

Public Speaking Workshop

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Exercise 1: Introductions: Briefly introduce yourself, something interesting you'd like to share about yourself, and what you hope to get out of this class. Please keep this under 2 minutes.

Part 1: Before You Speak

Even before you actually speak in public, there are some things you want to keep in mind and do. These may seem obvious or basic, but they will help you prepare for speaking, order your thoughts, and help you to focus. If you've got these things already thought out and done beforehand, changes, disruptions, and other hiccups (microphone being weird, dropping your notes, switch of rooms, rain) will be less of an issue and allow you to continue to speak.

1. Decide on your purpose. Why are you speaking? Why is it important to you? What do you hope to accomplish?
2. Consider your audience. Who are you speaking to? Who else might be there? How might you have to tailor your words to accommodate the audience? (examples: giving a talk to elementary schoolchildren for a demo, announcing tournament winners in Court, speaking for a vigil).
3. Consider the mood of your audience. Know that you might have to adjust parts of your speaking if audiences are restless, hot, upset, hostile, sad, etc.
4. Consider your topic. Is it pertinent and appropriate to your venue and audience?
5. Consider the type of speaking you're doing: class, speech, acceptance, announcement, rousing oration, introduction, etc.
6. Consider where you are going to speak. Is there any equipment or props you will need to bring with (awards, a light, notes, props, etc). Be prepared.
7. Consider your time limits. Do you have a limit? What is it?
8. Are you giving a prepared statement, using notes, using an outline, or speaking off the cuff?
9. Once you know what kind of speaking you're doing, how long you have to speak, and how that speech is prepared, **practice** and **time yourself**. Just know how much you can say in X amount of time. And then plan to say less than that. Especially if there is a question/answer period.
10. Do you need special accommodations (a seat, wheelchair ramp, etc)? If necessary contact the venue/organizers beforehand.
11. Relax. Seriously. Make sure you're rested, especially if you're going to be speaking for a long time. Your body will thank you for it.

Exercise 2: Deep Breath: Take 10 deep breaths, letting your breath out slowly.

Part 2: Onsite

If possible, get onsite or where you will be speaking early. This will allow you to be familiar with where you are going to speak, room/area size, potential audience size, who is there, where you are supposed to stand, sit, etc. Orient yourself before you speak. If you have to get up or move to speak, get an idea how long that will take you. Basically, get the feel of the room/area. And once you have a sense of that, there are two things you want to check out:

1. Sightlines: where are you in relation to your audience? Will they all be in front of you? Some in front and some in back? Surrounding you? Can they see you? Can you see them? (For those with visual impairments, please orient and familiarize yourself with the space in the way that makes you most comfortable.)
2. Acoustics: Take some time to **hear** the room/area. How does the room sound? Does sound bounce? Echo? Get swallowed up? Does it sound better in one place than another? (For those with hearing impairments, please orient and familiarize yourself with the space in the way that makes you most comfortable.)

Exercise 3: Acoustics: Move about the room/area alternating between speaking and listening. Hear how you sound and others sound in different parts of the room/area.

Part 3: Speak Up!

You've got the prep out of the way, you're here and ready to speak. But before you do that, make sure you've **hydrated!** Your body and your listeners will thank you. Then take a few deep breaths.

1. Projection: Part of being heard is proper breathing. And proper breathing includes breathing from your diaphragm. Breathing from your diaphragm allows you to produce more sound without straining your voice or shouting. Note: an upright posture, if possible, helps with this. (**Exercise 4: Breathing from the diaphragm:** Put your hands on your stomach and belly laugh. (Ho!Ho!Ho! or evil laugh.) Then breathe while feeling those muscles move)
2. Speak slowly. We tend to go faster when we are nervous, and many people are nervous speaking in public. So we tend to speed up, especially when we have a short time limit to get in everything we have to say, and our brains think faster than we can talk. Remember that others need time to hear **and process** what you say. If you speak too fast, your voice can get muddled in the acoustics of the room/area, or be distorted if there is electronic amplification.

3. Enunciate. Do your best to pronounce words clearly and cleanly. This is especially important when you are speaking in a loud or echo-y place, are outside, using amplification, or wearing a mask. Speaking slowly will help you do this.
4. Lower your pitch. Along with speaking more quickly, people tend to speak in a higher, higher, higher pitch when they get nervous or excited. That's normal, but it can also make you sound like a cartoon mouse or chipmunk when you're trying to say something important. Slowing down and annunciating will help you do this.

Exercise 5A: The Basic 4: Practice the basics with short phrases “Just because we can't forget”, “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers”, “She sells seashells by the seashore”, “The red truck is driven by a duck”

5. Eye Contact: Look at your audience, or towards your audience, or towards the people in the audience the message is really for. This gives connection, and enhances your speaking and its impact.
6. Expression and Inflection: These help to give life to your words. They enhance your voice and give it tone, or flavor, if you will. This is especially important when reading a prepared statement, as the focus on the printed words can often lead to a monotone voice.

Exercise 5B: The Basic 6: Practice putting it all together with a longer paragraph. Feel free to use one of the prepared readings or use something of your own, pre-written or off the cuff. Read things changing your tone to convey different emotions. Repeat as necessary until you are comfortable.

Exercise 5C: Tools: Practice **5A** and **5B** but with a mask, amplification, etc.

Part 4: The Words You Use and How You Use Them

How you structure your speech is important. The words you use and how you put them together make a difference. “Tattered”, “well-worn”, “rundown”, and “many times lovingly patched” can mean nearly the same thing, but they convey worlds of difference in tone. “Windblown” and “a tangled mess” can describe the exact same hair. Your choice of vocabulary matters. It can change the whole tone of what you say.

