



## Tips for Successful Public Speaking

The key to being successful in public speaking lies in a) what you know, and b) what you do.

### What you know

As much as possible, remove the unknown elements about your speaking event. These can include:

- 1) The room,
- 2) Your audience, and
- 3) Your content

- 1) **The room:** The more familiar you are with the venue of your presentation, the better. If possible, arrive early at that location, and acquaint yourself with the entire room. You certainly want to be familiar with your speaking area. This includes having a good feel for the depth and width of the stage, plus knowing the acoustics of the room. If you will be using a microphone while speaking, make sure it is working properly and is set at the appropriate volume levels. If you are using visual aids, make sure the light levels in the room are appropriate, and the visuals can be seen. (Note: Some older projectors may not be powerful enough to project effectively with the lights in the room set to a bright level.)
- 2) **Your audience.** If you are speaking at a place where you know very few of your audience members, get to know them before your speech. Be there as they arrive and introduce yourself to them. Establishing a connection with them, however brief, will make it easier to deliver your presentation than it will be if you don't make any connection.

Additionally, if you can learn some details about your audience beforehand, do it. Ask the leader of your audience's organization questions about their members:

Age	Gender
Cultural background	Educational background
Professional background	Their average day
Issues & frustrations they face	

Knowing these things will allow you to be more sensitive to any applicable issues/needs, and tailor your message to meet those needs.

- 3) **Your content.** If you are not familiar enough with your content, or you are uncomfortable about it, your mind can be preoccupied to the point that your nervousness (and the accompanying physical symptoms) are compounded. Disciplined writing and practice will raise your familiarity level with your content. Without that to worry about, you can be more at ease.

## Do's & Don'ts

**Do:** Use a microphone if necessary. You need to be heard throughout the room.

**Don't:** Push your voice. Your voice will not project as well when you are nervous. Forcing yourself to project too much is detrimental to your voice and difficult to sustain during a speech of any length.

**Do:** Drink room temperature water.

**Don't:** Drink hot and cold liquids. They will tighten your vocal cords. (No coffee, no soda, no ice water.)

**Do:** Expect to be successful. Your imagination is a powerful tool. If you can envision yourself speaking with confidence and communicating effectively, you are more likely to meet that positive expectation.

**Don't:** Entertain doubts. This will sabotage your successful presentation.

**Do:** Understand the positive expectations of the audience. No audience wants to be bored; they want to be entertained, educated, and stimulated. They want you to do well!

**Don't:** Focus on your nervousness and fear. Instead, concentrate your attention on the benefit that your message will bring to the audience.

**Do:** Use the energy that accompanies nervousness to your benefit. The symptoms of the "fight or flight syndrome" are natural; they are okay. The key is to make that nervous energy work for you, by using it to infuse your voice and your expressions with energy and enthusiasm. It will add "punch" to your presentation!

**Don't apologize for being nervous.** In actuality, you may be more aware of the symptoms of your nervousness than your audience is. They may not even notice them, unless you draw attention to them. Don't mention it; just move forward with your presentation.

**Do:** Relax. Use stretching and breathing exercises to release the tension.

**Do:** Seek frequent speaking opportunities. Nothing will build your confidence like the practical application of these principles. The more you speak, the more your confidence will increase! Take advantage of every opportunity you have to speak publicly. (If you need a venue in which to practice, look into **Toastmasters International** [<http://www.toastmasters.org>] on the web) In gaining experience, you will create positive momentum in your speaking ability.

Now go out, and start creating and enjoying your phenomenal speaking success!



Jim Key, 2003 World Champion of Public Speaking