

# public speaking

(pūb'lik spēk ing)

v. delivering an address to a public audience effectively

Many people have a fear of public speaking, and often avoid it completely. The Book of Lists indicates individuals fear public speaking more than death or disease! The following tips will help you create an effective presentation and deliver it in a professional and effective manner.

**Practice:** This is the key to effective public speaking! Practicing your speech several times alone, and then in front of a group (peers, family, colleagues) will help you become more comfortable with your speech and polish your presentation.

**Organization:** A well organized speech will also alleviate apprehension and help you move confidently through your presentation. Regardless of your topic, your speech will have an introduction, body and conclusion. In the introduction you will get the attention of the audience and preview your main points. In the body you will develop your major points and provide supporting details. Finally, in the conclusion, you will review your main points, indicate that the presentation is coming to an end, remind your audience of the central idea and leave your audience with something to remember: a quote, challenge or appeal.

**Eye contact and gestures:** "Where do I look and what do I do with my hands?" are common concerns among public speakers. When addressing a group, don't give in to the temptation to scan the audience with your eyes, or focus on the wall above their heads. Most audiences can tell you aren't looking at them. Instead, make brief but recognizable eye contact with individuals in the audience. But don't stare! More than 3 seconds of eye contact in a public setting makes most people uncomfortable. Gestures, while natural in everyday conversation, are of great concern to most public speakers. Most people try to limit their hand use or hide their hands from view – which causes more trouble than it solves!



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**Delivery.** A clear, confident delivery is very important for public speakers. Below are some tips to help you make the most of your delivery:

- Try to speak extemporaneously (using notes and an outline) rather than from a manuscript or memorized document.
- Focus on vocal variety, varying your rate, pitch, emphasis and volume.
- Avoid verbal clutter. Becoming aware of unnecessary words in your everyday speech will help you eliminate them in your public presentations.
- Make sure visual aids are large enough to be seen by the entire audience.
- Never, never, never pass a visual aid around the room! It distracts the audience and you will lose their attention.
- Only show a visual aid when you are referring to it, otherwise keep it out of sight or covered



**Calming your fears:** Anxiety over public speaking can cause a number of reactions: increased heart rate, heavy, shallow breathing, a dry throat, sweaty palms, sweating, fidgeting and an increase in body temperature. In order to combat these challenges (which are a normal for the majority of public speakers) you can follow a few simple rules: Whenever possible, you should speak on topics of interest to you. You will feel much more comfortable if you feel you know something important about the topic. Practice, be prepared and organized – you will be much more confident if you know what you are doing! Use your nervous energy in your speech with gestures or by moving away from the podium. And take a deep breath – it will calm you down and help prepare your voice for speaking. You should not, however, drink caffeine or smoke before your presentation. It will only increase your heart rate and exacerbate the symptoms you already have.

### **An effective public speaker:**

- Makes a connection with the audience
- Is well prepared and well organized
- Maintains good eye contact with the audience
- Has a confident delivery style



#### References:

Brydon, Steven R. and Michael D. Scott. Between One and Many. McGraw Hill, 2003.  
Bovee, Courtland L. Contemporary Public Speaking. Collegiate Press, 2003.



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