What Effective Speaking Is

The politician speaks to gather votes. The lawyer presents her case to win a trial. The coach gives a pep talk to inspire his team. The student government president speaks to the student body to encourage recycling. The civil rights leader makes an emotional plea to win followers to the cause.

Speaking to an audience in public is one of the oldest forms of human communication. It’s a valuable art. The ancient Greeks honored this activity by building beautiful structures where their orators could practice their art and compete with each other. An orator is someone who is known for his or her skill and power as a public speaker. And today, you still go to your school’s auditorium—a word that comes from the Latin root for listen—to hear speeches by students, teachers, and visitors.

But as much as Western culture prizes the art of speaking, many people fear it. Studies have shown that speaking in front of a group is by far most people’s greatest fear. It ranks ahead of the fear of dying, riding in an airplane, or failure in other areas of life.

Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech—on 28 August 1963—was one of the most effective speeches of modern times.
You may have that same fear—that churning feeling in your stomach when someone asks you to talk before a group. Don’t worry; you’re completely normal. Everyone—the politician, the lawyer, the coach, and the leader—has the same reaction to speaking in public. But some people learn how to manage their fear. They practice, speak, and gain control of their fear so that it becomes less noticeable.

Although the fear of speaking is common, studies also show that the ability to speak well in front of a group is one of the qualities people admire most. The person who can communicate ideas clearly—both in writing and speaking—has a greater chance of personal and professional success than someone who does not speak or write well.

If it hasn’t happened already, chances are that someone will eventually ask you to speak before an audience. If you’re still an inexperienced speaker, you’ll probably have to confront your fear of speaking—including the knocking knees and sweaty palms. Learning the fundamentals of speaking can help you conquer your fear. That’s the goal of this lesson: to help you become a better, more confident, more convincing speaker.

Like writing, speaking is a skill you can learn. Once you grasp the basics, the rest is practice, polish, and style. Your initial mistakes may embarrass you, but you’ll survive. Learn all you can from your teachers and friends—some of them are already accomplished speakers. And once you’ve become more confident in your speaking skills, share with others your views, tips, and personal hang-ups about speaking. Help them learn what you’ve learned.

Similar to the ancient Greek orators, you’ll find that the more often you accept opportunities to speak in front of a group, the more self-confident you will become. Confidence and knowledge of your subject are important preparations for speaking. Now you’ll learn about some others.

Vocabulary

- orator
- impromptu
- extemporaneous presentation
- visual aids
- slide transitions
- gestures
- rate
- volume
- pitch
- pause
- articulation
- pronunciation
- stage fright
The Importance of Preparing to Speak

Good speaking involves the same fundamentals you learned for good writing. Good speaking, like good writing, is a result of the same type of process. Working through this process will help ease your fear of speaking. Do you remember the following six steps from the basic checklist? Keep them in mind as you read this section.

Six Steps for Effective Communication

1. Analyze your purpose and audience.
2. Research your topic.
3. Support your ideas.
4. Organize and outline.
5. Draft and edit.
6. Fight for feedback.
Purpose

Just as you do when you write, you should analyze your purpose when you prepare a talk. Speaking has three basic purposes: to inform, to persuade, or to entertain.

- The purpose of an informative presentation is to share your knowledge about a specific topic. Talks to clubs, orientation talks, and presentations at awards ceremonies are examples of speeches to inform.
- The persuasive presentation aims to move an audience to belief or action on an issue. Speeches at graduation and before class elections are meant to persuade.
- The goal of an entertaining presentation is to make the audience laugh. These rely on humor and colorful language. A speech at a roast, a talent show, or school follies is an example of entertaining.

Audience

Good writers aim the wording of a text at their readers. Likewise, good speakers tailor their remarks to their audiences. Analyze the listeners in your audience by asking yourself questions such as these:

- What are their listening traits, needs, desires, behaviors, and educational backgrounds?
- What do they expect?
- What do they already know about the topic?
- How can I gain and hold their attention?
The better you know your audience, the more confident you’ll be in facing them. Use simple, everyday language appropriate for your audience. Use contractions and keep sentences short. Use personal pronouns, if appropriate. Repeat key words and follow with specific examples.

