Public Speaking Tips

# Look at Your Listeners

Look your audience "in the eye" whether you’re talking to one person or an audience. This is called "eye contact". It shows your listeners you’re talking to "THEM" and that you are sincere. Even if you’re reading a report, be sure to look up often.

# Speak Clearly

Pronounce your words clearly. Slurred, mumbled speech sounds careless and may lead to misunderstanding. It frustrates your listeners too. Before giving a talk, yawn to relax your jaw and throat. As you speak, OPEN your mouth and use your tongue & lips to shape words clearly.

# Control your movements

Unless you’re gesturing, keep your hands still. Twisting your hair or playing with a ring or pen will distract your audience from what you’re saying. Don’t talk with your eyes closed or sway from side to side. You may make your listeners drowsy or seasick.

# Vary Your Delivery

Keep your voice lively by varying its pitch and expression. Monotones are deadly to listen to.

# Still Nervous?

"Stage Fright" - tension is natural. It means your body is ready to give you an extra boost of adrenalin. Performers and athletes know that. Tension before a performance helps them to do their best. Think of your listeners as equals, not judges. Most of them would feel nervous in your place too.

# Think Before You Speak

Understand your topic and know how you feel about it. Choose a specific theme, then support with reasons and details. Order your thoughts logically. Be sure you’re not contradicting yourself. Leave out anything that is even slightly off the topic.

# Know your Material

MEMORISING A SPEECH WORD FOR WORD IS NOT RECOMMENDED. This can lead to a speaker’s nightmare - blanking out - forgetting everything. Instead, become thoroughly familiar with your material. KNOW what you’re talking about. Jot down a few key reminders on note-cards. Even if you leave out some expressions you’ll always be able to present a complete logical talk.

# Using Notes

Use index cards for notes. They’re easy to hold and don’t rustle. Write just one cue or reminder on each card, then number the cards in order. As you speak, glance occasionally at the cards to keep them on track, but don’t read from them. Speak directly to your audience.

# Resist Pet Phrases

Avoid repeating "You know", "See", "Like", "I Mean" or other favourite phrases. You’ll annoy and distract your listeners. Instead of hearing what you are saying, they’ll be counting how many times you use your pet phrase. Ask your friends for your pet phrase - they’ll be more aware of it than you are.