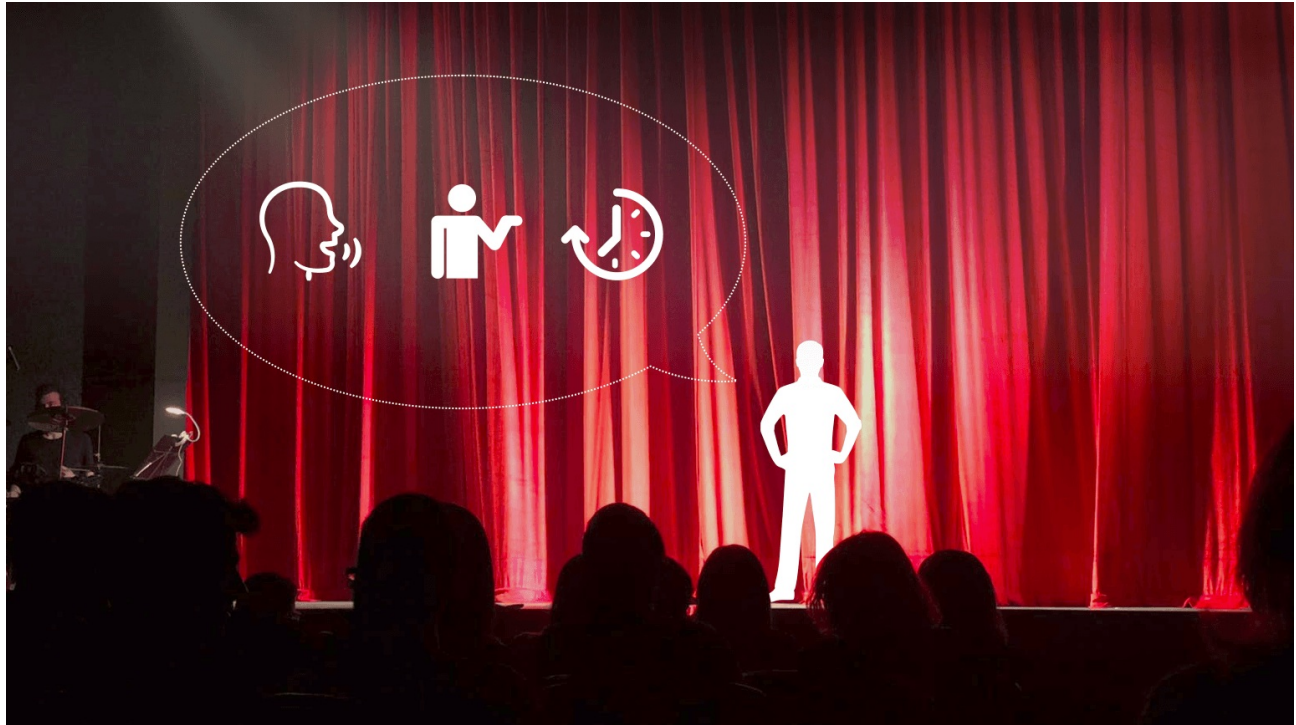


The Ultimate Public Speaking Tips to Hook and Impress Any Audience

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According to experts, public speaking is one of the most important and beneficial skill sets for your career. It helps to increase confidence and shapes the perception of others about you when you deliver a presentation.

Despite these benefits, however, many seem to fear public speaking. According to experts, roughly 80% of people get increasingly nervous and lose sleep before a big public speaking moment. Some experts even suggest that the fear of public speaking rivals death. Yet, most people will be put in a situation where they will be expected to speak in front of a crowd and these moments can sometimes be career-defining.

If you have been tirelessly trying to get the butterflies in your stomach to fly in formation when you're thrust to speak to an audience, you're not alone. Here's an easy to follow step-by-step guide (with all the public speaking tips you need) on how you can overcome your fear of public speaking and impress your audience even if you're a beginner.

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1. Prepare for your presentation

A speaker's worst fear is to see that the audience is bored or has gotten no value from the speech. This is why thoroughly preparing for your presentation is vital.

Here are a few easy steps to prepare and research for your presentation:

Identify the context of the event

For example, if you're speaking at an industry conference on AI Technology – you can be sure that your audience will include practitioners and technicians in that space. Recycling basic content about their industry that they're already aware of is a definite way to quickly lose their attention.

