

Public Speaking Guide

This article is a brief introduction that will cover the primary elements that go into making a great speech.

Public Speaking Tips

Physical

- Eye Contact: Use appropriate eye contact with every audience member. Simply looking at someone will retain their attention. Avoid staring at one particular person by scanning the room and distributing your eye contact evenly among the audience.
- Facial Expressions: While a business setting will not require any dramatic facial features, simple but effective messages can be conveyed with the correct expression.
- Posture/Poise: When speaking, make sure you are always standing up and facing the audience. Avoid slouching and maintain a relaxed, upright posture.

Delivery

- Professionalism: VCG's clientele are industry leaders. Absolutely no profanity is allowed. Avoid using colloquial language and use project-relevant terminology.
- Pace: Nervousness may cause you to speak too quickly. Ensure your delivery comes off as natural and sincere by slowing down and focusing on clarity rather than speed.
- Pronunciation: This is somewhat related to pace. Make sure the audience understands exactly what you're saying by slowing down and enunciating.

Analysis + Content

- Thesis/Theme: When given an argument, ensure you have a well-defined stance on what your position is. A strong thesis is more conducive to better, pertinent evidence.
- Signpost: Give the audience a roadmap of the main points you are going to cover in your speech. i.e., To improve Apple Music's marketing strategy, I would implement a three-pronged strategy. First, __. Second, __. And finally, __.
- Evidence: Use numbers, statistics, and concrete values to support your thesis. While anecdotes and personal stories may be entertaining, they should not constitute the crux of your position. Your position is defensible largely because your evidence is tractable.
- Relevance: Stay on topic. Before making another point or further research, ask yourself whether the statement is relevant to the discussion at hand.

Impromptu Speaking

Perhaps the most important form of public speaking you will need to know is the ability to speak on your feet. As opposed to memorizing a script for a presentation, improvising words conveying content you already know is much better. Here is a simple mental roadmap of what an impromptu speech should look like.

1. Attention Getting Device – Tell an anecdote, joke, story to capture audience’s interest.
2. Thesis – A single, opening statement that summarizes the focus of your entire speech.
3. Supporting Evidence – Use statistics and stories to back up your thesis.
4. Summary – Connect your evidence with regards to how it supports your thesis.
5. Closer – One liner that finishes your speech.

Miscellaneous Tips

1. Practice, practice, practice. Feeling nervous is completely okay. Unfortunately, there’s no universal formula for a good speech. While we gave you tips, it’s up to you to find your own style of speaking, and that comes with practice.
2. Know your audience. Consider who your listeners are, then tailor your word choice and level of information to them.
3. Adapt to your feedback. Notice everything from facial reactions to constructive criticism. Don’t be afraid to be flexible and try new types of delivery.
4. Don’t read unless absolutely necessary. Memorizing a script does not equate to effective delivery. Instead, create an outline that gives you an informational skeleton, then complete the speech with improvisational speaking.
5. Use your voice and hands effectively and in moderation. You may not even notice some nervous ticks that you may have when you are speaking, such as repetitive gestures or a speaking pace that’s way too fast. Instead, use your physical delivery for emphasis and attention.
6. Show off your personality! Don’t let the speech topic or anxiety restrict your performance. By speaking genuinely, the audience can tell, and you will build credibility for what you say.
7. Practice, unfortunately, does not mean perfect. This seems somewhat contradictory to the first point, but it’s important to understand that none of us expect every single speech to be perfect. The nerves won’t go away entirely, but by practicing you can minimize them.