

PUBLIC SPEAKING 101



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CREATING A GREAT SPEECH



When you give a speech, whether it is a presentation at work or a talk in front of unfamiliar faces, the most important way to help ensure that you hit it out of the park is to prepare in advance. Even if it's a topic that you feel you know backwards and forwards, preparation is still a vital component to making a great speech.

RESEARCH YOUR TOPIC.

Even if you know the topic well, research will give you confidence. You want your speech to rely on facts, not faulty memories. Double-check your speech for accuracy by conducting research.

If you are new to the topic, research is even more essential to a successful speech. Research also makes you more comfortable with the material. The more you prepare beforehand, the more comfortable you'll feel as you deliver the speech. Thorough research makes your audience feel comfortable, allowing them to trust you as an authority.

THE HUMAN BRAIN STARTS
WORKING THE MOMENT YOU
ARE BORN AND NEVER
STOPS UNTIL YOU STAND UP
TO SPEAK IN PUBLIC.

George Jessel



SHOULD I WRITE OUT THE SPEECH OR JUST MAKE AN OUTLINE?

Is it more effective to deliver a speech from an outline, or to write it out and read it verbatim? Both options have their advantages and disadvantages.

By writing the speech out, you can memorize it more easily. You can use repetition to your advantage and have the whole thing stored in your brain, word for word. The downside is that you run the risk of sounding almost robotic. It won't sound natural. And if you have a copy of your speech on hand, you run the risk of reading it directly from the page, which is boring to those who hear it.

With an outline, you can still have your basic facts in front of you. This will also give you some flexibility. You can ad-lib a little and tweak some things, freeing yourself up so that you sound a bit more natural. The downside is that this makes it a little difficult to rehearse the speech since you don't have a concrete speech to work with.

The best solution is to combine the best of both worlds into your approach. Write out a full speech that you can read, rehearse, and know well. When it comes to giving the speech, take only an outline with you. This will ensure that you don't just read it off the paper, and, should you forget something, you can always glance down at your outline and refresh your memory.

One of the biggest obstacles about to speak in public is stage fright. Your heart starts to race, your palms are sweaty, and you get butterflies in your stomach. The few minutes before the speech can be surprisingly nerve wracking!

Even experienced actors still feel some stage fright before a big performance. The good news is that once you begin your speech, the nerves will subside if you're thoroughly prepared. There are ways to help combat stage fright so you can feel confident when you go out there to deliver your speech.

READ THE SPEECH ALOUD TO YOURSELF.

As mentioned in the previous section, reading the speech aloud to yourself can help you feel more comfortable with it. Reading your speech over and over will give you an opportunity to work the kinks out of the speech and make it better. You'll also get a feel for the flow and become comfortable delivering the material.

REHEARSE IN FRONT OF A SMALL GROUP.

One of the best ways to get comfortable talking in front of a large group is to start by becoming comfortable talking in front of a small group.



If possible, get some friends and family together to sit down and listen to your speech. This will give you a group of friendly listeners who can provide feedback in a comfortable environment.

Your audience can give you suggestions for how to improve the presentation or your delivery. They can also help you get comfortable performing it in public. Since they are people you know, you'll feel more at ease in front of them and you'll be able to relax.



GRASP THE SUBJECT,

THE WORDS WILL FOLLOW.

Cato The Elder

The more comfortable you are ahead of time, the more comfortable you'll be when the time comes to step up in front of the crowd for real.

SHOULD I VISUALIZE THE CROWD IN THEIR UNDERWEAR?

This is a common suggestion that is given to people who have stage fright. The idea is that in your mind, your audience will be more embarrassed than you are. This approach has a few drawbacks.

Let's say you're delivering the speech, making a solid effort to make eye contact with several people in the crowd to engage them. You're nervous, so you start picturing them in their underwear. Your mind becomes distracted, and you begin to lose your place. All of a sudden you're stammering to remember the point you were making.

