

What is Speaking?

Speaking is the delivery of language through the mouth. To speak, we create sounds using many parts of our body, including the lungs, vocal tract, vocal chords, tongue, teeth and lips.

This vocalized form of language usually requires at least one listener. When two or more people speak or talk to each other, the conversation is called a "dialogue". Speech can flow naturally from one person to another in the form of dialogue. It can also be planned and rehearsed, as in the delivery of a speech or presentation. Of course, some people talk to themselves! In fact, some English learners practise speaking standing alone in front of a mirror.

Speaking can be formal or informal:

- Informal speaking is typically used with family and friends, or people you know well.
- Formal speaking occurs in business or academic situations, or when meeting people for the first time.

Speaking is probably the language skill that most language learners wish to perfect as soon as possible. It used to be the only language skill that was difficult to practise online. This is no longer the case. English learners can practise speaking online using voice or video chat and services like Skype. They can also record and upload their voice for other people to listen to.

Types of speeches

Since speeches occur in a variety of settings and for different purposes, they fall into different categories. Knowing the various types of speeches can help you determine which best suits your needs the next time you speak publicly. Consider the following types of speeches:

Informative speech

Informative speeches aim to educate an audience on a particular topic or message. Unlike demonstrative speeches, they don't use visual aids. They do, however, use facts, data and statistics to help audiences grasp a concept. These facts and statistics help back any claims or assertions you make. For example, a zoo guide gives an informative speech to a group of people, educating them on a zoo animal using various statistical facts or historical information. Informative speeches can also cover social or economic

topics. Although they're not designed to get the audience to believe a certain viewpoint or opinion, they inform the audience with all the relevant details surrounding a particular topic.

Entertaining speech

Entertaining speeches aim to amuse a crowd of people. Often less formal and shorter than traditional speeches, entertaining speeches communicate emotions rather than giving the audience facts and figures. Rather, they often include humor or funny stories. You can often find entertaining speeches at a birthday party or a wedding. Some examples of entertaining speeches include a best man's speech at a wedding or a principal's speech before a school talent show.

Demonstrative speech

Demonstrative speeches serve to educate an audience about a topic or idea they don't have knowledge of. They often include visual aids to help better demonstrate or describe something in greater detail. While you can easily confuse a demonstrative speech with an informative speech, a demonstrative speech actually demonstrates how to do something. For example, a tech company can give a speech demonstrating how new devices. While they're informing the public about their new products, they're demonstrating how they work, thus, making it a demonstrative speech.

Persuasive speech

Persuasive speeches help convince an audience that the speaker has the right opinion on a particular topic. Persuasive speeches can cover any topic from entertainment to something more serious like politics. Typically, speakers use concrete evidence to better persuade their listeners and gain their support. When you include evidence, it helps make your stance more believable and may even be enough to change a listener's mind about the particular topic you're speaking on. With enough facts to back up your opinion, you have a greater chance of receiving the audience's support.

When a lawyer gives a speech to a jury about their particular client, for example, they use a persuasive speech with enough facts and claims to get the jury's support and have them vote in their favor. Keep in mind that persuasive speeches can also use emotions to help the audience better understand the speaker's opinions and feelings. For example, if you're trying to convince someone to help the elderly, you'd likely use emotion to appeal to the audience.

Oratorical speech

While oratorical refers to the act of speech giving, an oratorical speech refers to a specific type of speech. They're typically more formal than other types of speeches. While some oratorical speeches can be long such as those found at funerals or graduations, others may be short and more informal such as a toast at a special event.

Though oratorical speech givers don't necessarily want to persuade the audience on a particular topic, they can still cover certain issues and express their opinion.

Debate speech

Debate speeches refer to a type of speech that often follows a certain set of rules and takes place during a debate event. During a debate, all sides have an equal amount of time to speak on behalf of their opinion or view. While a debate speech often uses the same mechanics as a persuasive speech and includes plenty of statistical figures to help support a claim, it's different from a persuasive speech. For example, rather than trying to convince someone to join a particular side as with a persuasive speech, debate speeches aim to justify an opinion on a particular matter.

