

## The Secrets Of Public Speaking - Follow These 10 Simple Tips

Is there anything more terrifying than facing an audience of strangers and knowing you have to deliver an entertaining and informative speech?

OK, some people thrive on this type of challenge! But the vast majority of us are at least a little nervous every time we have to speak publicly. In fact, fear of public speaking is probably one of the most universal fears throughout all walks of life.

Thankfully, public speaking is a fear that can easily be overcome with a little practice and the right approach. You can use the tips below to improve your public speaking skills.

### 1. Be prepared and practice.

The more you know what you want to say, the better you'll get at it. First, brainstorm the topic of your speech and research it, if you need to. Write down all the points you want to make and then organize them into an outline. Fill in the details. Once you have the essential content of your speech written (at least in your head), transfer your main ideas to index cards. Write the main idea in dark ink on the front of the card, and if you think you'll need cues, write them on the back of the card in pencil. Then, practice your speech out loud at least 3 to 5 times. If you can, practice it in front of a friend or family member and ask them for feedback and if that's not possible, at least practice in front of a mirror. Do it until you can talk naturally, with only a glance at your cards. Don't ever read your speech word for word!

### 2. Know your audience.

The better you know your audience, the easier it will be to connect to them as you speak. When you are able to make that connection, you'll hold their attention. And seeing that you're doing so will increase your confidence and comfort level, making it even easier for you to speak well. So, find out everything you can about the people you'll be speaking to. Know what their "hot topics" are, inside jokes and so on. The more you know about what makes them tick and what interests them, the better speech you'll be able to give.

### 3. Dress the part.

When you're standing up in front of an audience, all eyes are on you. Like it or not, your image is important in this situation. So, dress to impress this particular audience. If you know your audience well (see #2), then you'll have an idea how to dress. For example, you might dress in a conservative navy suit if you're speaking to a group of bankers, but in a more casual, fashionable outfit when the audience consists of artists and designers.

### 4. Pay attention to the old KISS principle, that is, Keep It Short and Simple.

The key is to get your points across as quickly as possible. Don't beat around the bush or try to impress with complex metaphors. Stories, however, can be a powerful public speaking tool, especially when they contain at least a hint of humor. But again, keep them short and on point. Shorter messages leave the impression of a savvy, smart speaker. They're also easier for your audience to remember.

### 5. Speak clearly and at just the right tempo.

The mark of an inexperienced, uncomfortable public speaker is someone who speaks all in a rush, slurring words in her desire to get it over with. Don't be this kind of speaker if you want to hold your audience's attention. On the other hand, don't speak so slowly your audience's minds start to wander.

### 6. Use visual aids to illustrate your points.

Many people will understand your message more clearly when it is more visual. What we see often leaves a more lasting impression than what we hear. You can use slides, photographs, PowerPoint presentations, or even a simple whiteboard to add visual cues to your speech. One caution though—don't turn your back on your audience as you use your visual aid, and don't turn the lights on low for long periods, or you might be surprised to look up and see they are all sleeping!

### 7. Interact with your audience.

Lectures will rarely have the same impact on an audience that an open discussion will. Look for opportunities to involve your audience in what you are speaking about. Ask for validation of points you are making ("Am I right?" "Has that ever happened to you?") or allow time for questions. Also, make

sure to establish eye contact with your audience—and keep it—throughout your speech.

8. Speak with sincerity and passion.

You want to leave a lasting impression with the audience about your speech topic. So be sure you are true to yourself and your topic as you speak and don't be afraid to inject passion and enthusiasm into the speech as well.

9. Come out from behind the podium.

You'll project confidence and a sense of comfort when you have the courage to let go of the podium and stand in front of your audience with nothing to "protect" you. As you speak, you can walk back and forth across the stage, making eye contact with different people. Some speakers even walk out into the audience to get "up close and personal." Be respectful of people's personal space, though, if you decide to do this. You don't want to be perceived as threatening or overbearing.

10. Close your speech in a memorable way.

Give your audience something to think about as you finish up your speech. Certainly, it's a good idea to summarize your main points one more time, but then finish up with an inspiring story or quote, or leave them with a thought-provoking question.

Public speaking is an essential life skill that every person should strive to master. The ability to speak confidently in public will serve you in every part of your life, whether you are sharing opinions in a small group or delivering a planned speech in front of a group of hundreds.

### About the Author

Andrew Rondeau transformed himself from a \$4 an-hour petrol-pump attendant to a highly successful Senior Manager earning \$500k every year.

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