Types of Speaking

Briefings, lectures, and speeches are often referred to by the generic titles speech, talk, or presentation; this lesson will refer to them interchangeably as talk or presentation. Differences exist among the three types of speaking. These differences will influence your organization, support, beginning, ending, and delivery. Briefings present information quickly and concisely. Lectures are used to teach new material. Speeches are given in a variety of situations.

Briefing

Briefings are the most common type of presentation in business and military settings. By definition, a briefing is brief, concise, and direct. Sometimes, a briefing’s purpose is to inform—to tell about a mission, an operation, or a concept. At times briefings also direct—they enable listeners to perform a procedure or carry out instructions. At other times they persuade—they support a certain solution and lead listeners to accept that solution. Use the ABCs of briefing to help you remember that a briefing should always be Accurate, Brief, and Clear. Accuracy and clarity characterize all good speaking, but brevity distinguishes the briefing from other types of speaking.

Lecture

In a lecture, most of the speaking is directed toward teaching. The lecture is the most frequent method of instruction. As the name implies, the primary purpose of a teaching lecture is to teach or to inform students about a given subject. For convenience, you can divide teaching lectures into the following types:
1. Formal lectures, where the communication is generally one-sided, with no verbal participation by the students
2. Informal lectures, usually presented to smaller audiences—these allow for verbal interaction between instructor and students

Unlike during briefings, it is appropriate to use humor in the lecture.

**Speech**

Speeches to inform use the same kind of organization and support materials as lectures do. Entertaining speeches may rely heavily on humor and other attention-getting support. Persuasive speeches are characterized by more appeal to emotions or motives than any other kind of talk you will give. Appeal to such motives as fear, curiosity, loyalty, adventure, pride, and sympathy is common in persuasion.

**Four Methods of Presentation**

You can usually choose one of four common methods for your presentation:

1. Speaking from memory
2. Reading from a prepared manuscript
3. Speaking impromptu, with no specific preparation
4. Speaking extemporaneously, with preparation and a few notes

**Memorizing**

Speaking from memory is the least effective method of delivering a talk. You should avoid it when you can. While this method may seem appealing to people who can’t think on their feet, the memorized talk is like a straitjacket. You can’t adapt it to the immediate situation or to your audience’s reaction. This method makes it nearly impossible to create a bond with your listeners. The memory method also requires a lot of preparation. Worst of all, you face the danger of forgetting your lines.

**Manuscript Reading**

Reading a presentation can be a good option in situations where every word must be perfect. To do this, you write a word-for-word script of what you are going to say. Such a script:

- Guarantees that you’ll send the right message
- Ensures that you won’t leave out key information
- Avoids trouble caused by ad-libbing or going off the message
- Gives exact definitions and precise phrasing, if these are important

Reading your presentation allows you to plan the exact words and phrases you will use. But the disadvantages of this method far outweigh the advantages. Many speakers use the manuscript as a crutch instead of thinking through the ideas in the talk.
If you must read from a manuscript, consider the following suggestions:

- Prepare your manuscript carefully.
- Make your words simpler, clearer, and more vivid than you would in a paper.
- Make your sentences shorter and your ideas simpler than in writing.
- Make clear transitions between your ideas.
- Use repetition to emphasize your main ideas and key points.

Prepare your paper so that it will be as readable as possible:

- Type the manuscript in large, easily readable type (at least 12 point).
- Number the pages.
- Double- or triple-space the manuscript.
- Never break words at the end of a line.
- Leave plenty of white space—fill no more than two-thirds of the page with text.
- Print on only one side of the paper to make the text easier to handle.
- Put a double slash (//) at places where you wish to pause during delivery.
- Underline words you want to emphasize.
- Mark places in the manuscript where you plan to use visual aids.

For more hints on how to read from a manuscript, see the section called “Handling Your Notes.”

