



According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two! This means, to the average person, that if you have to go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy!

How To Conquer Your Public Speaking Fears

Be Prepared - Being prepared is by far the most important element. Know your audience—greet people as they arrive—it's easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers. Know your material well, too. Practice your speech. Use a tape recorder or videotape yourself beforehand, so you can see how you appear to others in your speaking and eliminate potential distractions.

Give of Yourself - Use personal examples and stories in your speech whenever possible. Make sure your stories help to emphasize or support your point. The stories must match your message. Use examples from your personal and professional life to make your point. In either case be willing to give of yourself by sharing some of yourself with the audience.

Relax - Realize that people want you to succeed. Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative, and entertaining. They don't want you to fail. Preparation is the key. Focus on your message and not the audience. Use gestures and walking patterns. Practice your speech; plan exactly how you will open. Turn nervousness into positive energy; harness and transform nervous energy into enthusiasm.

Use Natural Humor - Don't try to be a stand up comedian. You can use natural humor by poking fun at yourself, something you said, or did. Be sure NOT to make fun of anyone in the audience, though. They will appreciate your ability to laugh at yourself, but don't overdo it and DON'T APOLOGIZE. In other words, don't call too much attention to your mistakes. The audience will give them as much weight as you give them. Your best bet is to ignore mistakes and move on. Your listeners will forgive you.

Plan Your Hand & Body Positions - During the practice of your speech look for occasions where you can use a gesture. Establish three positions where you will stand and practice not only how to move to them but where in your speech do you move. Pick three positions, one on center stage, one to your right, and one to your left. Do not hide behind the lectern. When you do move, maintain eye contact with the audience.

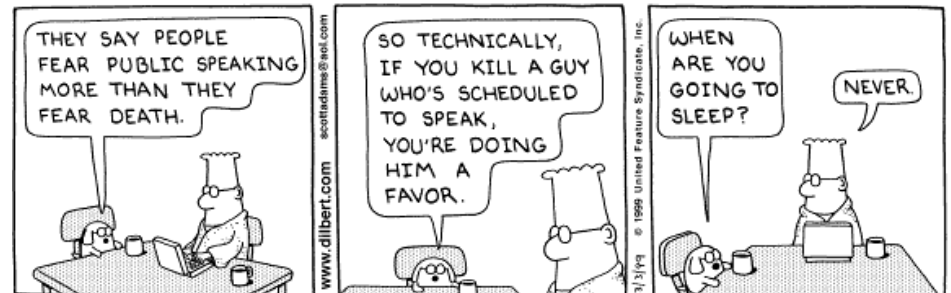
Avoid Junk Words - The best way to eliminate junk words is to count them. Professional athletes are notorious for their frequent use of "uh" and "you know." They are also accustomed to being coached. Counting junk words is like counting your errors or strikeouts! It helps you get rid of them. Be warned: if you have more than an occasional junk word, the audience will start counting! You want to be remembered for your ideas, your plans, your integrity, and your vision. You do not want to be remembered as Mr. "Uh" or Miss "You Know."

Record a presentation or voice mail that you've sent, then rewind and count your junk words. Try it again. When you sense a junk word coming on, STOP TALKING. In other words, pause until you know what you want to say next. Then you can begin again with an effective word or phrase rather than junk.

Remember that you can't speak as rapidly as you think. If you try to stay apace with the speed of your brain, you speaking will be very hard for others to follow. Your goal is to deliver your speech like a final draft on the word processor. Hold it all together by remaining focused. Eye contact is helpful with this.

For practice, read aloud the message below, then read it again, substituting a pause every time you get to a junk word (in parentheses). Practice this exercise and then apply the principles to all of your messages. The audience will no longer spend its time counting your junk words and you will enjoy the attention you get as an articulate person whose speaking ability commands respect.

Our new (uh) program will add significantly (you know) to our (uh) profits. (and uh) We can move to the top five (uh) companies in (uh) customer service rankings. We can enter the (uh) emerging markets in (you know) India and (uh) Brazil. (and) Our shareholder value (uh) will increase dramatically.





"Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't; the other half have nothing to say and keep saying it."

How To Speak Confidently and Effectively

Preparation - Prepare the structure of the talk carefully and logically, just as you would for a written report. What are the objectives of the talk? What are the main points you want to make? If there are things you cannot easily express, possibly because you're not sure you understand them, it is better to leave them unsaid.

Appearance - First impressions influence the audience's attitude about you. Whether the occasion is formal or casual, dress conservatively and appropriately for it. Don't let loud or uncomfortable clothing wear you.

Environment - Ask the program chairman to assist you in trying to eliminate all possible environmental distractions before you begin speaking. Close windows or doors if necessary. Test the sound system and increase or decrease the volume to suit your speaking voice. Make sure the room temperature is comfortable for both yourself and the audience.

Room lighting should also be considered; too much light near the screen will make it difficult to see the detail on a slide or transparency. On the other hand, a completely darkened room can send the audience to sleep. Try to avoid having to keep switching lights on and off, but if this is necessary, know where the switch is.

