

Speak Up

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One of the biggest fears most people have is to stand in front of an audience and give a speech or presentation. Some sources say up to 70% of the population can be termed glossophobic; glossa the Greek root for tongue and phobic meaning fear. Such a fear can affect a person's occupation and future successes. The best way to address this fear is through practice, the younger the participant, the better.

Many adults are asked to give presentations on a regular basis at their jobs and many of the skills involved in a great presentation are the same ones you would use for a public speech. One of the main differences between presentations and speeches are that speeches do not use any type of prop. Typically presentations may use Powerpoint slides, videos, or another type of visual to help illustrate the main points. Speeches may also require the use of a podium which reduces the mobility of the speaker. At the end of a speech the speaker will not ask for questions as is typical in a presentation.



Practice makes perfect as the 2010 4-H/Tropicana Public Speaking County Winner presents at the Palm Bay City Council Meeting.

A few of the key elements that are used to strengthen a speech are the same ones that would be used for a presentation. These include:

- The 5 W's:
 - Who are you speaking to (youth, adults, etc.)
 - What are you speaking about (topic)
 - Where are you speaking (logistics)
 - When are you speaking (logistics)
 - Why are you speaking (is this a persuasive speech, an informative speech, etc.)
- Create an introduction, body, and conclusion, just as you would when writing an essay. Make sure to consider that the audience is likely to remember on average only 3 key points, so don't bombard them with information. Keep it simple. It is extremely important that the speaker does their research and knows their material well, if only to help boost the speaker's confidence level. If giving a presentation, the speaker would want to be prepared in knowing their topic above and beyond for those audience members that do ask questions. But remember, the audience doesn't need to know every little detail you know, 3 key points will do it!
- Make the speech interesting by creating a "hook." A hook draws the audience in at the beginning of the speech and leaves a lasting impression at the end of the speech. Hooks are commonly short stories (a few sentences, 1-2 minutes) about the speaker. Sometimes they can include appropriate humor, usually about the speaker, as you don't want to offend any of the audience members. The art of storytelling is something that needs to be practiced with family and friends ahead of time.

- When it comes to speeches, words are of the essence, but so is the speaker's appearance and mannerisms:
 - Dress: No matter what anyone ever says, first impressions do matter. The audience will be considering your appearance the minute you approach the stage or venue, so dress the part. Remember it is always better to be overdressed rather than underdressed.
 - Voice: Tone will help keep your audience engaged. A monotone (one note) speaker will lose the audience quickly. The speech will be too boring and droned out. Varying tone, using high voices and low voices, as well as adding expressions of excitement, sadness, etc. will help the audience relate better and keep them awake. Not only is tone relevant, so is how loud the speaker is. If using a microphone, just speak at a normal voice range and let the microphone do the work. If the speaker's voice is all that is available to them, then it must carry all the way to the back of the room to where the last person is standing or sitting. Practice is essential.
 - Gestures: Props, gestures, or hand movements are another aid to keep the audience's attention. The speaker may use their hands to emphasize a point, to count off numbers, to illustrate the size of an object, etc. Gestures help create a focal point for the audience.

A few last minute pointers to consider:

- The best place to practice a speech is in the mirror.
- There is always room for a pause break with an added deep breath if the speaker messes up or forgets to mention something.
- Don't make a speech more difficult by trying to memorize it. Create an outline, use notecards, etc. to assist in remembering the speech. With memorization comes the panic of forgetting what was memorized.
- Smile and have fun! Practice makes perfect!

These key points and helpful hints should get any beginner speaker up to speed and serve as a good reminder to those who are more seasoned. Remember that the more glossophobia is addressed head on, the easier it becomes to tackle it. The possibilities are endless as to where this skill can take you, maybe all the way to the White House.