knowledge, and due to bad weather six total beginners turned up. It was a much more informal group than I had prepared for so started by asking them what they expected, what they knew, preconceptions and ideas they may have.

5) Research – The better prepared you are for your speech or lecture, the better the speech will be. It is better to be over prepared than under. When I first started I wrote everything down that I wanted to say, including jokes and quips. Many people say this is bad practice but if you are able to read it “naturally” then you can get away with this in the early stages. Only very experienced lecturers and public speakers can talk without notes. The form of these notes will be personal to you, and you should not feel pressured to use a particular method.

6) Be aware that any holes in your research will be noticed and questioned by someone in the audience, so to prevent any awkward moments make sure there are no holes, sweeping statements or uncertainties. Never assume “no one will notice” or “no one will ask about that”. Always assume someone will ask. Try and think of all the questions you could be asked and make sure that you have an answer.

7) If you think “I hope no one asks me” you can guarantee someone will, so have an answer. However, if you are asked a question you do not know the answer to, then do not be afraid to admit to not knowing, although you can lessen the impact of “I don't know”, to “I haven't researched that yet”, or “that is an interesting line of thought, which I hadn't

considered". Better to bluff why you do know an answer rather than make something up; someone is bound to notice.

8) Timing – You will be given a time for your speech, sometimes these are flexible (between 10-15 minutes for example) which is good, as going over time is bad manners. However, if you are told you have 20 minutes make sure you stick to it, as you cannot rush your lecture to finish as this will affect delivery, and you do not want to be stopped before the end. If you have a time slot of 20 minutes, for example, the audience will know this, and will start fidgeting as you go over time, which is distracting for you, and you are certain they are not listening, but rather thinking about their lunch or tea-break.

9) Use the premise that 2000 words will last approximately 10 minutes talking time. So for an hour's speech you will need approximately 10-12000 words. It may seem a pain to write this much for a speech, but it is a good guideline for the amount of information you will need. After some experience this will come naturally and you will not need to be so pedantic with the preparation. It is better to have too much information than finish a lecture ten minutes early, as if you are a new public speaker you will not want an extra ten minutes question time. Also if you are being paid to speak they may feel they have not got their money's worth.

10) Practice the speech at home, and time it. Remember to speak slower than you would normally in order to be heard and understood.