

Before You Begin

1. Audience: Who is the audience? Size? Seated? Standing? What do you know about them? Consider the audience first and the message second.
2. Message: What is the message? What does that audience want/need to know? Are you persuading? Calling to action? Educating? You could organize the message around questions you are asked. Along with rhetorical questions, use statistics, visuals, surprise, contemporary information, and history. Build your case with stories and data, wisdom, poetry and irresistible logic.
3. Timing: How long are you speaking? Write a few minutes less material. Time it when you practice. Leave time for question and answer (if appropriate)

Writing A Draft

1. Listen to yourself: As you write your speech, speak it out loud, not in your head, not whispered, but audibly out loud. Say a few words or a few sentences and then type them up.
2. Powerful first line: Begin the talk with the essence of your message. Make the first sentence eloquent: vivid, forceful, fluent, graceful and persuasive. On your way to the podium, think about that first sentence.
3. Clarity: Make your message clear and succinct. Take out all extraneous words such as "like, so, and, I'm going to tell you about...."
4. Make the words come alive: Find a prop that will add to your message. Use a metaphor. Use effective words such as conviction, exhilarating, startling, uncanny, dollop, deliberate, daring. Create a file in which to collect intriguing words and poignant quotes.

Preparing To Speak

1. Equipment: Will you use a microphone or podium or Power Point? When at the podium, move the mike firmly towards you so your voice is heard clearly. Move it twice, firmly if the first guess was not right. Try it in advance if you can.

2. Modus: Will you read or memorize the speech? Write bullet points? Speak extemporaneously? If you are reading a paper or writing in bullet points: Use 18 – 24 font, bold, with lots of space on the page.

Mark places to pause where you will speak faster; slower, more loudly, more softly, and where you will breathe. Circle words to indicate where to slow down. Variety lends intrigue and even more attentive listening.

3. Rehearse: 5 times, to yourself, aloud, standing, to one person, to several.

Delivering Your Speech

1. Breathe: Just before you begin to speak, squeeze your body then release. Take some deep breaths. Breathe deeply through your nose, exhaling longer than inhaling. Try it. Two are good and 10 will make you very calm.

2. The Powerful Pause: When you arrive at the podium, or in front of the audience, pause and let yourself settle before speaking those first words. Let everyone in the room become attentive. Count 1, 1,000, 2, 1,000, 3 1,000 and then speak that first pithy sentence bringing into focus your intentions, your motivation, and the heart of your message.

Pause at the very beginning and whenever you say something worth considering. It gives the audience time to savor your message, and will make them listen more closely to what follows. It also gives you time to clear your mind for the next thought.

3. Think about what you are saying as you say it: This is huge, and it is subtle. Picture the place, the situation, the visuals and sounds and smells and physical nature of the words you are saying. Be present in that very moment, not just a little ahead or out in the audience with a critical eye. Think about the issue, what you are saying, not about how you sound or look.

4. Speak clearly to people: Speak directly to people (look at their forehead if you have to) but speak to a person, not to the room. Speak several sentences to one person, then one or two or several or a paragraph to the next person, or in another area of the room. Do not roll your eyes over the audience back and forth. Speak clearly. Use your lips and jaw to articulate. Separate the words. Hit the consonants, especially the one at the end of a word.

5. Share your voice: The person farthest from you should hear you easily. Use a microphone if you need to. Remember: when asked a question by a front row audience member, you must repeat the question in your own words and then answer it speaking to the questioner, but loudly enough to include the audience members in the back row.

6. Smile: Always smile somewhere during your speech. Life and most issues can be balanced between their challenging and their positive or at least ironic aspects.
7. Afterwards: Edit your speech, read evaluations, and ask the audience for their suggestions.