**Impromptu Speaking**

An off-the-cuff speech is an impromptu speech. **Impromptu** refers to speaking without preparation. It’s what you do when you must speak without warning or on a few moments’ notice. Making a good impromptu speech requires self-confidence, mastery of the subject, and the ability to think on your feet. Only people who know their subjects well and who can organize their thoughts as they speak should use this method.

If you have to make an impromptu speech, it’s helpful to begin by stating the number of supporting points you will make. For example, “I support Germaine for class president for three reasons. She’s honest, she’s hardworking, and she has experience in student government.” Then develop each point separately. By announcing your three points, you help structure your thoughts. You also help your audience know what to expect. It helps makes your talk brief, focused, and convincing.

**Extemporaneous Speaking**

The fourth method of speaking allows you the most freedom in adjusting to an audience as you speak. An **extemporaneous presentation** is one that you carefully plan and outline in detail, and deliver with only minimal notes. It is based on full preparation and adequate practice. The extemporaneous speaker’s only guide is usually a
well-constructed outline. You base all your remarks on that outline. You plan idea by idea rather than word by word. The presentation will sound natural, but it requires careful planning. It comes out a little differently each time, but the ideas are the same.

Speaking from a well-planned outline has many advantages. You’ve organized ideas and weighed materials in advance. You are free to adapt your talk to the occasion and to adjust to audience reaction. You can change what you plan to say right up until you step up to the podium. Finally, and most important, extemporaneous speaking tends to be the liveliest of the four types of speaking. Most effective speakers use this technique often. It is well suited for almost all the public speaking you will do.

And while you’re at it, you may want to prepare two versions of your outline. Make one version complete—almost in manuscript form. You can return to it several weeks or months later if you are called upon to give a similar talk. Make the second version much briefer—perhaps only one page long. You could write it on cards so you can use it when you give your talk. Think of it as a keyword outline. Make sure it contains important words and phrases to remind you of main points, subpoints, support material you plan to use, and things to say in your introduction and conclusion.

**How to Organize Your Presentation**

Clear organization is vital to effective speaking. The most obvious weakness among speakers is their failure to organize their material for their audience. A speaker must lead listeners mentally from where they are at the beginning of a presentation to where they are supposed to be at the end. For that reason, you must organize your message with the audience in mind. Like a good written paper, every presentation needs an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. First, consider the introduction and the conclusion.

**The Introduction**

Good speakers capture their audience’s attention immediately. No matter how much you know about your subject or how willing audience members are to listen to you, you must motivate them to listen throughout your talk.
Introductions vary depending on the purpose, the audience, and the situation. For an informative briefing, it’s helpful to begin with an overview. In such an introduction, you mention the main points you are about to discuss. Consider the audience, the occasion, and the objectives of your presentation, then decide what kind of introduction is appropriate. For a briefing, you might start with “Good morning, I’m (name) and I’m briefing on ________.”

For lectures and speeches, you can use attention-getters and motivations. A motivation tells the audience why it’s important to listen to the upcoming information. Here are some suggestions for gaining attention. You’ll have to decide which one best applies to the talk you are giving.

- Ask an intriguing question.
- Read a stirring quotation.
- Describe a common interest.
- Tell a joke that is suitable to the occasion (more on this in the “Humor” section).
- Make a startling statement.
- Use a gimmick or prop.

Transitions are also part of good writing, as you may recall from Chapter 2, Lesson 2. You can apply some of the guidelines for transitions in writing to your presentations as well. For example, one good strategy is to use words such as first, next, or finally. They help the audience follow the development of your ideas. Another is to use words such as however or on the other hand (to indicate a change of direction in thought) or in addition or moreover (to indicate a related idea).

**The Conclusion**

As with the introduction, your speaking situation and audience will help determine what kind of conclusion is best. Most talks don’t require a long conclusion. With informative presentations, you may want to summarize your main points. With persuasive presentations, your conclusion may be a motivational statement that emphasizes what you want your listeners to believe or how you want them to act. In an entertaining presentation, you might build to a brief, memorable punch line.

