

Preparing to Present

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about how to properly prepare for your speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Prepare to Present
2. Reading Your Speech Word for Word
3. Memorizing Your Speech
4. Speaking Extemporaneously from Notes
5. Dealing with Nerves

1. Prepare to Present



You've written your speech— congratulations! Now it's time to work on just how you plan to present your speech and prepare it accordingly.

First, decide how you'll present your speech: Will you read your newly minted speech verbatim from script? Or will you memorize it? Or will you simply read off an outline or notes?

2. Reading Your Speech Word for Word

For your first speech, it might be helpful to have it completely typed up and ready for you to read **verbatim** in front of a crowd. You may feel more confident having your exact wording in place assembled right there in front of you.

Reading verbatim from a script has its drawbacks; you may be limited in how much eye contact you can engage in with your audience. As such, your audience may more quickly disconnect from your words and you

as speaker.

Additionally, speeches read straight from a script or manuscript often feel stodgy and stilted, which is a sure way to bore your audience and lose their attention fast.



TERM TO KNOW

Verbatim

A word-for-word report of a speech.

3. Memorizing Your Speech

You can memorize your speech in the same way that you might memorize lines or a monologue for a theatrical play. By freeing yourself from reading off a sheet or many sheets of paper, you lose some of the rigidity that comes with reading a speech off a script.

There's less for your hands to fumble with, allowing you to take a more open body position as you deliver your speech, making you more engaging with your audience.

However, one of the biggest disadvantages to memorizing a speech can be unexpected stage fright where you might clam up entirely, unable to remember your speech. It never hurts to have a copy of your speech on hand when you plan on memorizing your speech.

4. Speaking Extemporaneously from Notes

The middle ground between reading from script and memorizing your speech is to read from notes. or speak **extemporaneously**.

By preparing an outline or a few note cards with keys points in the order you plan to present them, you have the freedom to have open body posture with a safety net of reference.

Speaking from notes sometimes involves keeping your hands busy holding the notes and it does draw your eye contact periodically away from the audience. The tradeoff is worthwhile because it allows you to have an engaging stance combined with an outline of your speech.



TERM TO KNOW

Extemporaneous

A type of speech delivery which involves preparation of speaker notes prior to delivery, associated with conversational style of delivery.

5. Dealing with Nerves

It's completely normal to be nervous about giving your first speech in front of a large group of people. Even world leaders get butterflies in their stomach before addressing the world stage. To help combat your fears,

just remember: If you flub your speech it's probably not going to kill you, so why stress?

You can also ease your fears by taking the time to practice frequently. Read your speech out loud so you begin to develop muscle memory around your phrases and sentences.

You can even read your speech in front of trusted friends or colleagues. By practicing in front of a smaller group, you can take the edge off having to present in front of a larger group. Additionally, having your friends as the test audience will give them an opportunity to provide you with valuable feedback about what you're doing well and where you need to improve.

If you're not sure what you look like while speaking, practice in front of a mirror. Better yet, record yourself and play back the recording a few times to yourself. Watching yourself speak is another great way to help calm your nerves and break the tension while discovering subtle facial movements or body language that might actually hurt your speech.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned how to **prepare for your speech**. Determine how you will present your speech: will you **read it word-for-word**, **memorize it**, or **read from an outline of notes**? Reading verbatim has both its positives and negatives. On the plus side, you'll have your entire speech written out in front of you; however, these types of speeches tend to feel a bit stilted to audience members. Memorizing your speech can seem like a weighty task, but it allows you to retain all of your key points and wording while still appearing natural and effortless to your audience. It frees you from having to read right off of a manuscript. When speaking extemporaneously, you can have a rough outline of your notes. You might have this on a single sheet or perhaps across several notecards. In either case, these serve as reminders about your topic, your points and in what order they should be shared.

If you're nervous about presenting in front of a group of people for the first time, **work out your nerves** by asking a small group of friends or colleagues to be your test audience. Your test audience can give you immediate feedback on what you did well and how you could improve. Ever wonder what you look like while giving a speech? Practice in front of a mirror, or better yet: Record yourself. You'll be able to see if you have any unconscious gestures or habits that you can correct or prevent as you feel them happening.

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TERMS TO KNOW

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