

## More on Public Speaking

### *Comments by Alan Power*

#### What are 7 more principles of public speaking?

#### Public Speaking Advantage | Paul Geiger (Founder)

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#### 1. Know Your Audience and Tailor Your Message

One of the most important things you can do before stepping on stage is to understand who your audience is. Are you speaking to students, professionals, or a community group? Each group has different interests, backgrounds, and expectations. Knowing your audience can tailor your message to resonate with them. Consider their needs, preferences, and level of understanding regarding your topic. The better you know your audience, the more likely they will connect with your message.

*For Masons, pick a topic that you know will interest them and that you have done your research on so that you can know your topic and speak to it. (And be able to answer questions about.) But if there is something you don't know, don't try to "fake it". Just respond that you will look into it and find out for them.*

#### 2. Organize Your Content with a Clear Structure

Having a well-organized presentation is key to making your message clear. Start with a strong introduction that outlines what you will talk about. Follow this with the body of your speech, which should cover each point in a logical order. Make sure to conclude with a summary that reinforces your main ideas. This clear structure helps people follow along and retain the information you share. Think of it as giving your audience a roadmap for your presentation so they know exactly where you're heading.

*Introduction, information or explanation and concise summary. For any presentation, these are the keys. The introduction introduces the idea to be presented. You then provide your "argument" in support of the idea to support your point and then follow up with the summary of what you said and proved. Think of it as a sales pitch.*

#### 3. Practice Consistently to Build Confidence and Fluidity

Practice is essential when it comes to public speaking. The more you practice, the more confident and fluid you become in your delivery. Rehearse your speech multiple times—this could be in front of a mirror, with friends, or even recorded so you can see yourself. When you practice, pay attention to your timing, body language, and vocal delivery. Familiarity with your content will help ease anxiety and allow you to speak more naturally. Everyone develops their style through practice, so keep refining your skills!

*I was never so surprised as when I first saw myself on TV giving a speech. My hands were all over the place. How could anyone concentrate on what I was saying? Try it if you can. Set up a camera and do your best to give your speech. You'll be surprised at what you see. Practice out loud, not just in your head. You need to hear yourself say the words. Practice with a microphone so you are not*

*“afraid” of it. Practice putting it right up to your lips and speaking loudly and clearly into it. Let yourself hear your voice a milli-second later and get used to it.*

#### **4. Focus on Clarity in Both Speech and Thought**

Clarity is key in communication. Your audience will likely understand and remember your message when you speak clearly and concisely. Organize your thoughts before speaking and avoid jargon or overly complicated language unless it's necessary and your audience will understand it. Use simple, straightforward examples to illustrate your points. Aim to be direct and to the point. This way, your message will shine through without unnecessary distractions.

*Enunciate clearly. DO NOT mumble into the microphone. Know clearly the message you want to get across. If you do and forget some detail you will still be able to go on vice looking lost and confused in front of everyone.*

#### **5. Engage the Audience with Interactive Elements**

Engagement is crucial to keeping people's attention. Incorporating interactive elements into your presentation can make it more lively and memorable. Ask questions, encourage discussions, or integrate short activities related to your topic. These opportunities for interaction help the audience feel involved rather than as passive listeners. When people are actively participating, they are more likely to connect with what you're saying.

*You can ask questions but, in general, they should be rhetorical questions with a pause afterward to allow them to consider the question. Don't ever single someone out in the audience and embarrass them. (Unless you have arranged it in advance.) And I don't think you want to encourage discussion while you are presenting. It's a good way to lose your audience's attention. Keep your presentation brisk and at a good pace to keep their attention. Pretend you're presenting to a younger audience with a short attention span and you have to keep them attentive to you.*

#### **6. Manage Stage Fright with Relaxation Techniques**

Feeling nervous before speaking is something many people experience. Managing this stage fright is important for delivering your message effectively. Find relaxation techniques that work for you—deep breathing, visualization, or simple affirmations can help calm your nerves. Before stepping on stage, take a moment to center yourself and focus on your message rather than your fears. Remember, feeling nervous is normal; with practice, you'll find ways to manage those feelings.