Instead, pretend that they are not even there. Or pretend that the crowd is much smaller than it is by focusing on one person at a time. Ignore anything that adds to the pressure, such as cameras, lights, or sounds.

PSYCH YOURSELF UP.

Before getting on stage in front of your audience, do what you can to get yourself pumped up psychologically. Listen to your favorite music beforehand, if possible. Calming music can decrease your nerves, distract you from the pressure, and even increase your memory retention. If you can't listen to music, hum your favorite tunes in your head or recite some positive affirmations.

Different music affects people in different ways. Do you perform best when fired up? Then pick your favorite rock tunes that are upbeat. If you perform better when you're relaxed and calm, perhaps classical or instrumental music is best.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.

As mentioned in the previous section, you'll be most confident to deliver a memorable speech if you know the material backwards and forwards. Nothing replaces thorough preparation beforehand! If you know what you're talking about, you'll be less nervous and your performance will be a winning one.

Knowing your stuff also has the added benefit of preventing you from constantly looking down. Also, if you have a copy of your speech in front of you, knowing it backwards and forwards will help keep you from just reading it directly from the page.



THINGS TO REMEMBER AS YOU'RE GIVING THE SPEECH



When delivering your presentation, what you say is very important, but remember that your non-verbal behavior often communicates more than what you say. Make an effort to control your body language and present the right impression to those watching your presentation.

EYE CONTACT IS IMPORTANT.

As you step up to begin, you may briefly forget everything you prepared. It's usually a temporary effect, but it can lead to an over-reliance on your notes or speech. You'll want to make eye contact with the audience because it'll help to get them involved in what you're saying. It's okay to glance down periodically, but your focus should be on the crowd.

Avoid looking awkward by knowing your speech well. That way, you can focus on maintaining eye contact with your audience without looking up and down constantly to refresh your memory.

As a result, your audience will see you as an authority on the subject and trust what you have to say.

TALK RATHER THAN READ

When you have your speech in front of you, it's very tempting to look down to read it.

If you're an author and you're doing a public reading of a new work, you might be able to get away with this. Otherwise, talk to the crowd as if you're inviting them into a conversation about your subject matter.

In order to connect with your audience, it's important that they can see your face. Therefore, try to look down at your notes seldom and only briefly.

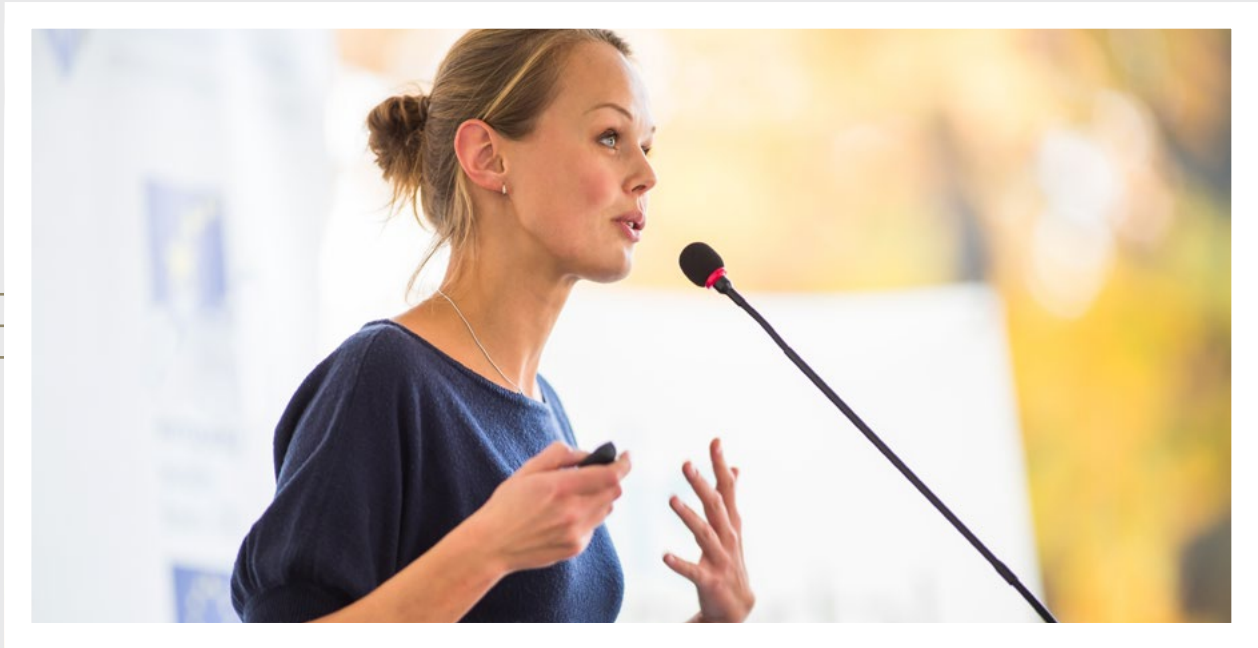
Holding the speech in front of your face is ineffective and will muffle your voice. Talk to your audience as you would to a friend discussing your topic. Just think of it as a conversation!



