



TOP 10 CHECKLIST FOR PUBLIC SPEAKERS

“Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear.” Mark Twain

1. Get familiar with the area where you will be speaking. Visit the room before your presentation. Stay in the room alone. Walk the room and sit in the audience. Go up to the podium. Now, look out at your “audience” and start talking. Carry this vision with you.
2. Attitude: You are a person with a cause. Start with the premise that you have something important to say and that you have an urgency and desire to communicate it. Develop a deep interest in and knowledge of your subject, even if it is material you learned exclusively for this presentation. Convey your passion.
3. Don’t worry about appearing nervous. Keep a glass of warm (not cold) water handy. Forget about how you are coming across. Concentrate on the fact that you have an important message to communicate.
4. Anticipate the audience’s opening question. The audience is thinking, “Why should I listen?” Let listeners know you are qualified to speak. Let them know what they can expect to learn. Then, tell them how you plan to proceed. That’s right. Give them the outline of your presentation. Audience members are much more responsive and receptive when they are assured that you will cover the points that interest them.
5. Focus on friendly faces. Look for anyone smiling or nodding. Return eye contact with these people again and again. You will get strength from their acknowledgement. As the presentation continues, you will see that more people are tuning in to you; expand your eye contact to include them. Pretty soon you will be making eye contact throughout the audience.
6. If you get stuck, pause and ask a rhetorical question. Then answer it. Even in a half-hour presentation—generally the shortest kind—it is permissible to digress for a few minutes or to repeat points. No one expects every phrase to be perfect.
7. There are some “nevers.” Never apologize. Never tell the audience you are nervous. Never make excuses for anything (the nonworking microphone, the noisy waiters, the audio-visual glitch) while you are “on stage.”
8. Maintain a positive attitude no matter what happens. There are certain things that are beyond your control, even with good planning. For instance, you are not in control of (1) how accurately you are introduced (2) how well the equipment functions (3) how each audience member responds. Regarding the last point, some audience members will wander, mentally and even physically. This should be of—no concern—unless you see a trend developing.
9. Look upon public speaking as an extension of natural conversation. All the rules about being a good communicator in natural conversation apply: Speak slowly and clearly, give the person time to understand what you are saying and make eye contact.
10. Every presentation should be engaging to the audience. No matter how serious the subject matter, people want it presented in a compelling way. Your aim is to capture and hold the audience’s attention throughout your talk. Your listeners must feel the material has relevance to them as individuals, with examples and explanations fitting their experiences directly. Each listener should be thinking, “Hey, this is interesting. It’s about me.” Never underestimate the power of everyone’s favorite subject

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