All talks need a conclusion. The conclusion brings the presentation to an effective close and satisfies your audience. The time you spend on your conclusion is important because it creates an impression that the audience will remember once you have finished. A good way to end a briefing is by saying, “Ladies and gentlemen, this concludes my briefing. Are there any questions?” For lectures and speeches, use a remotivation to remind the audience why it’s important to know the information and how they can use it.
A key rule in verbal communication is to keep it short and sweet. You may have heard the time-tested advice, “Be clear, be quick, be gone.” Few audiences will tolerate a speaker who wastes time. Get your act together before you speak. Know what you want to say, and then say it with your purpose and the audience in mind. Remember the old rule of public speaking: “Tell them what you’re going to tell them; tell them; tell them what you told them.”

**The Effective Use of Visual Support**

The body of your talk is where you discuss your main points, give information, construct your argument, persuade, or entertain using illustrations, examples, and clarification for support. Here’s where you can really prove your point with testimony and statistics. You support this with visual aids.

**Visual aids** are objects or displays that give emphasis to and illustrate your ideas. Slides made with PowerPoint or other presentation software are the most common forms of visual aid for most talks. Other types of visual aids include whiteboards, flip charts, objects, models, photos, maps, charts, and drawings. They help you remember key points and keep the talk on target.

Use visual aids to help the audience “dig in” to what you have to say. Research shows that a week after people hear a presentation that has no visual aids, they retain only about 5 percent of the information. With visual aids, retention jumps to about 65 percent. The reason? The human brain processes visual images about 400,000 times as fast as text alone. In other words, “show and tell” is better and faster than just “tell.”
When you deliver your talk, remember the following points:

- Don’t put up a visual aid until it is relevant to your talk. The audience will focus on the visual aid instead of listening to you.
- Don’t stand between your visual aid and the audience; make sure everyone can see.
- Talk to your audience, not to the visual aid.
- If necessary, use a pointer to draw the audience’s attention to key items.
- Always point with your arm that is closest to the visual; otherwise, you might block the audience’s view.

After you’ve covered the information in a visual aid, remove it or cover it up. One exception to this rule is when you use a visual aid as an outline. In this case, you can leave it up as long as it relates to what you’re saying. But when it’s no longer useful, remove it.

Using slide transitions can help you navigate through your presentation. In public speaking, **slide transitions** are effects such as sound, animation, or movement that take you from one slide or part of the talk to the next. They help your audience follow the flow of your ideas.

Here are some other tips on using visual aids.

**Color**

Color is an important communication tool. But don’t overdo it. Limit your choices to four or five colors. Use colors to emphasize key elements, but avoid loud colors that might be distracting or hard to read.

To give your visuals a unified appearance, use the same background color on all images. Maintain good contrast between important information and background. Use light letters (for example, white or yellow) on a dark background or dark letters on a light background.

**Text**

Slides aim at the visual portion of the brain. If they are jam-packed with information, they’ll confuse the audience. If you use slides, include lots of white space and keep words to a minimum using uppercase and lowercase letters. If your slides are self-explanatory, you probably have too much wording on them. Remember, this is a presentation, not a paper. You add value to your presentation with your eloquent speaking abilities, not by cramming words on a slide.

**Equipment Operation**

If you use a computer data projector, an overhead slide projector, or a 35-mm projector, it helps to ask a friend to operate the equipment. This person should be familiar with your presentation. Give the person an outline that indicates when to display and remove the visual aids.
If you don’t have a friend to help, see if you can use a remote-control device to operate the equipment. This will allow you to move around a bit. Make sure you practice with the visual aids before the presentation.

Visual aids are tools that can help the audience remember and understand the content of your message. But don’t overdo them: When you emphasize everything, nothing seems important.

### How to Use Presentation Skills

While what you say is important, the image you project as a speaker is even more important. Numerous studies have shown that people remember less than 10 percent of what a speaker says. First impressions are largely based on nonverbal communication, such as how you dress, wear your hair, carry yourself, and use gestures and other body language. Other keys to a polished delivery include your voice, the appropriate use of humor, the way you handle your notes, and your ability to overcome stage fright.