As you prepare for a debate speech, you get to improve your public speaking, research and critical thinking skills. It's worth noting that while you can prepare for a debate speech, you can't anticipate every argument other debaters will bring up. Therefore, continuously giving this type of speech helps you think more quickly and helps you feel more comfortable in this setting.

Special occasion speech

Special occasion speeches don't fall into a particular category and don't follow a set format.

Instead, they aim to fit the special occasion, whether it's a wedding, an award show or a birthday party. Special occasion speeches aim to fit the context of the environment to effectively communicate the message and gain the audience's attention. While they're often short and upbeat, they're still interesting and direct. Unlike a lot of other speeches, special occasion speeches don't require the use of statistics or data.

Examples of special occasion speeches include those given to introduce a speaker or a guest's arrival. You can also give this type of speech when you accept an award. If you're accepting an award, you use a special occasion speech to express how much the award means to you.

Pitch speech

Pitch speeches try to get support or approval for an idea, product or solution. For example, if you're a salesperson, you may try to sell a customer a new product. You're essentially pitching the product to them by telling them its best qualities and how the product can benefit them in their daily life. Pitch speeches can also be part of a greater presentation such as one found in an office when you're trying to get your colleagues or superiors on board with a particular idea or approach.

Motivational speech

Motivational speeches aim to inspire an audience and give attendees the confidence to do something better or improve themselves. They essentially serve to lift the audience's spirits and improve their self-esteem. Motivational speeches help move a person or audience toward achieving a particular goal. While employers or managers give this type of speech to motivate their employees to perform better in the workplace, coaches give this type of speech to inspire their team to perform better on the field or court.

Impromptu speech

An impromptu speech refers to a speech you deliver without any prior preparation or rehearsal time. Typically, someone spontaneously calls on you to give an impromptu speech at an event or another occasion. Because of the nature of an impromptu speech, giving one can often feel intimidating and cause a great deal of stress since you had no time to prepare. However, with some guidance and experience, you're better able to deliver an impromptu speech with confidence.

Farewell speech

A farewell speech refers to a speech where you say your goodbyes to a group of people. For example, you can give a farewell speech to your colleagues when you leave your job, or give a farewell speech to your loved ones if you're moving far-away or traveling abroad. Since farewell speeches often have a sad tone, they often generate strong emotions in both the speaker and the audience.

Explanatory speech

Explanatory speeches describe a situation or particular thing. While they're similar to demonstrative speeches, explanatory speeches provide a breakdown on how to do something while providing the audience with a detailed step-by-step process. They also don't use a visual aid to help the audience better understand what you're saying. When a food talk show host shows their audience how they make a particular dish, for example, they use an explanatory speech to describe each step of the recipe process.

Eulogy or funeral speech

Funeral or eulogy speeches aim to honor a recently passed individual in front of an audience attending a funeral service. Typically, they're given by a minister or by someone close to the deceased. The speaker tries to find the right words to not only honor the individual with a heartfelt speech but also praise them for what they achieved when they were alive.

Tips for speech

Before you give a speech, it's important to do conduct enough research to ensure you effectively communicate your idea, opinion or message. Use these tips to help with the speech research process:

