

Lesson # 8 Effective Speaking

1. The goal of public speaking is to **effectively communicate your ideas to the audience**. The speaker can do a number of routine things to make the communication more effective. The need to **stand up straight, look people in the eye, move around the room, gesture when needed, do not read off a script, and have a confident presence** all add to the effectiveness of communication.



2. In order to be heard the speaker needs to be aware of **Volume**. This is not a question of treating the voice like the volume control on the TV remote. Some people have naturally soft voices and physically cannot bellow. Additionally, if the voice is raised too much, tonal quality is lost. **Instead of raising the voice it should be 'projected out'**. Support the voice with lots of breath - the further you want to project the voice out, the more breath you need. When talking to a group or meeting, it is important to never aim your talk to the front row or just to the people nearest you, **but to consciously project what you have to say to those furthest away**. **By developing a strong voice, as opposed to a loud voice, you will be seen as someone positive**.



3. In order to be understood the speaker needs to **be aware of clarity**. Some people tend to speak through clenched teeth and with little movement of their lips. It is this inability to open mouths and failure to make speech sounds with precision that is the root cause of inaudibility. The sound is locked into the mouth and not let out. To have **good articulation it is important to unclench the jaw, open the**

mouth and give full benefit to each sound you make, paying particular attention to the ends of words. This will also help your audience as a certain amount of lip-reading will be possible.



4. In order to add interest the speaker needs to be **aware of variety**. To make speech effective and interesting, certain techniques can be applied. However, it is important not to sound false or as if you are giving a performance. While words convey meaning, how they are said reflects feelings and emotions. Vocal variety can be achieved by variations in:
- **Pace:** This is the speed at which you talk. If speech is too fast then the listeners will not have time to assimilate what is being said. Nevertheless, it is a good idea to vary the pace - quickening up at times and then slowing down – this will help to maintain interest.
 - **Volume:** By raising or lowering volume occasionally, you can create emphasis. 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, be careful not to overuse this technique.
 - **Pitch - Inflection - Emphasis:** When speaking in public, try to convey the information with as much vocal energy and enthusiasm as possible. This does not mean your voice has to swoop and dive all over the place in an uncontrolled manner. Try to make the talk interesting and remember that when you are nervous or even excited, vocal chords tense and shorten causing the voice to get higher. Emphasise certain words and phrases within the talk to convey their importance and help to add variety.
 - **Pause:** Pauses are powerful. They can be used for effect to highlight the preceding statement or to gain attention before an important message. Pauses

mean silence for a few seconds. Listeners interpret meaning during pauses so have the courage to stay silent for up to five seconds – dramatic pauses like this convey authority and confidence.

Eight Steps for Controlling Public Speaking Anxiety

1: **ADOPT RIGHT MINDSET: Re-frame a Pessimistic Attitude**

- **Understand how stress works.** Work to accept the need for some stress to perform optimally
- **Re-frame how you perceive the symptoms of stress** (nervousness, butterflies etc.): stress, and its symptoms, are needed for peak performance
- **Give up the belief that you have to be perfect.** None of us are
- **Remind yourself: when you speak in public, nothing ‘bad’ can happen**
- **Regulate any negative ‘self-talk’.** No more ‘What if I forget what I want to say?’. Instead ask yourself ‘What if they give me a standing ovation?’. seriously.

2: **CREATE CONTENT: Develop your Material.** Write your speech. Some people are able to deliver great presentations by ‘winging-it’, they improvise. A less stressful approach is to develop your content in advance. After you have spent enough time thinking about, developing, and practicing your presentation you will find you know the content of the presentation in-side and out. Some people manage to do an acceptable job just off the back of the preparation in writing the presentation, but we recommend developing a script, practice the script, and then throw it away. For most speeches you really only need two or three main ideas.

3: **PRACTICE: Rehearse and Gain Experience.** Practice is important. Some people will recommend not practicing as a way of limiting stress. If you can’t avoid giving the speech, don’t avoid the practice.

- Practice makes perfect. Presenting is a sport that needs training.

- Practice your speech delivery out loud, verbalize the complete presentation.
- Practice clarity, pace of speaking, engaging with audience, making eye-contact.
- Practice until you memorize your script, then use the script as a safety net.
- Confidence comes with experience. Public speaking experience will reduce the stress you feel the next time around.

4: **PREPARE: Attend to the details.** These small little techniques can play a huge role in controlling the build up of emotions in the lead-up to your speech.

- Set the right tone in advance by sending a thoughtfully written agenda
- Exercise
- Get some rest
- Eat lightly or not at all an hour before the presentation
- Avoid too much coffee, too many cigarettes or other mood-altering substances. While they can work, in the short term – regulating the dosage is impossible.
- Look your best, dress for success
- Prepare a ‘flight-check’ to ensure you have everything you need 1 hour before your speech

5: **RELAX: Stay Calm and Visualize Success.** To help your performance and to establish the right mindset, visualize delivering a successful presentation (the outcome you want). People who fear public speaking tend to fret, and spend their time visualizing the ‘worst-case’ outcomes and abysmal failures. Without realizing it, they adopt the exact opposite visualization approach needed for optimal performance!

- Quiet your mind
- Breathe
- Laugh

- Warm up your voice
- Visualize your optimal outcome (a successful presentation)

6: **HUMANIZE THE AUDIENCE: Remember your Audience's Flaws.** Your audience is human. They are not perfect. And they want you to succeed.

- Remind yourself that your audience has flaws just like you
- Assume your audience is friendly (they are)
- Assume your audience is there because they are interested in what you have to say (they are)
- Love your audience and assume they love you (they do)

7: **SET THE RIGHT TONE: Be Yourself Establish the right tone and mood for your speech.**

- Adopt the right disposition
- Have conviction
- Be yourself
- Do not perform, instead think of your presentation as a private, one-on-one conversation
- Smile

8: **UNWIND: Relax and Debrief.** Even very experienced public speakers and presenters can find themselves in a bit of a mental fog following their speech. It can be hard to concentrate or stay focused afterwards. Critically, what takes place after your presentation will have an important influence on the way you approach and deliver your next speech.

- Breathe deeply. This will help to reduce your heart rate.
- Minimize self-talk. You can mentally review your presentation later.

- Write down any comments, outstanding to-do's or feedback for review later.

Summary:

- Anxiety before a presentation or speech is normal. Everyone experiences it.
- This physiological response is an inheritance from our caveman ancestors. It is part of our lizard brain.
- A little stress is a good thing. It is necessary for peak performance.
- We can deal with speech anxiety via avoidance or stress management.
- When possible, convert 'public speaking' style presentations into a sit-down style presentation.
- We recommend eight steps before, during and after the speech to help manage stress.
- Smile.