*Taking a moment before stepping on stage can be good or it can be bad. It can settle you or make you more anxious. Find out what works for you. I find that if I don't think about it at all and just consider it another day, I do fine. Best way to kill stage fright is to be prepared. Practice beforehand, out loud, and know what you're going to say and the point or points you will be making. In other words, if you know what you're going to say – then go say it. And say it boldly, because you have something important to tell your audience or you wouldn't be there.*

#### **7. Use Visual and Vocal Variety to Maintain Interest**

To keep your audience engaged, it's helpful to vary your delivery visually and vocally. Use gestures, facial expressions, and movement to add dynamism to your presentation. Vary your vocal tone,

pace, and volume to emphasize key points. These changes not only capture attention but also help underscore the importance of your message. A monotone delivery can lead to disengagement, so don't hesitate to inject energy and enthusiasm into your speaking.

*I found this very important when I was a children's minister (seems like another life). Monotone and no movement does not keep your audiences attention. Pace your presentation briskly. Get on with the key points and don't waste time with minutia. Move your body and arms illustratively but not so much that it distracts from what you are saying. Vary your pitch in your voice at the right times to emphasize points. Do NOT "regurgitate" your speech in a monotone. There is no quicker way to lose your audience's attention.*

*All of these points are good points to help you hone your presentation skills. Practice eye contact with your audience so that you can connect with them and make it personal.*

## Purdue Global Public Speaking Principles

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It could be delivering a presentation at work, giving a heartfelt toast at your friend's wedding, or talking to your child's class on career day. No matter how serious or celebratory the occasion, most people experience some public speaking jitters. In fact, researchers continually [report](#) that public speaking is one of the top social anxieties. Whatever the event you're speaking at, delivering a speech that is clear, engaging, and gets your point across is key.

Here are 11 public speaking tips to help you excel the next time you have to speak in front of an audience.

### 1. Write It Out

Create an outline of your speech to organize the content. Even if it's going to be a quick one- or two-minute speech, writing a focus for the beginning, middle, and end can help you home in on key ideas you want to convey.

If you can write out the whole speech, do it. You may end up improvising certain parts anyway, but the more you can prepare, the more seamless your speech will be. Susan Cain, author of the book [Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking](#), writes that speech preparation is especially helpful for introverts since you'll gain a better understanding of how you'll come across — which can increase your confidence.

*This could help. But practicing the whole presentation out loud will do better. If you need a “cheat sheet” so that you do not forget key points, that’s OK. Just don’t lose focus on the audience and read from it.*

### 2. Start Strong

Grab your audience's attention early. You can do this by starting your speech with a surprising statistic, a joke, or an interesting anecdote. The [YPO](#), a nonprofit global leadership community of chief executives, offers some examples of attention-grabbing speech openers:

- Use a well-known or thought-provoking quote that is relevant to your speech.
- Ask a “what if” question to draw in your audience.
- Get on stage and ... wait. The silent pause can draw all eyes toward you.
- Create a one-two punch opener by combining multiple techniques. For example, open with a surprising statistic, then follow that up with a few seconds of silence.

*Excellent ideas. You are grabbing your audience's attention with something they do not know, and you have validated why they should continue to listen to you. You are Gunga Din bringing them the “water”.*

### 3. Be Yourself

If you get anxious about public speaking, it could be tempting to try to emulate more famous public speakers or even fall back on just reading your speech or notecards. The lack of authenticity will come through.

Instead, [Toastmasters International](#) recommends keeping the tone conversational while embracing your own unique style. That means avoiding using overly complicated words when possible and using your written speech as a starting point, not as something you recite.

And if you make a mistake while speaking? Don't worry and don't apologize. The audience is rooting for you, so just pick up where you left off and forge ahead.

