

# Best Practices in Public Speaking

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## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn some guidelines to follow for giving an effective speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Writing the Speech
2. Preparing Beforehand
3. Delivering the Speech
4. Thinking of the Audience

## 1. Writing the Speech

Good public speaking begins with the content of the speech itself. The first thing you should consider is the **topic**, or subject, of the speech. Choosing a topic that is relevant to your **audience's** interests will help you keep them engaged.

Once a topic is chosen, narrowing down the focus of the topic will allow you to cover more detailed information, and your audience should find the speech easier to follow as a result. When writing the speech, keep the purpose of your words in mind. Do you want to inform your audience of something, or do you want to persuade them to your side of an argument?

Creating a well-organized speech that introduces a topic, emphasizes a few main points, and leads to a conclusion that sums up a central thesis, will make your job easier when it comes time to speak.



## TERMS TO KNOW

### Topic

Subject; theme; a category or general area of interest.

### Audience

One or more people within hearing range of some message; for example, a group of people listening to a performance, speech etc.; the crowd attending a stage performance.

## 2. Preparing Beforehand

Sometimes the idea of speaking publicly can be overwhelming. Practicing your speech and mentally preparing yourself beforehand can lessen anxiety and build confidence for the moment you're in front of a crowd.

Rehearsing the speech out loud after writing it can assist you in nailing down good timing and refining your intonation. This will also help you memorize what you've written, thereby allowing you more freedom with your delivery.

If you feel anxious at the thought of public speaking, trying relaxation exercises such as deep breathing or even meditation may help you clear out negative thoughts.

Envisioning the speech going well can also lead you to a feeling of empowerment. Whatever strategy you choose, planning days or even weeks in advance will make the experience of public speaking more manageable.

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## 3. Delivering the Speech

Even if you're confident in the quality of your speech beforehand, the actual process of speaking in front of an audience provides many opportunities to enhance your message.

As the focus of attention, you have the ability to use both vocal and visual elements to your advantage. Effective vocal delivery involves changing elements such as pitch, volume, and speaking rate in order to emphasize parts of your speech that are integral to its theme.

In terms of visual elements, maintaining eye contact and keeping an open posture can help you build a relationship with the audience. On the other hand, inappropriate dress and unnecessary gestures can distract your audience.

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## 4. Thinking of the Audience

The audience is the target of your speech, and effectively communicating your theme to them is the goal of good public speaking. As such, you should always keep the audience in mind both before and during your time on stage.

Knowing details about your audience in advance, such as age, religion, and educational background, can help you tailor your message to make it more relevant to them.

While talking, pay attention to both verbal and non-verbal feedback of crowd members to determine if they are engaged or distracted. If you sense they are distracted, changing the pace of the speech with an inquiry or story can reengage them.



### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned some tips for giving an effective speech. **Construct a well-organized speech** with an engaging topic and a clear theme in order to hold your audience's attention. **Prepare beforehand** through rehearsal, and use techniques such as meditation to reduce anxiety. When

**delivering the speech**, keep in mind how your vocal delivery and visual appearance can enhance your message. **Consider the background of the audience** before the speech, and the reactions of the audience during the speech.

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