Instead, it's likely you'd want to introduce big ideas that challenge what they already know about the industry currently and where it's moving towards.

When Steve Jobs famously unveiled the iPhone in the 2007 Worldwide Developer's Conference, he was tackling an existing industry norm of buttons on cell phones. Needless to say, his gamble paid off and set the foundation of the smart phones we now know today:

That said, Steve's presentation style might not be for everyone, it's up to you as a presenter to decide how best to deliver your speech when the time comes.¹

Know the demographics of the audience

It is important to know the demographics of your audience as it determines how you can make your tone suitable and content relatable to them.

If you're speaking to audiences from a particular generation, consider including examples that will resonate with them. For example: when speaking to millennials, try referencing recent news on developments in technologies they use every day (e.g. SnapChat or Netflix) to be more relevant to them.

Organizing your content

You can have the best ideas. But if they aren't sequenced in the right order, you're basically back to square one.

Most experts agree that various presentations follow different 'story arcs' where they usually fall within three big acts: the Start(or Hook), Middle and Conclusion.²

These structures can exist in all sorts of ways such as a Problem, Solution, Call-To-Action type framework for sales. We see this mirrored by numerous presenters where they establish a cause for concern upfront before addressing these concerns with a product or method.

After you've decided ideas you'd like to flesh out, begin organizing them in an order that will keep the audience hinged on your every word. In this video, Aimee Mulins tells a story about adversity followed by resolution later on in life:

2. Develop a presentation that will captivate your audience

Picking a good topic and conquering your stage fright is half the battle won in public speaking. Putting it all together in a presentation that flows well and engages your audience is what differentiates a blockbuster speech versus a lacklustre talk.

Start strong

It's been said that the first 30 seconds of your presentation determines whether the audience want to listen to you or not.³

Here are some proven ways to grab the attention of your audience:

- **Start with an anecdote.** If you can draw relevance to your speech topic – sharing a quick story related to the topic is a great way to appear more relatable and lead audiences into your punchline.
- **Use an analogy.** Analogies are a fun and interesting way to begin your presentation. Comparing two seemingly unrelated things can help build a case for what you'll say next. Not only that, it can be helpful if you need to explain a complex situation that your audience may not understand.
- **Use a memorable quote.** Starting with a memorable quote can help enhance your credibility and reinforce your own claims especially if it comes from notable figures or experts. It can also help inspire the audience which will then make them excited about your idea. The end result? It makes them more engaged with your presentation. Killing two birds with one stone!

Use storytelling techniques

Presentations are hardly ever a one-way dialogue. You'll want to take measures to engage the audience and make the presentation a conversation.

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Try to pose provocative questions or use props. Asking questions to the floor engages your audience presentation and also demonstrates that you value their opinion on things. In some cases, getting your audiences to visualize problems might be more effectively demonstrated than theorized.

Bill Gates is an iconic example of how using props can really drive a message through when

he released a swarm of mosquitos during his speech to communicate how people from countries with a high level of malaria infection feel:

Use visual aids effectively

Visual aids such as presentation slides are an opportunity to enhance and drive your message home with 43% added recall for presentations according to Prezi.

Sometimes putting all the information on a slide may steal the audience's attention away. To prevent that, you can make use of evocative images that supports your speech to either transport audience members into a particular scene or to draw analogies for relevant messaging.



E.g. picture of disaster that is evocative and memorable

3. Overcome your nerves and stage fright

Picture this: moments before your speech, your heart's pounding profusely in anticipation for what's coming next. You step behind the podium and all eyes are on you. The pressure becomes overwhelming and you freeze, unable to utter a single word.

It's been long known that public speaking outranks even death as the top fear of most individuals. This then leads to the question – how do the pros make it look easy?

Embrace your anxiety

The truth is everyone gets nervous, even seasoned speakers. As Mark Twain put it nicely:

“There are two types of speakers: those that are nervous and those that are liars.”

Remembering and embracing that you'll always get those butterflies in your stomach leading up to your presentation is half the battle won. Learn to harness that flush of adrenaline and energy to engage with your audience early on.

