

Public Speaking

Public speaking, whether planned or impromptu, is all about style and delivery. Once you have mastered the content, the audience wants to be brought into the speech. Both beginners and seasoned speech givers will always have areas to work on since public speaking is a skill that undergoes continuous revisions. This section is divided into two parts (content and style) to help make sense of a speaking in front of a group.

Content:

Begin by figuring out what your audience wants and needs to hear. Why are they here? As a speaker, you should address their concerns along with ideas you bring to the table. Your speech should be in a logical order so that the audience understands the flow.

If your topic involves complex ideas, prepare handouts in advance for your audience so that they can follow along or think about the material once the speech has ended.

During your speech, include humor, personal stories, and conversational language. This will make it easier for you to remember what to say.

Presentation:

The way you dress conveys the tone of your speech. If the occasion is more solemn or formal, bright colors or extravagant accessories are not appropriate. During the speech, you want to appear confident and pleasant without any arrogance. Even if you feel nervous, keep your cool by speaking slowly, enunciating the consonants, and showing appropriate emotions depending on the topic. If there is a microphone, adjust your timing if the room is particularly vibrant like the echoes of a large cathedral. You can always ask to practice speaking into the microphone before the event begins.

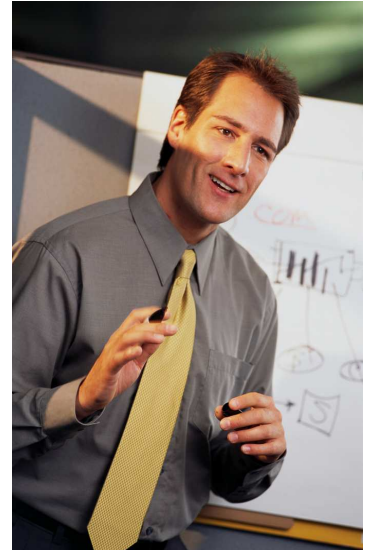
When speaking, you will want to make appropriate hand gestures or walk around if possible. Most audiences prefer a more active speech as opposed to reading verbatim with your head down. Even when proclaiming the Word, you will want to be familiar enough with the reading that you can make eye contact, but do not have it memorized. If your presentation has a PowerPoint component, make sure you have mastered the timing in advance. Do not annoy your audience with lots of tiny text on a slide. Bullet points are much more effective.

In most situations, you can glance at your notes. If you make a mistake, do not apologize, rather correct it and move on. If what you have prepared is obviously not getting across to your audience, change your strategy mid-stream if you are well prepared to do so. Remember that communication is the key to a successful presentation. If you are short of time, know what can be safely left out. If you have extra time, know what could be effectively added. Always be prepared for the unexpected.

Occasionally pause during the presentation to give yourself and the audience time to absorb and reflect on the information. Don't race through your speech and leave the audience, and yourself, feeling out of breath.

Flip Chart Color

-Black, blue, and green inks have the greatest visibility.



-Blue is the most pleasing color to look at with red coming in second (note: pleasing to look at and visibility are not the same)

-Do not do the whole chart in red ink.

-Avoid purple, brown, pink, and yellow inks.

-Permanent markers give the most vivid color but dry out faster if you leave the cap off. They also frequently bleed thru to the next page. Forget trying to get the ink out of your clothes.

-Water colors are less vivid and squeak when you write. Ink will wash out of clothing.

Use Color Thoughtfully

=> Use bright colors for small graphics to make them stand out.

=> Use subtle colors for large graphics so they do not overwhelm.

Use Color Psychologically



According to Greg Bandy in *Multimedia Presentation Design for the Uninitiated* certain colors evoke certain emotions.

=> **RED** = Brutal, Dangerous, Hot, Stop!

=> **DARK BLUE** = Stable, Trustworthy, Calm

=> **LIGHT BLUE** = Cool, Refreshing

=> **GRAY** = Integrity, Neutral, Mature

=> **PURPLE** = Regal, Mysterious

=> **GREEN** = Organic, Healthy, New life, Go, Money

=> **ORANGE / YELLOW** = Sunny, Bright, Warm

=> **BLACK** = Serious, Heavy, Profitable, Death

=> **WHITE** (if the example were white, you couldn't see it)
= Pure, Hopeful, Clean

Practice! Practice! Practice! This will help with the flow of the speech as you begin to memorize the order of the various sections. Recite your speech aloud to another person who will make sure your audio-visuals work properly and count the number of filler words (you know, ummm, long pauses). Keep a timer so you know that your speech is within the allotted time frame.

The day or night before the speech, take some quiet time to view the speech happening successfully in your head. Look at your body, hear your voice, and react to the audience's applause. This will help you gain confidence. Remember that your speech represents you as a person. Experience builds confidence so allow yourself to make a few mistakes, but then correct them for next time.

These tips are applicable to all areas of speaking including the classroom, reading at mass, floor meetings, etc.