*Sound advice. Don't read your presentation. Use notes if you need to. And don't worry about minor mistakes. The audience won't lynch you for it. They are the ones that want to hear what you have to say. If you make an error, keep going. Correct it if you must but most people probably won't even notice.*

#### **4. Practice**

Practice goes hand in hand with the first three tips. How your speech comes across out loud compared to how it reads in your head can be very different. Practicing a speech enables you to:

- Work out pacing and pauses for optimal impact.
- Make sure you're able to clearly and confidently pronounce your speech.
- Feel more comfortable with the message you're delivering.
- Test drive your opening, especially if you're going to tell a joke.

Practice in front of a mirror and in front of a friend if possible. If you need to memorize your speech, break it down into chunks and work on memorizing one part at a time. [Chunking is a cognitive principle](#) that states information is more easily stored when it is broken down into pieces. For speeches that are several minutes long, use chunking to tackle one section at a time, then weave them together in your preparation.

*Chunking can be good if you don't get the "chunks" mixed up. Practice the joke and the timing. Nothing worse than telling a joke and having it fall flat because the timing was wrong. The great comedians of our age had good timing in their delivery. It is an art. Don't do jokes if your delivery is poor.*

#### **5. Pace Yourself**

In public speaking, pace is the speed at which you speak. Talk too fast and the audience may not be able to understand you or grasp the topic. Speak too slowly and they can become bored or frustrated. The trick, according to [Toastmasters](#), is to vary your pace. For example, speak quickly to convey urgency, or speak slowly to build tension.

You could find yourself speaking quickly even though you didn't plan to do so. Sometimes speakers do this out of nervousness. To help slow yourself down, try speaking in a loud voice and over-articulate. Both will force you to slow down. Additionally, you can write pauses into your notes to remind yourself to take a breath and vary your pace.

*This another “know your audience” thing. Young people tend to talk faster than older ones. If you’re presenting to an older audience, slow down, articulate loudly and clearly. Look for the understanding in the audience’s eyes. If it isn’t there, you’re moving too fast. And, of course, vice a versa with a younger audience and you’re an older presenter. You’ll know you have lost them when their cell phones come out. Pace is very important for maintaining your audience’s attention.*

## **6. Dress for Success**

While you can't necessarily control every detail of a speech, you can control how you look. Dress in comfortable clothes that make you feel good about yourself. This helps you feel confident.

That isn’t to say you should dress down. The [BBC](#) talked to professionals in human relations and career coaching about clothing in the workplace, and the consensus was that you should observe what others usually wear in the workplace, and then put your personal spin on it. This exudes a sense of belonging while also helping you to stand out just enough to be recognized as a leader.

*Dress for your environment. If everyone is in a suit, you should be too. If everyone is in a polo, you should be in a polo or a suit. Show your audience that you “respect” them.*

## **7. Prepare for the Worst**

It might sound counterintuitive but imagining the worst-case scenario that could happen during your speech could help calm you down. In an article for [Mayo Clinic](#), Craig N. Sawchuk, PhD, LP, suggests that when you’re afraid of something, you may overestimate how bad it will be.

Instead, Sawchuk says, think about the worst that could possibly happen, and then think about your best possible response. Doing this has the effect of minimizing fear, which can increase your poise come speech time.

*Hmmm. I guess that could help. But if bad things happen, I think that just may be life. You can help by knowing your topic and being prepared to answer questions.*

## **8. Tour the Space Beforehand**

Don't let a surprising venue layout derail your speech. A setup involving a podium (or lack of one), platform, or stage may seem new and jarring if it's drastically different from where you practiced.

Before a speech, walk around the venue if you can. Touch the podium. If you are going to be holding a microphone, hold it and walk around with it before the speech. Look out into the first few rows so you have an idea of where to look as you're delivering the speech.

*This is good guidance. It also helps to do a test run on the microphone to get yourself comfortable with speaking at your venue. Some auditoriums can have an echo effect. It’s better to know in advance rather than being surprised.*

*This is all good guidance and added to what you have seen before, you should now be prepared to go out and be a great speaker and a leader. Don’t forget the personalization of eye contact and a sincere face to help you “win” the audience. Be excited about what you are presenting. If you are not excited how can you expect your audience to be excited?*