

Ten Tips for Effective Public Speaking

Sharpen your competitive edge

The number one fear of most people is public speaking. Yet there are few skills that have a greater impact on your success in landing a job, gaining a promotion, or winning against the competition. Great public speaking is really the sum of its parts. Our tips will help you leverage your strengths and start to make improvements in areas where your delivery needs help.



1 Prepare to succeed

The single most important thing you can do to make your next presentation successful is to be prepared. That means make time for some serious practice. Experts suggest you spend 60% of your time to prepare your content and slides and 40% of your time to practice.

2 Say it correctly

Part of good preparation is double-checking the pronunciation of any tricky words—especially jargon. Your correct pronunciation and knowledge of industry terms lends credibility to your presentation.

3 Overcome your anxiety

Almost every single presenter experiences some anxiety before speaking. Know that audiences seldom detect it. Audiences want speakers to succeed. They want to be enlightened on your subject of expertise and want you to lead them through the material.

Use breathing and relaxation techniques before you present to calm your nerves. Instead of focusing on yourself, focus on your audience. Believe it or not the audience didn't come to see you. They came to see what you can do for them. Put your energy into giving them the best presentation you can. Begin slowly and use short sentences. As you acclimate to the situation you'll begin to feel more confident.

4 Make first impressions count

Before you even begin to present, your audience will base their first impressions on your appearance. Make it count. Dress appropriate to the event. Be neat, clean, professional, and comfortable enough to act naturally.

5 Stand for attention

Stand up straight, with your legs shoulder width apart and your weight evenly distributed. Good posture reflects confidence and engagement with your presentation and your audience.

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6 Act naturally

Gestures add interest and emphasis to your presentation. If you're nervous, feel awkward or stilted; start slowly and add movements or gestures as you begin to relax. Practice gestures as part of your presentation preparation and they'll come easier when you present.

7 Make eye contact

A great way to help calm your nerves is to make eye contact with one person in the audience. Speak only to them. When you've looked at them long enough to feel you've made a connection, move on to another person, and then another. One of the best ways to keep your audience engaged in your presentation is to maintain good eye contact.

8 Show your feelings

You may normally be reserved, but for your presentation, open with a smile. Show your audience you're happy to share your information with them. Facial expressions add power to your words. Just be sure your expressions are appropriate to your subject matter.

9 Make yourself heard

There are several aspects of verbal delivery to consider. Volume is probably the most important. Make sure you speak loudly enough so that everyone can hear you. If you're not sure, ask. Also, consider your rate of delivery. When presenters are nervous they often speak faster. Try to speak slowly and clearly, so your audience can understand every word. Finally, consider the pitch of your voice. Too much variation is distracting. Too little is monotonous. Aim for consistency with some variation when it's appropriate to the content.

10 Silence your distracters

Filler words and phrases like, "um," "ah," "you know," etc. quickly become distracting to those you want to engage. Break the habit of using filler words as quickly as possible. Instead, fill the space with silence—even if it means speaking in fragments. As you relax and improve, shorten the moments of silence—eventually you can eliminate them entirely.



The power of print

When presenting, always give a printed handout to your audience. Color handouts are the most effective. Color enhances your image, gets more attention, and improves retention of your presentation. Save paper by printing on both sides of the sheet. In PowerPoint®, print your presentation as Handouts (2 slides per page) or as Notes for a small slide image with your script below. Some presenters also bring a copy of their presentation printed on transparencies—for backup in case of technical difficulties. For the full line of Xerox color printers and multifunction printers (solid ink and laser) visit www.xerox.com/office

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