

Did you know that public speaking is the # 1 fear in North America? The second greatest fear is death! If you have the fear of public speaking, you are not alone. You must first recognize what "fear" is. Fear is the anticipation of pain. Is your fear real or imagined?

1. Know your material Use humor, personal stories and conversational language
2. Practice. Practice. Practice! Rehearse out loud. Practice with a timer
3. Know the room. Arrive early, walk around the speaking area. You don't need to begin a speech by tripping over an extension lead.
4. Relax. Begin by addressing the audience. This buys you time and calms your nerves. Pause, smile and count to three before saying anything. ("One one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-thousand. Pause. Begin.) Transform that nervous energy into enthusiasm. Everyone is scared of public speaking. The secret is not to let on that you are! This will require a concentrated effort. Your posture is very important. Make your body look flexible and stand upright but easily, and smile.
5. Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear and confident. Visualize the audience clapping – it will boost your confidence. People want you to succeed. Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They're rooting for you.
6. Don't start by clearing your throat. And don't ever apologize for anything– the audience probably never noticed it and if you apologise, it draws attention to it and the audience tightens up expecting more problems.

7. Volume

Your voice is not like the remote control for the television. Some people have soft voices and can't shout, and if you raise your voice, the conversational and tonal qualities will be lost. Instead, project your voice by using more breath. This will develop a strong voice which will sound positive. Always speak to the back row. You can create emphasis by raising or lowering volume. If you drop your voice to almost a whisper (as long as it is projected) for a sentence or two, it will make your audience suddenly alert, but don't do it too often.

8. Clarity

Open your mouth, don't speak through clenched teeth because that will keep the sound locked into the mouth and not let out. To speak clearly, unclench your jaw, take a good breath and move your lips. Especially pay attention to the ends of words, don't swallow the end of the sentence.

9. Variety

You need variety. How a word is said reflects feelings and emotions. I don't know if you've ever played that game with your dog where you say, "You are a bad dog and I'm going to beat you and throw you outside in the snow." Depending on how you say it, your dog will cower, or wag his tail. It's not the words, it's the tonal quality.

10. Pace:

This is the speed at which you talk. If speech is too fast then the listeners won't have time to take it in. Better a clear, shorter speech than one which is gabbled, but varying the pace by quickening up and slowing down makes it interesting.

Pitch.

Try to speak with as much energy and enthusiasm as possible. This doesn't mean your voice has to swoop and dive all over the place like a plane out of control.

Pause:

Pauses are powerful, even when there isn't much time. They can highlight or draw attention before an important point. Pauses mean silence for a few seconds. Listeners interpret meaning during pauses so have the courage to stay silent for several seconds. This makes your speech dramatic and it conveys authority and confidence.

Consider acting out your verbs. For example, the word Zoom. Don't just say "zoomed," but draw out the vowel like the sound of the car speeding past: "Zoomed!" A little bit of a growl in your voice will help emphasize a word such as "angry."

Notecards.

They give you something to hold, which is helpful if you don't know what to do with your hands, but you will not be as free to use gestures.

Occasionally glance down, but look out at your audience most of the time. Eye contact will keep them engaged.

Notecards should contain only the keywords.

Organize them in a way that makes sense to you.

Number them.

List them.

Use different colors.

Write them large enough to keep you from having to lean down and squint in order to read them.