- **Research your audience.** If you know who you'll be speaking to, get to know your audience before giving your speech. Getting to know your audience can give you insight into their opinions, thoughts and how best to reach them. Consider what questions they might ask you and if you don't think you have suitable answers for them, perform enough research to help you better prepare for their queries.
- **Consider the event or venue.** As you continue your research, think about the venue or event where you'll give your speech. For example, you can give a speech at an industry event, a birthday party or a formal conference. Consider the venue, along with how much time you have and whether or not you'll get a microphone to use. Knowing this information can help you create a speech that effectively addresses your audience with the right tone and fits your time allotment.
- **Focus on your topic.** When preparing your speech, take the time to understand the topic you're speaking on. Make sure you know what you're talking about. If you need additional knowledge, gather enough information with thorough research. Make sure to focus only on your particular topic and avoid getting sidetracked with other information. If it helps, create an outline for your speech to help you stay focused.
- **Get balanced information.** Depending on the type of speech you give, you may need to provide a balanced set of evidence to your audience. For example, instead of providing your audience with statistical evidence only backing one side of an argument, offer them figures that support both sides. Giving them a balanced set of information helps them come to their own conclusion. If the side you're on has better evidence, it's often better to let the audience come to their own conclusion rather than forcing them into your mindset.
- **Use reputable sources.** If your speech contains facts, data and statistical figures, make sure you're getting your information from credible and reputable resources. Consider using peer-reviewed academic journals, government websites, industry literature, reference books or scholarly websites to find the data, information or statistical information you need. Using valuable resources ensures you're giving your audience the most accurate information. It's also important to cite your sources in your speech to not only give them credit but also to improve your ethos with your audience and help them believe what you're saying.

There are three main aspects of effective speaking:

- **Vocabulary**

Language is an integral part of speaking skills. The words you use must suit the occasion and the audience. For example, the language you use when speaking to a friend is different from the one you use for a formal presentation.

Effective speakers customize their message to suit their audience. The audience is familiar with certain types of words. It's important to use such words to get them to respond. For example, using industry terms in a client meeting can evoke desired responses.

As a general rule, shorter and simpler sentences work well. They are easier to process and understand, and they create a sense of urgency. For example, in the **Avengers** series of movies, when Captain America says, "Avengers assemble!", and not "Avengers, gather around me", the message becomes memorable and impactful.

Similarly, the memorable line in Jawaharlal Nehru's Independence Day speech in August 1947, "At the stroke of the midnight hour", conveyed the gravity of the occasion, which a line like "At 12.00 am..." may not have.

• **Voice**

Another aspect of speaking skills in communication that is often ignored is your voice. It includes pitch, tone, and strength. How you speak signals your emotional state.

A low voice and too many pauses could denote hesitation. Clarity and volume could denote confidence. A strong and confident tone portrays conviction. People believe what you say when you deliver it in a strong voice.

Public speaking requires practice. You might be quite comfortable talking to small groups or in informal settings. But that is not the same as addressing a large crowd, which is why practice and rehearsals matter.

You can slowly read your message aloud, making sure you pause at the appropriate places. This will help you polish your speaking style. Good orators have a tone and style which they own. It's his distinctive voice that makes Morgan Freeman a favorite Hollywood narrator.

- **Nonverbal**

The final aspect of speaking skills is not about speaking at all. Nonverbal communication consists of body language. It includes facial expression, posture, eye contact, and hand gestures. Your body language must match your words for your address to be effective.

Your body language signals to the audience how invested you are into what you are speaking about. It shows the passion behind your words and helps draw the audience emotionally to your message and make them feel involved.

The importance of speaking skills

You might think that you're never going to lead an army or coach a cricket team. So why would you need to practice speaking skills? The fact is, such skills will come in handy not only at your workplace but also in your personal life. Here's how:

- **Getting them to say 'yes'**

One of the objectives of speaking effectively is the ability to persuade: when you need your manager to back your idea, when you want your team to work longer hours or when your spouse needs convincing to watch your favorite movie. These are all instances that require effective speaking.

The whole point of speaking skills is to be able to sway people's opinions. It's to get them to act in alignment with your goals.

- **Developing a career edge**

Being an effective speaker separates you from the corporate herd and pitches you as a valuable resource for your company. It, of course, gives you an edge over your colleagues.

Effective communicators get special treatment because they are often asked to represent the company. They're the ones meeting the important clients, negotiating and closing deals, and building a reputation for the company.

For example, when you need to impress a new client, you send your best salesperson. You won't send in someone new or inexperienced. The best salesperson is almost always your best speaker.

When it's time for promotions and bonuses, speakers are rewarded first.

Companies invest significantly in their training. They're the ones who get groomed for leadership posts.

- **Holistic communications development**

Speaking skills hold a special place of value. Good speakers are also good writers for they would have written several drafts of each speech.