#### Aspects of Physical Behavior

**Your Appearance**

Looking good boosts your self-confidence and builds your credibility with the audience. Do you need a haircut? Are your shoes shined? Are your clothes clean and freshly pressed? Are your buttons buttoned?

Your posture also creates a general impression of you as a speaker. Stand straight and alert, but relaxed. Don’t lean on the podium, rock back and forth, or slouch on one leg and then the other.

**Eye Contact**

As soon as you’re at the podium, establish eye contact with the audience. Let the audience know you are looking at them and talking to them. Effective eye contact is *direct* and *impartial*. Don’t stare, but do look at the audience. Look slowly from one side of the room to the other. This is the best way to get audience feedback and hold listeners’ attention. A speaker buried in his or her notes loses listeners. Effective eye contact is powerful and enhances your credibility.
Facial Expressions
Use facial expressions, but don’t overdo them. Use them the same way you would if you were engaged in a casual conversation. You should not smile or frown continuously, but use these expressions as necessary to reinforce your ideas.

Body Movement
Everyone has quirks of movement. Usually they’re not noticeable. But when you’re standing in front of an audience for a long time, they may become a distraction. Be aware of your typical body movements. Keep yourself in check, and always seek feedback. In time, you will have speaking down to an art.

The following describe some of the types of speakers who have movement challenges:

- **The life-rafters**—These speakers cling to the podium or lectern.
- **The hand-washers**—These speakers store all their nervousness in their hands—while speaking, they wash and wash.
- **The caged tigers**—These speakers continually pace from one side of the room or stage to the other.
- **The rockers**—Rockers unconsciously move backward and forward, or side to side, or both.
- **Pocket maniacs**—These speakers jam their hands in their pockets.
- **Pen clickers**—These speakers have to be doing something with their hands—they are compelled to manipulate and click any pen in their possession.

Gestures
Gestures are the purposeful use of your hands, arms, shoulders, and head to reinforce what you are saying. Your gestures should appear natural and spontaneous. Used appropriately, they add life and vigor to your presentation. Inappropriately used, they can be a distraction to the audience. Make your gestures slowly and naturally, and watch your timing. Be sure they are consistent with what you’re saying. Make them add meaning to your presentation. Practice your gestures in front of the mirror.

Your Voice
Using your voice is just like playing a musical instrument. You have control over the sounds that your voice makes—the rate of speaking, volume, pitch, and pause. You can learn to control your voice in each of these areas. Use your voice to create interest in your presentation and drive home your ideas and information.

Rate
Rate is the speed at which you speak. There’s no single correct rate of delivery that works for every talk. You might consider this fact, however: People can listen four to five times as fast as the normal speaking rate of 120 words per minute. If you speak
too fast, your talk will be impossible to understand. If you speak too slowly, your audience will find it harder to follow your meaning. And if you do not vary your speed, your voice will be monotonous and you may lose your audience’s attention. A faster rate communicates excitement or sudden action, and a slower rate sounds calm or tired. Use the rate of speech that is most appropriate to the ideas you are expressing.

Volume

Volume is *how loudly or softly you speak*. It’s another verbal technique that can give emphasis to your talk. Before you speak, survey the room where you will deliver your talk, if possible. Take time to practice talking in the room. Bring along a friend. Ask the friend to move to various parts of the room and tell you whether he or she can hear you. Know how loudly you must talk. Remember that when the room is filled with people, you will need to talk louder because their bodies will absorb the sound. If the audience members must strain to hear you, they will eventually tune you out.

Change your volume to emphasize a point. Using a softer level or lower volume is often a more effective way to achieve emphasis than shouting is.

Pitch

Pitch is *the highness or lowness of a sound*. To use pitch effectively, you need to practice as a singer does. Begin at a pitch that is comfortable for you, then move up or down your scale for emphasis. You can use pitch changes in individual letters, in words, or in entire sentences. You can use a downward (high to low) inflection in a sentence to indicate certainty and an upward (low to high) inflection for an air of uncertainty. (For example, think about how your voice naturally rises at the end of a question.) A varied pitch rivets the listener’s attention.

