



PODIUM PRESENCE Information Sheet

I *mproving y public speaking means
developing your own style.*

It does not mean learning to speak like a newscaster or speak like someone else. It means strengthening your ability to say what you want to say. There is no such thing as a perfect speaker or speech. Everyone can improve.

T *he most important thing to remember
in improving your public speaking is
to become your own best teacher.*

Learn to analyze a presentation and you will be able to learn and improve with every speech you give. You can learn from every person you hear. If you hear someone speak and you did not even learn one thing then you have wasted an opportunity. Everyone has something to teach and something to learn.

K *now your audience.*

Know what they want to know. Know where they come from. Find out what interest them. If possible, know them by name and use their names in speech whenever possible. One study indicated that the sweetest sound in any language is the sound of you own name. Know your audience as well as you can.

S *pace and room arrangement are
important to speaking.*

For example, if people are in a circle, they tend to hear better. If you are speaking in a classroom it is better to stand so that your voice can project better, your presence adds to your message, and so that you can use body language.

T *here is no substitute for preparation
and practice.*

The best speakers practice each sentence in their head many, many times before they speak it. They try it over and over until the timing is just right and it begins to feel natural. Often it looks like they are sitting there thinking but really they are practicing speaking in their head.

D *velop the main theme or message
you want to communicate.*

Often when we try to use too many themes it becomes confusing and the audience doesn't remember any of them. It doesn't matter if you are making a point in a class or doing a full scale speech. Develop your main theme and keep hammering away to get that message across.

U *se an introduction, body and
conclusion in your presentation.*

All three of these should tie directly to whatever is your main theme. The goal of any speech is to help your audience understand something and having an introduction, body and conclusion helps your audience understand your theme and tie it back into everything you say.

T *he introduction has two purposes.*

The first is to secure attention and the second is to orient the audience toward your theme. Most audiences will pay attention to any speaker at least for the first 20 seconds. In that time, you should get their attention and orient them to your talk.

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The conclusion also has two purposes.

The first is to summarize the speech, and the second is to motivate the audience. The summary should restate the theme in a clear manner. The motivation should focus on what you want the audience to do. For example, if you are recruiting people to come to a conference, your conclusion should end on a note that makes them want to come.

The cure for stage fright is to get emotional or to laugh.

Allow yourself to feel very happy or very angry and your stage-fright will go away. Allow yourself to laugh and it will also go away. Stage fright is like fog. A good breath of emotion or laughter will blow it away.

Make eye contact with the audience.

Allow yourself to smile. Don't be afraid to use emotion when it is real and sincere. Real emotion and feeling allows your audience to relate to you. If you let your guard down and speak from the heart, the audience will let its guard down and listen from the heart.

Build strong language into your presentation.

Strong language is language that expresses force, feeling, or fact. Examples of strong language are words that paint pictures that the listener understands. Scared is regular language, while petrified is strong language. Red is regular language, but cherry red is strong language. Strong language is more descriptive and helps your listener understand what you are expressing.

Use stories rather than statistics.

Statistics appeal to the head but stories touch the heart. Most people can't relate to statistics. They can understand them but are not inspired by them. Everyone, however, can relate to stories.

Vary your tone.

A person who speaks in one tone is monotone. That's what monotone means. Become a little louder at times and a little softer at others. Vary the tone. Don't be boring.

Vary your speed.

Mono-speed is as bad as monotone. It does not matter whether you talk more quickly or more slowly. What is critical is that you vary your speed and practice your timing. Speed up some words and slow down on some. Practice will improve your timing.

There is no one right way to speak, but there are some wrong ways.

Don't read from a script unless absolutely necessary. Also don't repeat things. If you want to reinforce a point, say it again but in a different and creative way.

Identify and eliminate weak language from your speaking.

Weak language is any word or phrase that does not add anything to what you are saying. Any word that does not make your message stronger makes it weaker. When you analyze a sentence, cut it down to as little as you need, without cutting out the message.

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The most common example of weak language is the word “um.”

From now on, if anyone uses the word “um” for the rest of this workshop, I want everyone else to raise their hands to remind the speaker that they said “um.” Other examples of weak language are “basically,” “well,” “That is to say,” “I mean,” or “In other words.”

We use weak language as a crutch.

We say words like basically, not because they mean anything but because they help us stall until we can think of something to say. But it is better to be silent than to use weak language. Be comfortable with silence.

Like anything else, public speaking is only worth doing if it is worth doing well.

No matter what else you learn, you must become your own best teacher. Learn to analyze every speech you hear. Look for the items from the 19 points already shared and see which speakers are using them and what their effect is. Become your own best teacher and you will always improve.