Good speakers are also those who can connect and empathize with people. This makes them approachable and authentic. Often, people gravitate towards them for support and advice.

They are also readers, as reading helps expand the vocabulary and develop the flair for using suitable words for different situations.

Thus, practicing speaking skills leads to the development of writing, listening, and reading skills too.

- **Becoming an expert**

Effective speaking signals subject matter expertise because of the research that the making of a good speech would involve. That is why a good speaker is also regarded as a leader and influencer.

Popular intellectuals such as Barack Obama and Richard Dawkins are all good speakers. When they talk, we believe them. We trust them to know what they're

talking about. To rise to a position of fame and influence, having effective speaking skills is a must.

- **Feel like a boss**

Establishing a genuine connection with the audience gives a sense of accomplishment. Listening to the audience's applause is a great boost for self-esteem. Being appreciated by the audience is like receiving a gift for all the hard work that a speaker puts in.

* Difference between formal & informal speaking
language / speech

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Preparing and Delivering a Seminar

Build a seminar around the main points you want to convey. Here are some essential principles, practices, and tips for preparing and delivering seminars. Some of these ideas apply to writing papers, too.

1. **Assume your audience is infinitely ignorant but infinitely intelligent.** The audience will understand a clear, complete explanation.
2. **Give a good introduction.** A research report will be boring to everyone except an expert in your area unless you provide the context. Explain why what you are doing is interesting and important.
3. **Never underestimate a person's pleasure in hearing a good presentation of what he or she already knows.** Don't feel foolish providing background that your audience might be familiar with. And don't assume your audience knows a great deal more than you do, even if you are a graduate student and they are professors. They still need you to orient them to what you are doing.
4. **Keep your audience oriented.** Make sure that they understand, at each step, why you are presenting each topic. If the audience becomes disoriented, you will lose their attention. Presenting an outline of the talk near the beginning can help.
5. **A talk should entertain.** The best scientific talks entertain by giving people new ideas and perspectives. High-quality graphics can also help.
6. **Present only one big idea per slide.** This helps convey your ideas forcefully; and prevents the audience from reading ahead instead of listening to you.
7. **Never read aloud from your slides!** A slide should support your talk, never substitute for it.
8. **Avoid spending time on highly technical points.** Unless it is a critical detail, it is acceptable to briefly state what was done and that it was reasonable, and add that you'd be happy to explain it in detail if anyone is interested. Then continue with the seminar.
9. **Practice.** Stand in front of a seminar room and present to an imagined audience or to a friend. Identify parts where you have trouble finding the right words and work on them. Make sure the talk is about the right length.
10. **Benefit from other people's opinions of your talk.** Parts of your talk may be less clear than you imagined. Even invalid criticism can be helpful: if one person thought your talk had an error, someone else probably will also, so head off future concerns by add a sentence or two to make your point clearer.
11. **Pay attention to your audience when you're speaking.** If everyone is watching you and listening, you are succeeding! If people look lost or somnolent, you may need to slow down, speak more loudly, and/or explain better.
12. **When you are speaking, you are in charge.** A talk can be badly derailed if you get into a discussion or debate with someone in the audience. If the discussion seems to have no end, say that you'll be pleased to continue the discussion after the talk and then resume.
13. **Check the time occasionally during your talk.** Adjust the level of detail and the rate of presentation so that the talk fits the allotted time.

Make sure that each one is clearly, slowly and explicitly stated when it first arises during the talk. At the end of the talk, restate all of the points in a summary.

Preparing and Presenting Seminar Papers

Your main goal in presenting this seminar is to communicate your topic to an audience of mixed backgrounds and interests. This should not be a technical paper such as would be presented at a professional meeting. Your seminar should tell a scientific story in a way that everyone present can understand and go home with some lesson learned.

Purpose of Seminar:

A presentation concentrates on teaching something to the audience. A good presentation means that the audience understood the message. The first rule is to place yourself in the mind of your audience. The second rule is to provide the minimum amount of information to the audience; this helps overcome the temptation to fill presentations with details meant to impress the audience. So, make sure to:

Try not to cover so many ideas, stick instead to a major theme.

