Tips, Insights & Tactics
19 Cures for Fear of Public Speaking

Speaking in public is one of life’s greatest fears. It also can be a key factor impeding our growth. If you’re one of the many, many people who dread public speaking, take heart. There are several sure-fire actions you can master to conquer your mental anguish and prepare yourself for success at the front of the room.

1. Accept Fate
The natural responses of many who fear public speaking, actually reinforce their fears. Their ultimate goal is to simply get this uncomfortable obligation behind them. Denial doesn’t help. The first step in overcoming the fear of presenting is to fully accept that you are going to present. Embrace it.

2. Think Externally
Next, focus on the message, not the messenger. Forget about yourself. At every presentation, the audience is hungry to learn new, useful, relevant information, delivered in a way that’s easy to understand and remember. They’re listening to learn. The presenter is secondary, the “medium” through which the (primary) information is delivered. When presenting, focus your mental energy on giving your audience valuable information they can use. It’s about them, not you.

3. Picture Success
Visualization is a technique that requires a leap of faith, but it works. Visualize every step of delivering a successful presentation: from being introduced, taking the stage, giving the presentation, fielding questions, and receiving a heartfelt round of applause. Visualize the satisfaction of success throughout.

4. Ground Yourself
We can be our own worst critic. Let go of perfection. Give yourself the same level of support and encouragement you’d be happy to give a friend. Put perfection aside. Give yourself full credit for rising to your best effort; and know that each presentation experience will help you improve. Build on each success.
5. Validate Assumptions
Before you get too deep into creating your presentation—even if you think you know—double-check with your host or sponsor to ensure you understand exactly who you’ll be speaking to, what information they need, and how much time you have to provide it to them.

6. Seek Depth
Nothing boosts confidence like a thorough understanding of your topic. Your in-depth knowledge will help you prepare the best presentation and equips you to address virtually any question your audience may ask.

7. Learn to Lessen
When it comes to presentation visuals, professional speakers will advise you that less is more. Information-loaded slides can’t be read at a glance. They have to be studied. So while the presenter is speaking, the audience is reading. Slides shouldn’t compete with the speaker, they should complement him or her. Keep your slide verbiage minimal. Use it to anchor the discussion, while your speech carries the bulk of the content.

8. Connect Facts to Emotions
What’s more memorable than facts and figures? A story. Tap the power of story to illustrate key points in your presentation. Stories are a presenter’s most powerful tool. Use them to make your presentation unforgettable.

9. Be Bold
As you create your presentation, give special attention to your introduction and conclusion. A strong opening will engage your audience and get you off to great start. A strong conclusion will end things on a high note and give you a chance to reinforce your most important points.

10. Prepare Answers
As you’re finalizing your presentation, brainstorm potential questions you may be asked during the Q&A. Take the time to craft a few short, succinct responses. If appropriate, create a handful of backup slides to complement your answers. If you finish sooner than expected, or if no one has questions during the Q&A, you could choose to share your backup slides to fill the time with extra, but useful information.

11. Build Confidence
Practice is one of the most important things you can do to counteract presentation anxiety. The amount of practice needed varies from person to person. Practice your presentation until you’ve mastered it. Learn it well enough to give it without your slides, if you had to.

12. Stay Consistent and Fresh
You don’t need to memorize your presentation word-for-word. Instead, memorize all the key points, and their sequence, to guide you. As you practice, make it a point to vary your exact words a little each time to keep your delivery consistent, but fresh.

13. Watch and Learn
Practice in front of a mirror, so you can observe your expressiveness, and practice keeping your head up. Ask a friend to record your delivery for similar benefits. Observing yourself practice helps you visualize success and improve your overall delivery. Practice in front of a small group if possible, to build your skills and confidence further.

14. Pace Yourself
Practicing your presentation numerous times also helps you lock-in pacing. Time yourself as you practice. Add appropriate pauses at moments when your audience will need a second or two to absorb the information. Aim to finish within the allotted time, leaving a few minutes for discussion, if needed.

15. Practice Breathing
Another key weapon in the battle against presentation anxiety is learning to relax. Practice to learn to relax more effectively. It’s easy to relax and control your breathing at home, without the anticipation of a presentation surrounding you. Practice relaxing in places that aren’t a pool of tranquility; any environment filled with distraction, activity or anxiety. If you can master calming yourself amid chaos, you’ll be better prepared to relax prior to your presentation.

16. Meet your Audience
Before your presentation begins, introduce yourself to a few people sitting close to the front of the room. Focus on your new acquaintances as your begin your presentation. It will help settle any opening jitters to see people you know, even if you’ve only just met them.

17. Breathe Deep
The most anxious moment of a presentation is the minute before you take the stage. Try to focus your mind beyond that moment, breathe deeply and focus on releasing the tension in your body.
18. Look Like a Pro
When you make eye contact with people in the audience, it helps engage them and keeps them engaged with your presentation. If you’re nervous about that, ease into it. Aim your gaze at foreheads or noses. From a distance, the people you’re looking at won’t know that you’re not looking them in the eye. As you grow more comfortable, you can ease your gaze into direct eye contact.

19. Keep Improving
Overcoming fear of speaking in public is a worthwhile pursuit. The ability to nail a presentation can be an important career-building skill. If you’re ready to seriously address improvement, consider joining a local Toastmasters group, where you’ll gain the opportunity to hone your skills in a friendly, supportive atmosphere. For details visit toastmasters.org

Print presentation handouts in color.
A great way to follow-up a successful presentation is to provide a printout of your slides, related documents, or sales proposals. To make the best impressions choose from a wide range of award-winning color printers and color multifunction systems from Xerox.
xerox.com/office

Free lifetime service coverage.
Get free lifetime service coverage on all your eligible printers and multifunction printers with Xerox eConcierge—an average value of $1,280* per device. Let the free Supplies Assistant desktop app help you keep track of printing supplies’ levels and reorders quickly and easily, for network printers from Xerox, Brother, HP, Lexmark and other leading brands.
xerox.com/eConcierge

Visit us on the web or ask your local Xerox provider about our comprehensive line of printers and multifunction printers. xerox.com/office