



It's normal to be nervous about public speaking, particularly if you don't have a lot of experience. We've got some tips to help you to grow in confidence, and master the art of speaking to a crowd.

## Prepare

One of the main ways make sure you give the best presentation possible is to properly prepare. This way, you'll feel confident that you know what you are going to say, and you'll be able to concentrate on other things, like for example interacting with the audience.

- Plan out what you want to say in full before condensing it into flashcards. Don't forget to include prompts telling you when to pause and breathe.
- Rehearse as many times as it takes for you to get the main points committed to memory. You don't want to seem like you're just reciting the speech off without feeling, but you also don't want to meander through it with lots of 'ums' and 'ahs'.

## Practice

Practising is simply the best way to get better at public speaking. Yes, some people might be more confident about it naturally, but nothing can replace actually getting the experience. Here are some ways you can practice:

- Do a trial run of a presentation with friends or family. (This is also good because they can give you feedback).
- Join a school debate team
- Volunteer to present on a subject in class
- Go to a comedy club and do a stand-up set

# How to master public speaking

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As you're planning out what you're going to say, keep your end goal in mind - do you want to persuade? Entertain? Educate? Inspire? Whatever your purpose, know it before you get started, and keep it in mind as you develop each point.

## Use rhetorical devices

Rhetorical devices are tricks of language that can make a speech really memorable. Don't overdo it though, as it will make your speech sound too formulaic. Here are some examples:

- Anaphora. Successive sentences that start with the same word or phrase. Anaphora is used particularly well in Martin Luther King's powerful, 'I have a dream...' speech, for example. This technique sounds great, almost like a poem, and repetition is always good to drive a message home.
- Parallelism. Successive sentences with similar structures. For example, in Barak Obama's inspirational 'yes we can' speech: "America isn't about 'yes he will'; it's about 'yes we can'." Parallelism sounds very snappy, which makes it memorable.
- Hypophora. Questions raised and answered by the author. For example: "So, how does this even work? Well..." Hypophora are great to grab your audience's attention.
- Rule of three. A series of three sentences, clauses or words which work well together. The idea behind this technique is that things sound more memorable or complete in threes, and once you start to notice them, they're everywhere: "Education, education, education!", "Sex, drugs and rock n' roll", "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" and "Friends, Romans, Countrymen. Lend me your ears" are a few of the more famous examples.

## Understand your voice

Your most important tool when it comes to public speaking is your voice, but most people don't fully appreciate what a huge impact it can have on what you're saying. In this [TED Talk](#), voice expert Julian Treasure explains how to make the most of this versatile and frankly amazing tool. Practise a few different ways of delivering your presentation to find out which method has the most impact.

## Keep it simple

People lose attention easily, so it's important to keep your speech or presentation clear and to the point. Here's how:

- Begin each new section with a clear and concise sentence which returns to your main point, and then develop that point throughout the section.
- Avoid going off on a tangent. Ideally, you should be able to summarise each section in one sentence and summarise your entire speech or presentation in three or four sentences.
- Go through each sentence and make sure it really needs to be there. Does it add something new that's important to your overall message?
- Get feedback from other people who aren't familiar with the subject - if they can explain your overall point back to you, you've done a good job.

## Use positive body language

When you're speaking in public, your facial expressions, gestures, and overall body language can have a huge impact on how people interpret your message. Pay attention to your posture, smile, make eye-contact with the audience, and use controlled hand movements.

## Watch yourself

When you're practising giving your speech or presentation, record the process and watch it back. As cringe-worthy as it sounds, it can go a long way to highlight things you might not otherwise have noticed about your presentation.

## Be yourself

There are lots of different presentation styles. Yes, there are some things that all good presentations need, but everything works better if you do it in a way that corresponds to you.

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