Focus on what the audience needs to know about the subject and not on what you want to tell them.

Don't give too many experimental details unless the method is the main point of the talk.

For each set of data, explain the significance of the findings, don't just only show it.

Don't assume that the audience will know what you mean.

Make transitions from one topic to another logical and smooth: "now I'd like to tell you..."

Unlike a written report, the audience must be able to immediately grasp the information. So, keep it simple.

Use repetition as a tool to help the audience remember important points.

Audience Analysis:

Remember that your audience will be scientifically literate but will not automatically understand terms, jargon, abbreviations, and methods used in all fields. When planning your seminar, put yourself in their shoes. Explain all terms and concepts that are important for understanding your topic and will be used throughout your presentation.

Ask yourself: What do they know? What do they want to know? What do they need to know in order to understand my presentation? Use the answers to these questions to guide how you present your seminar.

Title:

Make your title descriptive, succinct, informative and interesting.

Visual aids:

A visual aid is something your audience can see that aids your speech content. Always look and talk to the audience, NOT to the visual aid. Don't read directly from the slides; you will lose eye contact with the audience and run the risk of putting everyone to sleep because they can read faster mentally than you can verbally.

Animation is good and beneficial as long as it does not get too distracting.

» **Font, color, background**

Decide what font, colors, graphics, background design and layout to use for your entire presentation. While you can use variation, strive for consistency: titles should be the same color, bullets should be the same color and shape, etc... Visual aids can be created using almost any color, but there should be enough contrast between foreground and background elements and too many colors can distract from the message. If you want to use graduated backgrounds, keep them subtle and smooth.

N.B: Sometimes different computers project colors differently, so make sure to check it out on the big screen before the actual presentation.

» **Size and number of elements**

- A limited number of elements, big graphics, and big text make reading easier. "Less is more and big is beautiful". It should be big enough to be seen at the end of the auditorium. Nothing aggravates the audience more than not being able to see what the speaker is talking about. Titles should be 36-48 point and text should be 26-36 point (72 points equals 1 inch). Also, keep similar text the same size from one visual to the next.

» **Use of white space**

Blank areas in a visual help the reader through the data and avoid the appearance of overcrowding. Slides should have enough margins on all sides and eye friendly. Try to keep your slides neat and uncluttered.

» **Text**

Use short and simple phrases in place of sentences or paragraphs and limit the amount of information in the presentation. Each visual should be a hint and not the whole story. Visuals should have:

One main point

One thought per line

No more than 5-7 words per line

No more than 5-7 lines per visual

Use a combination of uppercase and lowercase lettering. Using all capital is harder to read. Avoid commas, semicolons, or periods in visuals. Instead, use bullets or numbers to separate and group ideas.

» References

You need to give credit to the work of others. Don't forget to include references on your visuals at the bottom in small font.

» Graphs and tables

Graphs and tables are the best way to summarize large quantities of raw data.

Simplify the data

Show only the essential information

Be consistent in style and terminology, font, color, style...

Data elements should be the thickest and the brightest colors. Frames, grid lines, axis lines, and error bars should be lighter in color and weight.

X and Y axis lines should end at the last data point

Include legends.

Proof read visuals, then have someone proof read them for you!!

How should the information be organized?

Developing an outline is important for a logical flow of ideas as well as serving as a checklist for items that appear in the slides per se.

Introduction and background information (why is the work important? what related work exists?)

Objectives of research

Explanation of methods (what is unique about the presenter's approach?)

Results

Discussion and conclusion (did the results meet the objectives?)

Relevance or significance, implications of findings (what is the overall scope of the work?)

Future work (what happens next?)

» Introduction (Tell them what you are going to say)

The introduction serves to provide a focus (statement of main idea), a reason to listen (significance of main idea), and an orientation (division of the presentation). Identify the problem and focus on the observations that led to your research topic. Include some background information.