A habit has developed over the past few years, especially among young people, in which speakers raise their inflection at the end of a statement just as they do for a question. This goes by several names: *high rising intonation, uptalk*, or *valleyspeak*. For many listeners, this creates a strange effect after several sentences—it makes the speakers sound as if they don’t know whether what they are saying is correct.

People who “uptalk” when giving a presentation or telling a story sound to others as if they are asking a series of questions instead of making a series of statements. For example:

- *We went to the baseball game Sunday, because my dad won tickets at work?*
- *The Braves were playing the Cardinals?*
- *The weather was great, and we all had hot dogs, fries, and ice cream for lunch?*
- *The Braves first baseman hit the longest home run ever at Turner Field?*

Listen to yourself when you talk, see if you are doing this without realizing it, and try to avoid it.
**Pause**

A *pause* is *a brief halt in your presentation*. It gives you time to catch your breath and the audience time to collect your ideas. Never hurry a presentation; pause occasionally so your audience can digest your comments.

When it comes to pauses, the important questions are where to make them and how long they should be. Pauses serve the same function as punctuation in writing. Short pauses are like commas; they usually divide points within a sentence. Long pauses are like periods; they note the ends of sentences. You can also use even longer pauses for breaks from one main point to another—to separate the body from the conclusion of your presentation or to set off an important point worthy of short reflection. In this case, the pause has the role of a paragraph in writing.

A pause may seem long to you, but it’s usually much shorter than you think—and your audience will appreciate it. Don’t get pause-happy, however, and make your presentation sound choppy.

**Articulation and Pronunciation**

Two other aspects of your voice are articulation and pronunciation. The way you use them indicates your oral command of the English language. *Articulation* is *the art of expressing words distinctly*. *Pronunciation* is *the ability to say words correctly*. Listen to yourself and make your words distinct and understandable.

You can articulate a word correctly and still mispronounce it. If you are not sure of a word’s pronunciation, consult a current dictionary—before you get up and give your presentation. You can even look up online dictionaries with audio links that will pronounce the word for you.

**Vocalized Pauses**

This is the name given to the syllables *a*, *uh*, *um*, and *ah* that often occur at the beginning of a speaker’s sentence. While a few vocalized pauses are natural and don’t distract, too many get in the way of effective communication. If you find yourself saying them, pause, collect your thoughts for a moment, then continue.

**Humor**

One way to capture and hold your audience is by using humor. But be careful! What one person thinks is funny may turn another person off completely. Always make sure your humor won’t offend anyone.

The best sources for humor are the tried-and-true quotes from famous people who wrote humorous works. Quoting Mark Twain, Erma Bombeck, Will Rogers, and others can add zip to your talk and keep your audience stimulated. There’s also a benefit for you: Hearing your audience laugh will give you a boost and build your confidence. There’s almost no greater thrill in the world than making a roomful of people laugh.
Not sure whether a humorous line or joke will work? When practicing your talk in front of a test audience, pay attention to how your listeners react to the humor. If they don’t laugh at a joke during the trial run or object to it, take it out.

**Handling Your Notes**

Unless you’re an extremely talented speaker—or an actor—reading words aloud sounds dull. People who read presentations frequently lack spontaneity. They stand behind the lectern with their eyes glued to their script. How interesting is that?

You can use one of two methods for handling your notes:

1. Hold the manuscript in front of you with one hand high enough that you can see it without bending your head, but not high enough to hide your face. The other hand will be free to turn pages and gesture.

2. Place your notes on a speaker’s stand or table so that both hands are free to gesture. Make sure, however, that the paper is high enough that you can read from it without bending over. Remember to let your eyes, not your head, drop to the paper.

It is important for you to rehearse your presentation so you can deliver it well while handling your notes so smoothly the audience won’t notice them.