MOVE YOUR VIEW AROUND THE ROOM

When making eye contact with your audience, try to make sure that every section of the crowd gets attention. Rather than focusing your gaze on one person, try to go from section to section, picking a person at random and making eye contact.

THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING TO SPEAK IN PUBLIC



While speaking in public can be a daunting task, it comes with incredible personal and professional benefits. The pressure of giving a speech makes you more prepared for many different types of situations in which you must communicate effectively with others.

IMPRESS YOUR BOSS.

If you are assigned a major presentation for work, you can take advantage of the opportunity to show your boss what a great employee you really are. By hitting the presentation out of the park, you can showcase your knowledge and work ethic. A great speech or presentation will really make you stand out from the crowd, which can lead to a raise or promotion.



PROVE THAT YOU'RE A REAL GO-GETTER.

One of the main traits of the office workplace is that many employees do the minimum amount of work required of them. A good presentation or speech will show the higher ups that you mean business and take work seriously.

One thing that upper management appreciates is initiative. With a strong and well-prepared presentation, you can show them that you have the ability and drive they seek in an employee.

STAND OUT FROM THE REST OF THE PACK.

By learning to speak in public, you can become a person who stands out from the rest of the workers in ability and initiative.

Showing your bosses that you are willing to go above and beyond by putting a lot of effort and energy into your presentations, they will be more willing to bring your name up in discussions about promotions or raises.

There are also benefits to your life outside of work that come with learning how to speak in public. For example, public speaking actually increases your confidence! If you're shy, delivering a powerful presentation on something you're passionate about can help you to move out of your comfort zone. If you can speak comfortably in front of a whole room of people, you can speak comfortably in front of one or two.

CONCLUSION



Public speaking can be an intimidating task for a lot of people. Take comfort in the fact that even actors and others who make a living speaking in front of large crowds suffer from some degree of nervousness before making a speech. By preparing yourself, you can help combat the anxiety by making sure you know what you want to say. This will help keep you from stammering to fill the silence and will boost your confidence. Thorough research will help you to ingrain the information into your brain. It will also help you avoid reading your notes like a book. That way, you can more easily engage the audience and make a greater impact with eye contact. A “pre-game ritual” can help you to ease your nerves. Music can be a helpful tool. You can either listen to your iPod or hum your favorite tune in your head to ease the nerves.

During your speech, look around to every section of the audience so that each member of your audience is engaged. Try to move your eyes instead of your whole head so that your movement appears more natural and less forced. There are many benefits of learning to speak in public. Most of all, you gain valuable experience from leaving your comfort zone, rising to the challenge, and conquering your fears. Prepare well, trust in yourself, and make the most of the opportunity to present your ideas and persuade others. Face your fears of speaking in public and emerge triumphant!

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