Be conversational and authentic

It's easy to have a conversation with someone in a personal one-to-one setting. Public speaking does not need to be that different. Imagine speaking to one audience member at a time when you're up on stage and you'll find that it's easier trying to connect to one person at a time than a whole room.

Presenters like Elon Musk sometimes appear comical on stage, but always authentic. He speaks direct to the audiences and in a language they can understand:

Know your content

Knowing your content at your fingertips help reduce your anxiety because there is one less thing to worry about. So one way to get there is to practice numerous times before your actual speech. However, you don't want to memorize your script word by word. It can work against you should you forget your content.

Instead, memorize the over-arching concepts or ideas in your pitch as it helps you speak more naturally. This will let your personality shine through. Speaking exactly from a memorized script may make you sound rigid and robotic.

Still, if you need to have a reference just in case you forget your speech, it is okay to have prompts in your slides or cue cards.

Mouth your words when rehearsing

Another method that most speakers use to embed their presentations into their conscience is to 'mouth' the words as they rehearse.

Not only do you begin to instinctively memorize your presentation each time you practice, it also aids in muscle memory when you need to deliver the speech on stage naturally.

4. Deliver an impressive speech

We've gone from prepping for a presentation, finding ways to engage your audience with presentations and combating stage fright. All this is left with is for the speaker to steal the show by delivering an impressive performance during the speech.

Here are some things you'll want to take note of to ensure you're in tip-top shape when it's showtime:

Hand gestures

Seasoned speakers swear by this and amateur speakers use it to great success.

Hand gesturing is a great way to avoid looking stiff and awkward on stage. A key tip is to have your hands held high above your waist at all times and let your hands gesture naturally as you talk. This makes you look more confident and also engages well with audience.

Body language

What great speakers have in common is how confident they are. Just like any other human being out there, these people also get the jitters before every speech – even great speakers like John F. Kennedy will spend months preparing his speech before hand.⁴

Most people struggle to be confident and it is okay. Not everyone can talk confidently especially in front of a large crowd. But sometimes, confidence is not all about how you speak but through your body language.

Standing tall and with good posture can do wonders for your perceived confidence and your actual performance. Using big hand gestures and standing firmly on your feet, a shoulder width apart, helps even the most nervous presenters open up on stage.

“Our bodies change our minds and our minds change our behaviours, and our behaviour changes our outcome.” – Social Psychologist, Amy Cudd

Small gestures like these give signs to your audience how to think and feel about you and whether they should listen to you in the first few seconds of your presentation. Hence, it is important to take note of your body language as it is a stepping stone to make you feel or at least look confident – even if you're not.

Tone of voice

Your voice plays a critical role in your success as a presenter. According to an analysis of media appearances by 120 top financial communicators, the sound of a speaker's voice matters twice as much as the content of the message⁵ and even an evaluation found one of the most popular TED talks concluded these very speakers have 30.5% higher vocal variety than other speakers that are less popular.⁶

Technical speakers focus a lot on how they train their voice as they articulate words. Some use a higher pitch when communicating an idea with energy and a lower pitch in solemn instances.

In short, it is about matching your emotions to the idea. For example, if you are sharing a sad story, it only makes sense to match that mood with your voice in a lower tone and volume.

Pause and emphasis

Pauses and emphasis are a powerful tool in a presenter's arsenal. When used purposefully in the right moment, it can create a dramatic flare to further reinforce what you have said, make the audience ponder over a topic or it can provide time for the audience to let the message sink in. It's basically a 'full-stop' or 'period' used but in spoken word.

Check out how to master the pausing technique from Brian Tracy:

Time management

Ending too early or too late can spell trouble for speakers that are on the clock for an event's schedule. At times, event schedules get delayed and leave little time for speakers to deliver their full speech.

The key tip to avoid an awry moment is to be very familiar with your content and to practice several versions of your presentation at varying durations.

Summing it up

And there you have it, these four big steps are what will help you ace your public speaking.

Don't shy away from your next chance to speak in public. Instead, make full use of the opportunity and apply these public speaking tips:

- Study your audience before preparing your topic
- Develop a presentation that will captivate your audience
- Overcome your nerves and stage fright
- Never Wing It. Practice Your Voice, movement and time-keeping

References

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