LEARN TO SPEAK CONFIDENTLY

CAPS

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
If you find yourself dreading that upcoming tutorial presentation, you’re definitely not alone! Public speaking doesn’t have to be anxiety provoking, and believe it or not, it can even be fun. Take a look at the tips on this page to help ease your mind about your next presentation.

Why is it important to be an effective public speaker?

Feeling confident speaking in front of a group can be important in your education, personal, and professional lives:

- Public speaking is required for many academic courses.
- Almost every career requires public speaking.
- To communicate successfully and be persuasive it is important to feel confident while public speaking.

In this booklet you will find tips for effective public speaking.
1. **Know your material.** Choose a topic about which you feel knowledgeable and have interest. The more you know the easier it is to talk and the less likely you will forget what to say. If you can’t choose your speech topic then be very familiar with the material and know more about the subject than you include in your speech.

2. **Good eye contact.** Don’t read directly from your notes. Try to practice a slow natural gaze around the room as you speak. Try not to focus on each person’s expression. See how [Barack Obama](above) uses eye contact in his Victory Speech.

3. **Stay calm.** Attempt to transform nervous energy into enthusiasm. Take a deep breath and smile before you begin. View [Paul Keating](above) calmly give the famous Redfern Address.

4. **Practice.** Try and practice your speech in front of an audience. Remember that practice builds confidence: so practice, practice, practice. If you feel like you want more experience with public speaking take a look at some of the local groups listed on page 7.

5. **Don’t apologize.** You may feel very nervous but mostly likely the audience doesn’t even notice. Don’t draw attention to your anxiety, just take a deep breath and keep going.

6. **Appearance and wardrobe.** Wear something that is appropriate and that you feel comfortable wearing. You don’t want the extra stress of worrying about your appearance during the speech. For a little humour about wardrobe see [Elmer Fudd](above).
7. **Confidence.** Stand tall and speak clear. Even if you have a great speech you can lose your audience if you mumble or talk too quietly. Think of the saying, “fake it, till you make it.” The more you pretend to feel confident the more natural it will become. Watch Martin Luther King Jr., confidently deliver one of the most famous speeches in history.

8. **Organization.** Make sure to arrive early and if possible practice to make sure everything needed for the speech is working. If visual aids are needed for the speech have a backup option in the case of a technical issue preventing you from using them as planned.

9. **Know your audience.** Be familiar with your audience and make your speech as appealing to that population as possible.

10. **Personal experience.** Use personal experiences when possible and appropriate. A personal experience is easy to talk about and most audiences enjoy a relevant, brief personal story. Watch Steve Jobs use personal experience to address the graduating class of Stanford University.

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**COMMON PUBLIC SPEAKING MISTAKES**

1. **Weak start.** Start strong, with an interesting quote or statistic to get the immediate attention of your audience.

2. **Reading a speech.** When you are too focused on your notes you may lose your audience.

3. **Apologetic stumble.** If you lose your place or stumble with your speech take a deep breath, your audience most likely never noticed the mistake.

4. **Rate and range of speech.** It is common to speed up our rate of speech when feeling anxious. Try to remember to breath and use pauses throughout your speech. Make the speech interesting with the range in your voice. Speak with passion and emphasise important sections to keep the audience interested. It is very difficult to follow a speech when it is given at a slow monotone pace or so fast it is hard to process the material.

5. **Lack of preparation.** Confidence comes from practice and preparation. Nobody wants to watch a person fumble through a speech making up material as they go. Make sure to utilize the 10 tips for effective public speaking so you don’t end up giving a speech like this guy in the video above.
VISUAL AIDS

1. Always have a backup or be prepared to give your speech without your visual aid if technical difficulty occurs.

2. Keep them simple. Too much information distracts from the speaker.

3. Large and visible. Make sure the text is large enough for all to read and choose colours that make text stand out. Watch the speech above for examples of good use of visual aids.

4. Don’t read the slides word for word: this is the same as reading a speech from note cards.

5. Use bullet points when possible. Think of visual aids as an outline to highlight important facts rather than lengthy sentences.

Learn more about putting together a PowerPoint presentation and to find some examples of good presentations.

STAY CALM BY MANAGING ANXIETY

1. Practice. Nothing can beat being prepared for your speech. The more comfortable you are with your speech, the better that you will do.

2. Avoid Caffeine. The morning of your speech opt for decaffeinated coffee or herbal tea. Caffeine can make it more difficult to stay calm.

3. Stay positive. Pay attention to your self-talk days in advance and as you prepare notice the positive aspects of your preparation and what you are doing well. Also read the Learn to managing stress and anxiety.

4. Be aware. Take time each day to notice your anxiety level and start practising deep breathing to reduce anxiety. Take slow, very deep breathes just prior to taking your place at the podium. This relaxes your body, helping to clear your mind. See the guided relaxation and meditation exercises.

5. Challenge negative thoughts. We all at times have negative thoughts about negative events that could happen. It is important to recognise these thoughts and challenge them with evidence of success from the past. You can also attend the Manage Your Thoughts Workshop put on by CAPS.
1. **Safety first.** Use your best judgement when telling a joke or using humour so people are not offended. The safest joke is one about yourself. Watch how Liza Donnelly uses humour to talk about change.

2. **Have fun with stories.** If possible think of a funny story within your own life that is relevant to the message of your speech.

3. **Comfort.** The more comfortable you feel giving a speech the easier it will be to incorporate humour.

4. **Have fun.** When possible choose a topic that you enjoy and be creative with the material and presentation.

5. **Gestures.** Make the most out of your body language and facial expressions during your speech; they can be very humorous when used appropriately. Also, remember not to take yourself too seriously. Watch how Darren LaCroix, world champion speaker, uses humour in his speech.

**OTHER RESOURCES:**

**Groups**
- University of Sydney Debate Team
- CAPS The Art of Public Speaking Workshops
- The Learning Centre
- TAFE public speaking course
- Toastmasters International
- The Voice Clinic

**Websites**
- [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)

**EXAMPLES OF OTHER AMAZING ORATORS AND SPEECHES:**

- Read [Charlie Perkins’s speech](http://www.charlieperkins.com.au) given at the University of Sydney graduation.
- Watch Charles Perkins’ natural response to an interview question.
- [Tony Robbins](http://www.tonyrobbins.com), see above
- Obama’s Tucson Memorial, see above
- [Famous Speeches](http://www.famousspeeches.com.au)
- [Women’s Speeches from Around the World](http://www.womensspeechesaroundworld.com.au)
- Speeches [Given by Women](http://www.giventhewomen.com.au)