How to Make a Speech

Eight Communication Power Tools

1. Eye Contact
   Good eye contact helps your audience feel more relaxed. Maintain eye contact by knowing your speech well enough that you need only occasionally glance at your notes.
   Find a few friendly faces in the audience that react to your message and concentrate on delivering your speech to them. Keep eye contact for four to five seconds at a time, and then move to someone else.

2. Stance and Body Movements
   Good posture portrays confidence. Square your feet shoulder-width apart and plant them flat on the ground. Swaying or too much movement can be distracting to your listeners.
   A natural position for your arms is relaxed by your sides. To emphasize strong points you'll want to use movements that are deliberate and precise but look natural and spontaneous.
   Be aware of habits you might have such as crossing your arms, leaning against a wall or the podium or tapping a pen. This may be distracting to your audience.
   Practice your speech in front of a mirror to evaluate your presentation style and body movements and adjust accordingly. Try many different ways to find a comfortable balance of gestures to use in front of an audience.

3. Facial Expressions
   Pleasant facial expressions help to establish a warm and positive relationship with your audience. A smile lets your audience know that you are human and trustworthy.
   Expressions in your face capture the mood of your speech and keep the audience involved.
4. Appropriate Dress

Good choice of attire helps establish respect with your audience. Before you arrive to give your presentation, ask others for their opinion on your choice of clothing and appropriateness for the occasion.

5. Voice Projection

Sometimes tone of voice can have more impact than the message. Put feeling and energy into your voice by practicing vocal skills. You can add interest and variety to your speech by:

- varying the pitch throughout to convey emotion (high and low)
- change the speed of your words to dramatize the audience
- use pauses and silences instead of *uhhs, umms and you knows*
- increase and decrease the volume of your voice to emphasize main points and draw in the listeners (soft and loud)
- add vitality so your voice never sounds monotonous or emotionless

Practice vocal variety every day and soon it will become automatic. Record your voice and evaluate where changes may need to occur.

6. Audience Involvement

Involve your audience by: asking questions, talking to them directly and sparking their interest. This helps establish a relaxed rapport.

Consider strong, catchy openings, visuals or demonstrations or ask for a volunteer's assistance.

7. Humour

The objective is to establish a comfortable atmosphere and connect with your audience. People learn more when they are having fun. Be cautious though – humour is not universal – know who is in your audience.

8. Controlling the “Butterflies”

Speaking in public, like any skill, can improved upon with practice. Everyone has a certain amount of nervousness when talking to a group but the trick is not to get rid of the nervousness - learn to control it:

- To help you relax, do some deep breathing exercises just before you present & stand tall with your hands on your hips (like a superhero) – this lowers cortisol (the stress hormone).
- Use your nervousness to add energy to your personality
Remember you probably know more than your audience.

Ten Rules for Good Public Speaking

1. Remember to introduce yourself.
2. Make sure you know who will be in the audience, and why they are there.
3. Go to the room early to make sure you're comfortable in the surroundings. Check the microphone, lighting, audio/visual equipment.
4. The first 30 seconds have the most impact. Don't waste these precious seconds – engage your audience right away with a startling statement, quote or story. End with a bang, not a whimper.
5. Do not start a speech with humour unless you are absolutely brilliant at it. If you tell a bad joke, you're going to lose any credibility you have. Moreover, if your only humorous material is at the beginning, the audience is going to be disappointed when you become serious.
6. Be realistic - don't expect to tell the audience everything you know. Find an angle and focus on it.
7. If using PowerPoint, be aware of font size, colour contrasts and quantity of content on slides. Be careful not to regurgitate what appears on your slides – they are visual complements, not replacements of what you say.
8. Don't read your speech. Write key points and instructions to yourself (e.g. pause, slow down) on note cards – and with practice this builds confidence as you won't need to read your speech. Glancing at your cards, delivery will appear extemporaneous.
9. Think in outline form: What are the five questions you're most frequently asked? Set up your talk in bullet points.
10. Record your speech or practice in front of friends and family. After every point, ask yourself, "Who cares?" If no one does, edit it out.

Removing Interjections ("um", "er", "like", "you know")

Eliminating crutch words is one of the fastest ways to improve yourself as a speaker. You appear more confident to your audience, and your message is easier to understand.

Don't Fear the Silence

Um's and ah's come because as a speaker you naturally want to avoid silence. You've been conditioned for two-way conversations. When you pause, you get
feedback from the other person and the conversation continues. In front of an audience, it is only you talking and the silence can be terrifying. The first way to combat crutch words is to realize silence is a good thing. Pauses help emphasize points and give listeners time to understand what you are talking about.

How to Combat the Crutch

Here are some suggestions for becoming a pause artist and eliminating crutch words from your presentations:

1. **Practice, practice, practice!** It is hard to cut the *um’s* if you aren’t prepared since you spend all your time thinking of what to say next. Therefore, know your presentation backwards and forwards.

2. **Breathe In, Not Out.** When you feel the temptation to *ummm* your way through a point, breathe in. This may add a pause to your presentation, but it will be far better than an ugly crutch word which blurs sentences together.

3. **Avoid them in Conversation.** Limit your crutch words when chatting with friends and family.

4. **Get a Counter.** Be aware - get a friend to count the amount of times you utter an *um* or *ah*.

5. **Comma = 1 pause.** Run through a list of items and force yourself to give a short count in between each item.

6. **Period = 2 pauses.** The end of a sentence requires twice as much pause. There is a time-delay between hearing your words and registering their meaning. Don’t cut over this step by blurring together your sentences.

7. **Double Underline.** Underline key words and phrases and double underline especially important ones. This helps you understand where to slow down and emphasize an individual word.

8. **Enthusiasm.** When you engage emotionally with your speech topic, it becomes easier to emphasize points and avoid crutch words.

9. **Plan Tricky Parts.** Think of creative solutions for tricky parts you might have difficulty explaining, e.g. word choice, visual support, etc.

10. **Quality over Quantity.** Be selective and emphasize only a few points in a speech, but emphasize them well and with repetition. A good way to have a presentation filled with *um’s* and *ah’s* is to cram a five minute speech with twenty minutes of information.
Further Resources

The following short video shows some things to do to make a bad speech. Of course, if you avoid doing these things, you will make a much better speech: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv99WqmswAE

To see examples of excellent talks on a wide variety of topics, go to the TED site: http://blog.ted.com

A number of links to web sites that can help you with various aspects of your presentation can be found at the University of Kansas Medical Center site: http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/effective.html

This site from the UK gives advice and examples covering a wide range of issues related to giving effective presentations: http://www.presentationhelper.co.uk