

Public Speaking

What is Public Speaking?

Public speaking is presenting and communicating in front of a live audience. This could be to educate or entertain your listener. It is important to know your audience and tailor your message to them.

There are many types of public speaking, 4 common ones are:

1. Ceremonial Speaking
 - Speeches on special occasions (for example a graduation party)
 - Things to include:
 - Personal Touch – include a story to go with what you are talking about
 - Occasion Focused – there is no need to include anything unrelated
 - Brevity
2. Demonstrative Speaking
 - Explaining how to do something – this is common for people that work in a field where processes are involved, for example in technology
3. Informative Speaking
 - Transferring information from one person to a group, usually in a meeting
 - This is important because it:
 - Can facilitate conversation
 - Build credibility
 - Cultivate leadership skills
4. Persuasive Speaking
 - Convincing your audience of your opinion and usually uses emotion and strong language
 - Skills used in persuasive speaking:
 - Tone of voice
 - Body language
 - Craft your message
 - Adapt the message to your audience and what they want to hear

Some other types include: motivational speaking and debating.

The next important thing to consider are the 7 elements of public speaking. These are the speaker, message, audience, channel, feedback, noise and place.

1. The speaker is most important element of public speaking, and it is important they do not rely fully on visual aids. There are 3 factors to think about with any speaker: your passion when presenting, credibility and your style to communicate your ideas.
2. The message is what the speaker says, and also has 3 elements: content, style (how your message is presented) and structure (the organization of the message).
3. It is always important to adapt to your audience, and know your audience before you write and present your speech.
4. When presenting, the speaker may use various different channels to communicate. These may be nonverbal (gestures/posture etc.), visual (videos/photos etc.) and auditory (tone).

5. Feedback when the speaker gets a response for the audience and they must pay attention to these reactions respond to them during the presentation.
6. There are 2 types of noise for the speaker to know about, these are external (laughter, visual interference, poor ventilation etc.) and internal (when the speaker expresses an unclear message).
7. It is important to look at the place where the speech is delivered beforehand and to make sure it works with your presentation.

Why is it important?

Public speaking is one of the most important forms of communication, but why?

1. By improving your public speaking skills, you improve your persuasion skills and your ability to win over a crowd. These are skills that are important to have in a business setting.
2. You are also able to motivate your audience. Public speakers can motivate their audience to do something or change their behaviors. You will also gain their trust and in turn have an impact on them.
3. Finally, through public speaking you will also be able to inform your audience on different issues, you will be able to share your knowledge with them.

As it is important to be work on your public speaking skills, it comes with many benefits.

They include:

- Career advancement: Good public speaking skills can help with career advancement as they show creativity, leadership and critical thinking skills. It also helps you build credibility and help you stand out at work (like speaking more at work meetings and giving your ideas).
- Confidence boost: The more you present, the more confident you will get as you will overcome your fears of speaking in public.
- Critical thinking skills: Your critical thinking skills develop when writing the speech as it involves tailoring it to your different audiences and thinking about your speaking style.
- Personal development: It also helps with personal development as it requires you to think about effective communication while preparing your speech.
- Making new social connections: After presenting members of the audience may approach you to discuss and this is a great way to make new connections.
- Build leadership skills: If you are able to persuade through public speaking and speak your mind publicly, it will enable you to do it in different settings as well.
- Learn to argue: While writing your speech, you will be learning to present an argument to your audience effectively. This will further be improved if you do a question and answer with your audience, to help them understand your point of view.
- Helps you drive change: Through public speaking you would be able to reach more people at once, rather than speaking to everyone individually with the issues you are presenting. The more people you speak to, the more change you can implement.

Some other benefits may include personal satisfaction, learning performance skills, developing your vocabulary and becoming a better listener.

Preparation

So, how do you prepare for a public speaking? There are 7 steps to prepare a speech and they are:

1. Identify your purpose

It is important to set the goal for your speech and so the question to ask here is: why are you speaking? Are you doing it to entertain, motivate, persuade, inform or inspire? Once you know this, it will be easier to focus while creating the speech.

2. Know your audience

When creating your speech, know who you are talking to. Learn and analyze your audience and try place yourself in their shoes.

3. Add significance

Know why you are giving this speech and adding significance will help engage your audience. You will be able to do this if you know your audience as they will be able to identify with your ideas. When writing your speech ask yourself these three questions:

- Why am I giving this speech?
- What do I believe?
- Why should the audience care?

4. Define your message

Make sure you define your message clearly, and try to focus on picking one message. To do this use the 'Message House' model:

- Have an umbrella statement
- Then have 2 or 3 core messages to support the umbrella statement
- Finally, you need to provide evidence, proof points and support

5. Establish structure

It is always recommended to use an outline for your speech to make it easier for your audience to follow your message. One example outline is:

- Problem – solution – reasoning

Try out different outlines that work best for your argument then add some more storytelling to get your message across.

6. Prepare a strong opening and closing

People tend to remember the beginning and the end the most and so it is vital to have a strong opening and a strong closing of your speech. In addition, it is important to repeat your message once more in the closing.

7. Practice

Don't forget to practice your speech. When presenting, if you do not have your speech memorized use bullet points as a guide. Some other options may include recording yourself, practicing in a mirror or to a friend. But practice often!

Presentation

When presenting it is important to focus on the different channels (as mentioned earlier): the nonverbal, visual and auditory channels. When speaking consider the 4 P's for presentation: projection, pacing, pitch and pauses.

- Projection: Make sure you are loud enough so that everyone can hear you, but you don't need to shout
- Pacing: Don't speak too quickly, and slow down the speed of your speaking when you need to emphasize a specific point. Also avoid being monotonous if possible.

- Pitch: Changing the tone in your voice can affect the mood of the presentation.
- Pauses: Pause to place emphasis on certain points to let the audience think about them.

Use hand gestures where necessary and try use the whole stage (however, don't speed walk around it). Finally, when presenting don't forget to be yourself and relax.

Tips to improve:

What are some things you can do to improve your public speaking skills?

1. Study great public speakers
 - Watch other public speakers and learn from what they do, look at their body language and pace and see how you can work on yours
2. Relax your body language
 - Work on your posture and keep eye contact with your audience, this will improve with confidence but will help with engagement. Start with your hands by your side and use hand gestures during your presentation.
3. Practice voice and breath control
 - Nerves can often make you speak quicker than usual so try breath control to keep a steady pace.
4. Prepare talking points
 - Before your speech prepare a few talking points that include the key message, organize them in chronological order, start with what you want to discuss first. This will make sure you don't go off topic.
5. Know your audience
 - Again, make sure you know your audience and tailor your speech to them.
6. Add a visual aid
 - A visual aid may help get your point across and engage with your audience, but it should not be a distraction. Include graphs and images to show your point but not too much text (if necessary, add a few bullet points).
7. Practice
 - The best way to work on your public speaking skills is practice, you will get more comfortable saying it the more you practice. By constantly repeating it, you will find a better way of saying the same sentence.
8. Record your speech
 - Record yourself so that you can go back and watch it to see what you can work on in terms of body language, tone, pacing etc.
9. Practice with a friend
 - Present to a friend and ask for feedback and tell them what to focus on (anything you need to work on, such as pacing).
10. Take a class
 - A class may help a speaker to gain confidence and improve their critical skills.

Articles used:

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