How you put the words together matters as well. Repeated phrases can build momentum. Circling back to an earlier topic and/or phrase can bring closure. Leaping back and forth between topics can cause confusion. Moving in an orderly progression can inspire confidence.

Exercise 6A: Alternative Words (Optional): Given a word, think of other ways to say it.

Exercise 6B: Building, Building (Optional): Write a short paragraph structured to convey some emotion or purpose (See Topics List for ideas)

Part 5: Public Speaking As Performance (and why it matters)

Public speaking is very much a type of performance. It might be a couple of minutes, it might be a couple of hours, but one way or the other, it is a performance. It is the communication of your purpose and message to the audience. And it begins from the moment you stand up from your seat, or clear your throat, or straighten up. Once your name is called or your introduction has been started or it's your turn or time, **your public speaking begins from that moment before you even open your mouth or get to the podium.** Your public speech begins and ends with your body language. So make sure you've wiped your sweaty palms beforehand and taken your deep breath. Straighten yourself and proceed with confidence. Even if it's fake but convincing confidence.

The Body: Remember that a huge amount of communication is through body language. Be mindful of what your body is conveying. We communicate through

1. Eye contact. Are you looking down in shame? Staring someone down in challenge? Giving those puppy-dog eyes?
2. Facial expressions. Are you smiling? Frowning? Is your face disturbingly expressionless? Do your expressions match the tone of your voice?
3. Posture: Are you leaning forward? Slumped? Upright? Stiff? Pulling away?
4. Movement: Are you standing or sitting still? Are your feet swinging back and forth? Are you pacing? What are you conveying with your movement?
5. Gestures: What to do with those hands! Plenty of experienced public speakers have difficulty knowing what to do with their hands while speaking, sometimes creating comedy gold.

Body language can trip us all up, especially if we're trying to convey a point. One performance technique that can help is the concept of Big Movement, Little Movement. Big movements are great for really big venues where your audiences might be relatively far away. Those in the back and even the middle might not really be able to see you. It's appropriate to use bigger gestures or expressions or movements. The smaller the distance, the smaller the movements need to be, especially if you're on an e-meeting or TV. Also remember that bigger bolder, wider gestures can suggest confidence, openness, welcome, whereas closed in small gestures can suggest sneakiness, hiding things, shutting people out.

Exercise 7: Big Movement, Little Movement: Practice moving your body, your limbs, even your expressions in big and little ways. Watch each other and think on what their actions convey.

Emotion: Another aspect of performance is emotion. When public speaking, don't fake emotion. Just don't. People lose trust when you fake emotion. It almost never works. Seasoned actors often have difficulty with this, so really, avoid it. Let your genuine feelings express through your speaking. But keep your emotion in check. Breathe. Slow down. Pause if you have to. If you are speaking through overwhelming emotion, that message must be even more important than the message. Breathe. Squeeze your hands together. Focus. Slow down again. And have a support person / object / mental image to help you if needed.

Improvisation: A lot of people have difficulty with improvisation (improv for short), yet it is a wonderful tool to help with public speaking. Once you have the basics down, improv can be your best friend. If the microphone just died, your flashlight went out, the wind blew away your notes or speech, you need to change what you're going to say to cover something just brought up, or someone asked you a question you hadn't anticipated, improv is your best friend. Improv is that tool you can use to make a raft out of a sinking boat.

Now improv is a whole class in and of itself, but one of the most important lessons in improv is the concept of "Yes, and..." What that means, in brief, is you take whatever is happening and build on it. For example, if you're speaking and the microphone dies and you need to wait for it to be fixed or replaced, you can ask, "Can everyone hear me? Wow, I guess I really am loud!" Or, as another example, someone speaking just before you made a point and it ties into what you were planning to say. Use it! Add it in. "The last speaker said they really love flowers. And I do too! And so do butterflies and birds and honeybees! And that's why I really would like this garden to be built!"

"Yes, and..." is also a way of thinking that helps us quiet the inner censor, and also cope better with sudden, random weird stuff that can happen with grace and good humor and calm.

Exercise 8: Yes, and...: Q&A about a topic where you answer questions posed by the instructor where the answer must begin with "Yes, and..."

Part 6: Q&A

In the time remaining, please feel free to pose any questions you may have that haven't already been answered. Also we can go back and repeat exercises if wanted.

Topics List:

Pizza: thin crust vs deep dish

Dogs vs cats

Best season of the year

If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around—

Favorite color

Best type of martial activity

My favorite holiday

Favorite poetic form and why

The merits of skunks, raccoons, and/or weasels

How much wood would a woodchuck—

When I grow up.....

If I had all the money in the world....

No shit, there I was

Things that go bump in the night

Why I'm really here

What is the meaning of life?

I had this one dream—

What happened last summer?

My three wishes

Choose your own adventure

The winners are....

The merits of my best friend who is being elevated

(Or use your own topic)

Reading Passages:

“Then at last, to keep himself awake, he crawled from the hiding-place and looked out. The land seemed full of creaking and cracking and sly noises, but there was no sound of voice or foot. Far above the Ephel Duath in the West the night-sky was still dim and pale. There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.” – J.R.R. Tolkien, *Return of the King*

“Listen! We have gathered the glory in days of yore
of the Spear-Danes, kings among men:
how these warriors performed deeds of courage.
Often Scyld Scefing seized the mead-seats
from hordes of harmers, from how many people,
terrifying noble men, after he was found
so needy at the start. He wrangled his remedy after,
growing hale under the heavens, thriving honorably,
until all of them had to obey him,
those scattered about, across the whale-road,
must pay him tribute. That was a good king!” – *Beowulf*

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
if you pardon, we will mend:
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call;
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends - William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*