**Overcoming Stage Fright**

Before you actually speak, your biggest challenge will be to overcome (or at least control) stage fright. Stage fright is the nervousness you feel when appearing in front of an audience—seen in misdirected energy, excitement, and anxiety displayed in your behavior. Everybody experiences some degree of stage fright. Most people get a little nervous, and a few become physically ill. You may have witnessed a great presentation “gone bad” solely because the speaker’s nervousness took over.

How do you banish stage fright? First, realize that your nervous energy is a tool you can use. Good actors know that, and they channel their nervousness into great performances.

Second, try taking a short walk right before you go on stage to help release some energy.

Third, know the first couple of sentences of your presentation cold. Usually, this includes the introduction and the transition into the first main point. This makes it much easier to get through the first minute, which is the most difficult.
Practicing and Giving Your Presentation

Read your presentation aloud several times, perhaps once a day for several days if you have time. Try to make your talk sound as if you are having a conversation. Act as if you were thinking the words for the first time as you read them. Edit words that are difficult to say. Make necessary changes on the manuscript. Practice looking at your make-believe audience most of the time as the manuscript becomes more familiar to you. Provide the punctuation through vocal inflection, variety, and pauses.

Another strategy is to record yourself on your computer or other recording device—listening to the playback will help you discover places where you may not be communicating effectively.

Even with this practice, you won’t be able to judge the effect of your presentation on another person. Most people are poor judges of their own presentations’ quality. That’s why it’s important to practice the presentation in front of a critical listener and ask for feedback. If you can find two people willing to listen, that’s even better. If possible, hold the practice session in the room where you will make your presentation. Practice walking to and from the podium. Do your visual aids work? Are you hitting a smooth flow? Does the presentation sound natural? Practicing your presentation will help you polish your delivery.

Remember that your audience wants you to succeed.

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The big moment has arrived. Walk to the podium. Take out your notes. Take a deep breath. Look slowly around the room. Survey the audience from left to right. Project confidence. Begin in a strong, self-assured voice. As you proceed, keep eye contact with the audience. Look for feedback (nods, puzzled looks, and so forth). Let members of the audience know you are looking at and talking to them. Smile!

Use natural gestures to relieve tension. Chances are your audience won’t notice your nervousness if you don’t telegraph it to them.

If you can capture and hold your audience during your introduction, you’re halfway home. Keep moving forward, always paying attention to audience feedback. Once you’ve made your main points, you can close with confidence. After saying “In conclusion,” end it. Smile and nod your head toward the audience while saying, “Thank you.”

Although preparing a talk can be hard work, for many people the hardest part is presenting the talk. Questions speakers most often ask are: How many notes should I use? How can I overcome nervousness? What kind of physical behavior is appropriate for me when I speak? What if my voice isn’t suited to speaking before a group? How can I project sincerity and enthusiasm?

The quickest way to find the answers to these questions is by speaking. The more you do it, the better you’ll get, and the faster you’ll work the kinks out of your delivery style. Continue to ask for feedback from people who’ve heard you speak. One of the most important things to remember: Your audience wants you to succeed.

Some Tips for Speakers

- “Tell them what you’re going to tell them; tell them; tell them what you told them.”
- “Be clear, be quick, be gone.”
- Use visual aids to help the audience “dig in” to what you have to say.
Using complete sentences, answer the following questions on a sheet of paper.

1. Where does the word *auditorium* come from?
2. What two things are important preparations for speaking?
3. What are the three basic purposes of speaking?
4. What are the three types of speaking?
5. What three parts does every presentation need?
6. What is the “old rule” of public speaking?
7. What are five examples of visual aids?
8. What happens to audience retention when you use visual aids?
9. What are most first impressions based on?
10. What purposes do pauses serve in presentations?
11. What should you do when practicing your presentation?
12. What’s the best way to judge the effect of your presentation on another person?

**APPLYING YOUR LEARNING**

13. Think about two different speakers you’ve heard recently. These could be politicians, religious leaders, sports announcers, teachers, actors, or musicians. Which one do you remember better? Why do you think that is? Compare the two, and explain why you think one was more effective than the other.