

● SKILLS

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

Speaking publicly can be difficult for some people, but it is an important skill to have. If you are talking to one person or five hundred, there are steps you can take to help assure your presentation is a success. The ability to communicate your information effectively will allow you to reach out to many different kinds of audiences with your message.

First, select a topic that you care about.¹ We have all had to sit through boring uninspired presentations at some time and do not want to put an audience through it ourselves. If you are passionate about your issue, it will be evident to your audience. The more intimate and knowledgeable you are with the topic, the easier it will be to deliver.

Preparation is the next step. Never assume that you know the topic well enough that you do not need to prepare. Determine the exact topic you will be discussing so you can stay on track.¹ Consider the amount of time you will have to deliver your presentation. Write out your talk so it has a logical progression. If preparation time is limited, at least write out an outline.

To make the most of each minute, edit out all distracting lines or extra comments. Have documentation to support every fact or claim. If using visual aids, make sure they fit into the progression of your discussion. People like handouts. Whenever possible, supply your listeners with background or summary documents.

A crucial part of preparation is practice. Give the talk out loud so you feel comfortable with its language and progression. It is always nice if you can have someone else listen to you and time the

presentation for you. They may be able to give you tips and ask you questions about the information you presented. This is a great way to practice answering questions from your audience.

When preparing your presentation think about the content and flow of the talk. Always consider your audience. Without them, you would be talking to yourself! Try to determine what level of knowledge they have about your topic. Your presentation should empower people with knowledge, not leave them wondering what you were talking about. Always thank your audience.

When preparing your presentation, consider the following tips:

- Try to know opposing points of view and offer good solutions or counter arguments.
- Avoid language that might be offensive to your audience (sexist, ethnocentric, etc.).
- Have a catchy opening that lays out the main points you will be making in

your presentation.¹

- The body of the speech needs to support the specific topic with facts, personal stories, or examples.¹

- Include a memorable conclusion that restates the points and offers positive solutions or actions.¹

Prepare yourself. Believe in yourself and in your information. Be confident and assured. Present yourself in a way that would be appropriate for and respectful of your audience.

We live in a visual world. Sometimes what people see can be a distraction from what they hear. Try to avoid unnecessary or distracting movement.¹ Make eye contact with your audience.¹ Move freely and comfortably so your audience is at ease. A gesture can be very powerful if you use it appropriately to emphasize your points.

Remember to use your voice to help get your points across. A monotone presentation will quickly lose its impact.¹ Remember to pause and to breathe. Have a good time when giving your talk.

Public speaking is an effective way of communicating your message and getting information out to people. It is a skill that can be a powerful tool.

— Pollyanna Lind

1. Schmidt, G. 2000. Don't get beached on the desert isle of communication; Quick tips for delivering effective speeches. *Solutions* (Apr.):1,3. Portland, OR: Solutions for Non-Profits.



Public speaking skills are a powerful tool for pesticide activists.

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