

20 tips to being a better speaker

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No matter who you are or what you do, speaking well is one of the most important skills you can develop. Personal relationships, social interactions and work situations all require you to communicate to other people.

By becoming a better speaker you can advance your career, enhance your reputation, boost your self-confidence and open up countless opportunities. Here are 20 tips to becoming a better speaker.

1. Talk with your listeners not at them - use a conversational style. The same as you would if they were sitting across a table from you. Don't use jargon and stuffy words, keep it simple and direct.

2. Paint pictures with your words - see in your mind the story you are telling. You'll have more excitement in your voice when you bring it alive.



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3. Put energy and fire in your voice - if your voice sounds nervous or timid, you sense it, the audience will hear it and you'll see their discomfort. Use energy and you'll come across as more confident.

4. Set the tone - your confidence, emotional state and attitude is often revealed in your tone of voice. You would use a different tone at a funeral than you would a wedding. Make sure your tone is right for the topic you're talking about. It will set the stage for your whole presentation.

- 5. Don't give long talks** - twenty minutes max, any longer than that is a test of peoples endurance. Remember, it takes more time to write a short talk than a long one. Keep it direct and to the point.
- 6. Don't write your speech word for word** - you'll end up reading it. Write it like a short script. Use phrases to guide you and jog your memory. It'll sound more natural and you'll come across as more spontaneous.
- 7. Practice your talk out loud** - if it sounds right it usually is right.
- 8. Prepare and rehearse** - too many people think all they need to do is rehearse once before they go into the presentation. If you want to hold attention and command authority you need to practice. Again, again and again.
- 9. Get and hold attention** - take command straight away by striding to the lectern with purpose. Start your talk eyes-up, in a conversational style, with energy and enthusiasm - by doing this you're saying, "I'm in control."
- 10. Don't fidget** - put pens, paper, phones or anything else distracting to one side. Fiddle with these things at your cost. You'll come across as nervous.
- 11. Look your best** - your appearance sets the stage. Make sure you use it to your advantage. Dress one step up from the best dressed in the room.
- 12. Make eye contact** - after your voice, your eyes are the most powerful tool for communicating. When presenting, establish eye contact and 'click' from one person to another in your audience, pausing briefly between each set of eyes in the room. This 'click' gives your listeners the feeling you're relating to each one individually.
- 13. Stand tall** - how you stand speaks volumes. A balanced stance with weight even but slightly forward says the speaker is engaged with the audience. A slumped stance says the speaker doesn't care.
- 14. Let your gestures flow** - they'll make you look more natural and they'll actually reinforce your words. But don't over do it.
- 15. Make a connection** - empathy builds trust. When you can read other peoples feelings and share your own you make a much stronger impact. It's critical for effective communication.
- 16. Show confidence** - your body language and facial expressions communicate as much as your words. Attitudes, feelings and emotions are sent like telegrams to your audience. Make sure they are in sync with what you are saying.
- 17. Smile** - you communicate joy and ease. A frozen or neutral face communicates absolutely nothing. Show warmth, sincerity and feeling by keeping your face animated.
- 18. Conquer nervousness** - overcome your fear with preparation. The more you prepare, the less nerves you will have. Begin preparing your talk at least three weeks ahead of time.
- 19. Check out where you are speaking** - it will prevent last minute surprises. Practice standing at the lectern, re-arrange chairs, check out the sound system - it's your stage, not just a room.
- 20. Be yourself** - the more you try to act like someone on stage, the more people will see straight through you. The more you act like yourself, the more natural and confident you will come across.

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