Visuals - Possible visual aids include:

- Real objects, handled by the speaker or passed around
- Overhead projection transparencies
- PowerPoint computer applications
- Whiteboard or Blackboard
- Video or Film Strips
- 35mm slides
- Flip-charts

Put up the visual aid only for as long as you need it, then take it down. If using a flip-chart, leave blank paper in between, so when you are finished using one chart, you can cover it with a blank page, which lets the audience know they should give their attention back to you. Numbered or labeled tabs on the side of a flip chart will help you find the visual you need quickly or return to a visual already used.

Visuals should contain the minimum information necessary or the audience will spend more time trying to read it than listening to you. Use visuals that are pleasant and easy to read from a distance.

Make sure you know in advance how to operate equipment and also when you want particular displays to appear. If someone else is operating the equipment, arrange what is to happen when, and what signals you will use.

Introduction - Greet the audience and tell them who you are. If you have been formally introduced by someone else, thank them, then tell the audience that you are happy to be there.

Timing - It's better to run under time than over time. Stick to the plan for the presentation and try not to veer off of the subject; you could eat up the allotted time or talk yourself into a dead-end with no escape!

Delivery - Speak naturally but do not be conversational. Pause at key points—this emphasizes their importance. Avoid repeating a phrase too much and using verbal pauses ("umm..."), or the audience will begin counting how many times you do so and stop listening to your speech.

Do not plan to read from a script, because chances are that you will lose your place in the text. You should know well what you are going to say; if not, you shouldn't be giving the talk! So, prepare cue cards which have just the key words and phrases (possibly sketches) on them rather than a lot of details. This will help you pace yourself and get through the speech without forgetting important points. Don't forget to number the cards in case you drop them, so you can easily put them back in order.

Also remember to indicate which visual aids go with the speech on your cards so you are able to produce the right visual at the right time. On the other hand, don't let the visual aid take over your speech; YOU are the presentation, after all.

Body Language - Remember that your body language (gestures, expressions, posture, etc.) conveys your confidence or fear, focus or confusion, to an audience. Be aware of markers and pointers, because if you fidget with these items, it will distract your audience. It would be best to place them at arms length except when direct usage is necessary.

Avoid tapping feet, tousling hair, wiping mouth or nose repeatedly, gripping or leaning on the lectern, etc. Don't fold your arms, because that gives an impression of defensiveness. Relax them and gesture naturally with your hands. For example, if talking about a small rock or a LARGE boulder, utilize gestures that will reinforce your point.

Practice good posture and move around a little to cure the nervous jitters and connect with the audience. If you are at ease, your listeners will be, too.

Eye Contact - Good eye contact is essential to clear communication. Look at the audience as much as possible, but don't fix on or stare at an individual; this can be intimidating. Instead, scan slowly across the room. Don't look at the floor or ceiling; this sends a message of distrust and uncertainty to the onlooker. A nice smile will put your audience at ease and allow for more approachability; it can also diffuse a tense situation.

Voice - How you say something is just as important (if not more so) as what you say. Speak clearly. Don't shout or whisper, but judge the acoustics of the room. Don't rush, or talk deliberately slow. If you always speak with the same tone of voice, you will put your audience to sleep; so, try to vary the speed, pitch, and tone of your delivery a little, as long as you can do so without feeling unnatural. Project your voice toward the back of the audience, especially in larger rooms.

Discussion - Leave time for discussion—five or ten minutes is sufficient. At the end of your presentation ask if there are any questions, but avoid being terse when you do this as the audience may find it intimidating. For example, it may come across as: "Any questions? If there are, you haven't been listening." If questions are slow in coming, you can start things off by asking a question of the audience, so have one prepared, just in case.

Finally - Enjoy yourself. The audience will be on your side (unless you give them a reason not to be) and want to hear what you have to say!

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Annoying Habits

- Don't stand in front of your visual.
- Don't face the display screen behind you and talk to it.
- Point to the screen rather than the transparency on the projector.
- Avoid moving about too much; pacing up and down can unnerve the audience.
- Avoid repeating a word or phrase too often or using junk words such as "uh" or "you know."
- Avoid writing on overhead transparencies with a pen during the talk; it's messy and distracting.

Questions

1. According to the handout, your speech should not be "conversational." Explain.
2. What factors affect the voice you use to deliver your speech?
3. What are some potential pitfalls in delivering a speech?
4. What kinds of visual aids can you use to enhance your presentation?
5. List 3 pros and 3 cons to reading a prepared speech, versus giving a speech extemporaneously.
6. Who or what should you look at while you deliver your speech?
7. What kind of information should your visual aids include?
8. List 3 things you should do to prepare for a speech.
9. True or false: it's better to go over than to finish your speech early.
10. How should you dress to give a speech?
11. Give at least 5 examples of "bad" body language, and five examples of "good" body language.
12. What are 7 things you can do to minimize distractions in the speaking environment?
13. Your host has just offered a brief, very flattering introduction; now it is your turn to speak. What do you say?
14. What sort of problems might occur with your visual aids, and how should you deal with them?
15. What is the most important aspect of successful speech-making?
16. Imagine that you are giving a speech about the hazards of eating cookies without milk. How would you organize it?