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## Deliver a memorable speech

From time to time, you may be required to speak to audiences of various sizes to inform, inspire, persuade, affect decisions or stimulate action. Internally, you may find yourself speaking to a group of employees or colleagues; externally, you may address a community group, the press, or a service organisation.

Preparation is vital, but a poorly delivered speech can ruin weeks of careful groundwork. If you want to deliver an effective speech, consider the following key elements:

### 1. Control nervousness

Top speakers are never free of nervous tension before their presentations. Nerves are part of a good performance – accept them. Also, learn to ease the tension through the process of auto-suggestions – the technique of imagining yourself in the speaking situation before the event. Having actually felt the natural anxiety beforehand, you are well on the way to controlling the jitters on the occasion.

### 2. Display confidence from the start

When a speaker moves to the lectern, the audience will look, notice and listen. Start with energy and enthusiasm – smile, look pleased to be there, take your time, don't get flustered, make introduction comments without referring to your notes, and project your voice to the back of the room. Look relaxed, confident and in command.

### 3. Establish rapport with the audience immediately

Show that you're glad to be up-front, that you like the people in attendance and appreciate the opportunity to speak to them. Establish and maintain good eye-contact with as many people as possible. Be authentic and begin by complimenting those present – for their professionalism, or for their success in a project being undertaken, or for their attendance etc. Make the audience feel pleased that you are there.

### 4. Get your delivery right

Vitality, enthusiasm, style and tempo are all important ingredients. Consider these important points:

- Imagine you are talking to people you know well. Be conversational and try not to read your speech.
- Stand naturally and upright, project your voice to the last row, vary pitch and change tempo to keep your audience alert.
- Look at individuals in turn as you talk.
- Use a variety of gestures, but not to distraction.
- Be light of touch and good humoured. Use jokes only if they are relevant (and funny).
- Don't preach or pontificate to your audience. Show sincerity and conviction, belief in your message and enthusiasm in putting it across.



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- Signpost important points – pause before making a key point to highlight it, and again afterwards to allow it to sink in.
- Pace your delivery. Start in low gear and gradually build up in intensity.

## 5. Avoid the common traps

- Try not to read your talk or bury your head in your notes. Don't talk to the white board or your audiovisual aids – talk to faces.
- Never pace up and down, fidget or use other irritating mannerisms such as jingling keys or swaying.
- Never compete with distractions.
- Never compete with yourself. If you distribute an item to be looked at, stop talking until it has been examined by all.
- Never uncover your audiovisual aids until you need them. And put them away as soon as you've used them.
- Never "um" or "ah". A moment's silence is preferable.
- Never run overtime.

## 6. Drive home your key points

It is important that you don't lose your audience. Summarise the main points regularly to help your listeners organise their thoughts and capture the ideas you present. Repetition and restatement are vital for effective communication.

## 7. Keep a grip on your audience

Watch your listeners – be aware of how they are reacting to your speech. Are they getting your message, or are they yawning, doodling or reading? Watch for the nonverbal clues that provide valuable feedback. Adjust your style and modify your content or delivery accordingly. To keep your listeners attentive, use various strategies – questions, demonstrations and illustrations.

## 8. Finish conclusively

Make sure you stop while your listeners are still with you. It's good to let them know when the end is in sight. Recap the key points. To strengthen the ideas presented, give your audience something specific to do or to think about in the days that follow – further reading, practice, follow-up, observations or a challenge. Leave them with more than just a warm glow – leave them with a memorable idea or thought, or a dynamic closing sentence rehearsed until it is part of you. The last impression is the lasting impression.

## Further information

The following fact sheet provides further information on these issues:

- Prepare a speech