



7 INSTANT TIPS FOR CONFIDENT & COMPOSED PUBLIC SPEAKING

RAMBLING VS. ORGANIZED MESSAGE

Many speakers ramble. They go from subtopic to subtopic, from one slide to the next. It sounds like they are speaking from a long, blurry list with no overall point. This type of message will not stick with listeners.

1

Instead, organize the same ideas into a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction should minimally communicate your main idea and give a very brief preview of the points you will cover in the body. Your body should be structured around approximately three clear points. Your conclusion should reinforce your main point one last time. This takes only minutes, but makes you sound clear and composed.

CLUTTERED VS. SIMPLIFIED NOTES

2

Overly detailed or cluttered notes hurt your effectiveness in many ways. Detailed notes cause you to look down and essentially read your presentation. Audiences simply do not like it when speakers sound or look like they are reading a paper because it minimizes interaction.

Instead, simplify your notes to talking points with key words only. As you practice, rewrite the notes a few times until your points look like simple phrases. We call these “speaking notes.” Simplified notes help you develop a natural, conversational, and comfortable sound more quickly.

POOR VS. DIRECT EYE CONTACT

Listeners expect eye contact. Poor eye contact is common for beginning speakers. Many speakers look at their visual aids, their notes, over listeners' heads, or at the floor.

3

Instead, look right into each audience members' eyes for about 3 to 5 seconds at a time. Then, move to somebody else. That is long enough to connect with each person. Overall, you should make eye contact with an audience 99% of the time. Even if you don't feel confident on the inside, direct eye contact makes you instantly appear more confident.

COMPLEX VS SIMPLE SLIDES

4

Most speakers 1) use far too many slides, and 2) make their slides too complex and busy. They treat their slides as if they ARE the presentation. Speakers end up with their eyes and bodies turned to their slides while they read them. This cuts your connection with listeners. It's not surprising that "reading from slides" is common among audience complaints.

Instead, think of your slides simply as a visual aid for your audience. Visual aids should emphasize your message. Don't rely on your slides to be your speaking notes. Make them more visual with images. Simplify the text to a minimum. Avoid animations or complex slide transitions. Slides should be 1) clear, 2) simple, and 3) help you make your point. Also strive to use fewer slides overall. This allows you more freedom to interact confidently with your audience.

LOW VS. CONFIDENT VOLUME

5

Most presenters speak too softly. They are only loud enough to be heard in the front of a room. This has two negative results. 1) Many people will not likely hear you sufficiently. 2) You will not sound confident in your message.

Instead, boost your volume a few notches higher and sustain it. Aim your voice at the back of the room. It may feel strange to practice this way, but it helps everybody in the room hear you clearly. It instantly makes you sound more confident and enthusiastic about your message.

NERVOUS VS. PLANTED FEET

Many speakers shift their feet, sway back and forth, and cross and uncross their legs nervously. These behaviors can distract listeners and make you look unsure about your message.

6

Instead, plant your feet and stand in one place. Face your audience. Keep your head up, not down on your notes. Hold your shoulders back a little. Your body language will look much more confident by simply changing your posture. Walking a few steps occasionally is fine, but don't pace. Walk as you transition between points and plant your feet again while you explain your next point.

AWKWARD VS. PURPOSEFUL HANDS

Many speakers feel awkward about their hands when presenting. They put their hands in their pockets, behind their back, fidget nervously, and play with their notes. Public speaking can make our own hands seem like foreign objects.

7

Instead of crazy hands, give your hands something useful to do. Hold your speaking notes with a loose grip, like you are holding an egg. With this loose grip, use your hands to gesture naturally and freely. Gestures help emphasize your ideas and communicate your enthusiasm. Even small gestures about once per sentence make you look more engaging.



NEXT STEPS:

1. As you practice your next presentation, record yourself on your phone to see what needs the most work.
2. From the tips above, concentrate on improving just 2 to 3 of the above issues.
3. Each time you present, continue to emphasize your strengths and work on your areas of needed improvement.