Preparing and Delivering Oral Presentations

Fundamentals of Presenting

Plan a Presentation

Delivery

Fundamentals of Presenting

The fundamentals of public speaking remain the same in any context, be it classroom, conference, parliament or crowded city square. Good public speakers use simple and clear language to communicate complex points. They pause when they speak, and they deliver their message with confidence derived from their knowledge and preparation.

A good presentation:

- Has a focused and relevant message
- Is clearly organized and supported by evidence
- Demonstrates understanding and analysis of ideas
- Is delivered calmly and confidently

Plan a Presentation

Focus and Purpose

A presentation is not a dry list of disconnected facts. Like lab reports or essays, it makes a specific point. Start by asking yourself "So What?" Determine the most important point you wish to make and identify why it is important.

Audience

Plan your presentation to suit your audience. Consider their familiarity with the subject and their purpose for listening to your presentation. Classmates will likely have some background on the topic, and because they are keenly aware that they will eventually present to you, they are usually quite generous in their reception of your talk.

Structure

A logical structure supports a clear and focused message, and it stops you from leaping from idea to idea, which can make it difficult for your audience to understand your talk.

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Introduction:

Tell the audience who you are and present your main argument with key background information.

Explain why your presentation is important.

Build a rapport with the audience to help them follow what comes next.

Body of your presentation:

The largest section of your presentation

It supports your main argument with specific examples.

Visual aids clarify your points and lend credibility to your presentation.

Conclusion:

A strong conclusion summarizes your main points.

Use key words from your introduction to briefly re-state your argument.

End your presentation with a simple, strong statement.

Preparation

Rather than prepare a script, create a plan for each section or idea with point form notes. A good presentation is not written down word for word or memorized but instead is a discussion of a subject you know inside and out. Speaking from point form notes keeps your delivery fresh. Remember, you are talking to people, not reading at them.

Key technical details can be written down, but make sure that you include only essential information as too many technical details may confuse your audience and cause them to tune out.

Visual Aids

Visual aids, like PowerPoint slides or printed handouts, offer structure for your presentation and help the audience follow the main points. Visual aids may be bulleted lists or outlines, charts or figures, or images that show important details that would take time to explain orally. Use visual aids to complement, rather than compete, with your presentation. If they are not necessary or helpful, don't use them.

And never read the exact words from slides that you present.

For a detailed examination of using PowerPoint, explore our "Using PowerPoint" guide.

Delivery

Practice

Rehearse! Focus on tone, volume, word choice, transitions, pauses and pacing. Note time limits. Time yourself and revise as appropriate. Practice your presentation before a friend or family member and ask for feedback.

Get to the room well ahead of time. Listen to some relaxing music if this helps you. Make sure the technology is all up and running if you need to use it.

Stay Calm

Chat with people in the audience before you present. This breaks the ice, creates connections, personalizes the encounter and helps you feel more confident.

Experts often suggest that you focus your presentation on a group of individuals instead of the entire audience. This makes it seem as if you are speaking to a smaller group

Pace and Volume

Take it slow. The single biggest mistake inexperienced speakers make is going too fast. [SB1] Remember that your audience is hearing the material for the first time and isn't nearly as familiar with the topic as you are.

Speak loudly and clearly. Practice pronouncing difficult words in advance.

Body Language and Eye Contact

and maintain eye contact with your audience. Always face your audience; avoid reading your slide presentation and try to look up from your notes regularly.

Stand tall at the front of the room. Don't sit down, lean on a desk or hide behind a lectern. Try not to sway back and forth.

Answering Questions

Leave time to answer questions, and prepare in advance for possible questions your audience **may ask**. You can pause to gather your thoughts before you reply, and if something is outside of your **comfort zone**, simply (and confidently) say "that is outside the scope of this research."

Share your Personality

Try to have some fun, put your personality into the presentation while maintaining professional **decorum**. Make the presentation uniquely yours – people will remember you and your message.

(Source: Trent University Publications)

Presentation

1. Show your Passion and Connect with your Audience
It's hard to be relaxed and be yourself when you're nervous.

But time and again, the great presenters say that the most important thing is to connect with your audience, and the best way to do that is to let your passion for the subject shine through.

