

Public Speaking Tips

- Believe in what you're saying.
- Attitude creates a lasting impression. Show energy and enthusiasm.
- Give sincere and honest answers. If you don't know, say so.
- Deliver clear concise messages in terms audiences can relate to and understand. Eliminate jargon.
- Put your audience first and provide information from their viewpoint.
- Know what you want to say in advance and deliver that message, regardless of what questions are asked. Although there is agreement on what will be covered, there are many other issues that are legitimate. Be prepared to address any major issue with something other than a puzzled look or stutter.
- Smile when appropriate so people know you want to be there.
- Do not memorize lines. You'll look and sound like a robot. If you know your stuff you'll be able to converse rather than recite. Imagine you are talking to a friend in your living room.
- Do not rely on notes except for statistics, citations, or "quotable quotes" of others. Too much time spent reading notes may convince your audience that you are unprepared. You might want to separate your notes into two groups. The first group would be the outline, or talking points, of what you are going to present, in chronological order. The second group of notes would consist of specific numbers and facts, as well as quotes. Reading directly from the latter can be viewed positively – that you care enough to present the fact, figure, or quote exactly right. Just don't overdo it.
- New technology is wonderful, but don't break in new equipment 15 minutes before the presentation starts. Keep your presentation focused on the message, and don't get carried away with special effects and razzle-dazzle. Anything that you use, other than your voice, should support your key points, not draw attention away from them. Select only those tools that clearly add value to what you're saying. After all, you are the most important presentation tool. Have a backup plan: What if your projector dies, computer crashes, note cards or handouts are still at home? What is plan B? (And did you practice it?)
- People will be watching you long before you speak; avoid any nervous or annoying actions. Button the jacket while you are still seated, not while walking to the podium.
- Vary your speed, go faster, then slower. Pause...frequently.

- If you are an interesting speaker, a 5-hour speech can seem too short. If you are a boring speaker, a 2-minute speech can seem too long.
- A prop is worth a thousand words. A yo-yo antenna, a display of QSL cards, photos from public service events – just don't go overboard.
- Greet audience members as they arrive. Shake hands. Establish a rapport. This also has a calming effect for you, the speaker. You already “know” members of your audience.
- Before your presentation, do some relaxation exercises. Shake the tension out of your hands and arms. Roll your shoulders and rotate your neck and head from side to side. Take deep breaths and relax your muscles.
- Make eye contact with audience members. Talk directly to them. Avoid dropping your head and eyes.
- Personalize when possible. No, you do not have to start a speech by telling a funny story. Tell a story of a real life situation. Your audience will identify with you; it keeps them interested, and it offers a change of pace.
- The only way to look polished while speaking is to practice. One practice technique that doesn't take much time is called bits. You practice a short piece of material over and over again. You don't practice it word for word, but just talk your way through it. This way you won't blank out when a distraction happens while you are on stage. What have you done to practice before your presentation? How about tape yourself and listen? Asked a target audience to review your remarks?
- To keep things running smoothly consider asking the program chairman to keep questions from the floor to a minimum, and encourage the audience to come talk to us at the "Activity Table" you and an assistant can set up.

There are some who claim that public speaking is merely knowing your subject. They take the attitude that having something to say is all that is necessary. That is not at all true. You, perhaps, have listened to many speakers who knew their subjects thoroughly, but who, when they attempted to speak, actually bored their audiences. Merely knowing your subject is as far from public speaking as knowing the words of a song is from singing. Knowledge of one's subject is vitally essential, but that alone does not give the ability to speak interestingly and correctly.

Remember, there is no boring subject...only boring speakers.