

# Public Speaking Tips

1. Remember, it is not the speech that counts. It is the value of the message to the audience that matters most. If you can reach the audience well then your speech was successful. So, don't focus on your speech, focus on getting your audience to understand and accept the message.
2. Dress Appropriately. Don't dress to impress, dress to succeed. If you are speaking to farmers at their local co-op, don't wear a three piece suit. Go for business casual. But if you are addressing a formal awards banquet, put on your best formal attire. Don't dress to be attractive, dress to be persuasive. You want credibility first, charisma second.
3. Know why this group should want to hear about this topic from you at this time. Determine what the message will mean to them. How will they benefit from knowing what you know and agreeing with your suggestions? Answer the age old question "WIIFM- What's In It For Me?"
4. Don't open with a joke, unless you must. Your opening should be designed to connect with them, not just to amuse them. If you want to be credible then tell them why you are here today and what benefit they will get from the ideas you are about to present. Jokes are fine but don't make them the purpose of your speech, unless you are a humorist.
5. Organize your thoughts in threes. People retain things well when they are presented in small groupings. Three is a good working number. Break your message into three main points, illustrate each one with an example or a story, then conclude by showing them specifically what to do next.
6. When in doubt...tell a story. True stories are best, but fables, parables, hypotheticals are also just fine. Be sure that you bring your points to life by describing how people can use or understand what you are telling them. The greatest teachers of all time were excellent story tellers; Jesus, Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain, Will Rogers, Ronald Reagan, Golda Meier. When asked to describe her ministry, Mother Teresa replied, "Come and look. Come and look." Don't just talk about things, bring them to life for people.
7. It's OK to use PowerPoint, but it's not OK to depend upon it for your success. Let your visuals reinforce and enhance your message. Don't expect them to carry your message, that's your job. Use visuals sparingly.
8. Turn on the lights! Let people see you and make sure you can see them. Your best and most important audio-visual is your own face. Do not stand at a darkened lecturn while slides give your speech. Stand in the light and talk with your audience. Put the slide screen off to one side.
9. Get away from the head table. Do not stand behind a table filled with others who are also facing the audience. Headtables are dead, relics of a bygone era. Have reserved seating up front if you must, but have only the speaker stand on the stage. Focus the audience's attention on the person they are expected to listen to. Keep others out of their line of sight.
10. Be real and have fun. If your notes fall to the floor, say "excuse me" and pick up your notes. If someone says something funny, laugh along with the audience. Relax, this is your chance to connect with people and to make a difference. Be yourself, not some speech teacher you thought you were supposed to be like. You'll do just fine. Trust yourself.

***Keys to successful presentations by Professional Speaker and Author Jim Cathcart, Speaker Hall of Famer and cofounder of the Professional Speaking Institute***