Be honest with the audience about what is important to you and why it matters.

Be enthusiastic and honest, and the audience will respond.

2. Focus on your Audience's Needs

Your presentation needs to be built around what your audience is going to get out of the presentation.

As you prepare the presentation, you always need to bear in mind what the audience needs and wants to know, not what you can tell them.

While you're giving the presentation, you also need to remain focused on your audience's response, and react to that.

You need to make it easy for your audience to understand and respond.

3. Keep it Simple: Concentrate on your Core Message

When planning your presentation, you should always keep in mind the question:

What is the key message (or three key points) for my audience to take away?

You should be able to communicate that key message very briefly.

Some experts recommend a 30-second 'elevator summary', others that you can write it on the back of a business card, or say it in no more than 15 words.

Whichever rule you choose, the important thing is to keep your core message focused and brief.

And if what you are planning to say doesn't contribute to that core message, don't say it.

4. Smile and Make Eye Contact with your Audience

This sounds very easy, but a surprisingly large number of presenters fail to do it.

If you smile and make eye contact, you are building rapport, which helps the audience to connect with you and your subject. It also helps you to feel less nervous, because you are talking to individuals, not to a great mass of unknown people.

To help you with this, make sure that you don't turn down all the lights so that only the slide screen is visible. Your audience needs to see you as well as your slides.

5. Start Strongly

The beginning of your presentation is crucial. You need to grab your audience's attention and hold it.

They will give you a few minutes' grace in which to entertain them, before they start to switch off if you're dull. So don't waste that on explaining who you are. Start by entertaining them.

Try a story (see tip 7 below), or an attention-grabbing (but useful) image on a slide.

6. Remember the 10-20-30 Rule for Slideshows.

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This is a tip from Guy Kawasaki of Apple. He suggests that slideshows should:

Contain no more than 10 slides;

Last no more than 20 minutes; and

Use a font size of no less than 30 point.

This last is particularly important as it stops you trying to put too much information on any one slide.

This whole approach avoids the dreaded 'Death by PowerPoint'.

As a general rule, slides should be the sideshow to you, the presenter. A good set of slides should be no use without the presenter, and they should definitely contain less, rather than more, information, expressed simply.

If you need to provide more information, create a bespoke handout and give it out after your presentation.

7. Tell Stories

Human beings are programmed to respond to stories.

Stories help us to pay attention, and also to remember things. If you can use stories in your presentation, your audience is more likely to engage and to remember your points afterwards. It is a good idea to start with a story, but there is a wider point too: you need your presentation to act like a story.

Think about what story you are trying to tell your audience, and create your presentation to tell it.

8. Use your Voice Effectively

The spoken word is actually a pretty inefficient means of communication, because it uses only one of your audience's five senses. That's why presenters tend to use visual aids, too. But you can help to make the spoken word better by using your voice effectively.

Varying the speed at which you talk, and emphasising changes in pitch and tone all help to make your voice more interesting and hold your audience's attention.

For more about this, see our page on Effective Speaking.

9. Use your Body Too

It has been estimated that more than three quarters of communication is non-verbal.

That means that as well as your tone of voice, your body language is crucial to getting your message across. Make sure that you are giving the right messages: body language to avoid includes crossed arms, hands held behind your back or in your pockets, and pacing the stage.

Make your gestures open and confident, and move naturally around the stage, and among the audience too, if possible.

10. Relax, Breathe and Enjoy

If you find presenting difficult, it can be hard to be calm and relaxed about doing it.

One option is to start by concentrating on your breathing. Slow it down, and make sure that you're breathing fully. Make sure that you continue to pause for breath occasionally during your presentation too.

For more ideas, see our page on Coping with Presentation Nerves.

If you can bring yourself to relax, you will almost certainly present better. If you can actually start to enjoy yourself, your audience will respond to that, and engage better. Your presentations will improve exponentially, and so will your confidence. It's well worth a try.

"Good Luck"!