



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA

**GREENSBORO**

The University Speaking Center

## Techniques for Managing Public Speaking Anxiety

- Movement helps breathing! Plan and practice your movement. The most logical times to move would be during the transitions of your speech.
- Wait. Don't begin until you are ready. Take a few minutes to look over your notes, say your first sentence to yourself, take a deep breath, and then begin!
- Practice concepts, not words. Never, never, never write out a talk word for word unless absolute accuracy must be maintained (legal situations). Otherwise, just make brief notes. A little spontaneity adds a tremendous amount of character to your talk. Written speeches are almost always boring, and when you read text, it is much more difficult to make a connection with your audience.
  - Memorizing a talk word for word can actually lead to more anxiety. If something out of the ordinary happens or if you ever lose your place, you will put an extreme amount of pressure on yourself to get back. A better way to memorize a talk is to narrow your talk down to just a few main ideas and commit those main ideas to memory. If during your presentation you have additional time, you can add more details to the main ideas, and if time runs short, you can rest assured that your main points were delivered.
- Exercise. Try walking before your speech. More strenuous exercise should take place much earlier in the day, not just before your speech. Stretch your muscles throughout your body. Try isometric exercise (Tense the muscle group, hold, release). Make a "Lion Face" and a "Mouse Face" to loosen up your facial muscles. Make fists, hold, release. Try shoulder rolls/lifts.
- Do deep breathing exercises. This is the old standby for any tense situation and professional speakers swear by its effectiveness. Take a deep breath, hold it for three or four seconds and exhale. Repeat four or five times. You'll feel remarkably more at ease.
- You might warm up your voice: "My mama makes me eat my M&M's."

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<http://www.performanceanxiety.com/topten.htm>

<http://www.leadersinstitute.com/resource/publicspeakingtips2.html>

[http://www.roch.edu/dept/spchcom/anxiety\\_handout.htm](http://www.roch.edu/dept/spchcom/anxiety_handout.htm)

[http://www.nsaspeaker.org/media\\_center/fear\\_of\\_speaking.shtml](http://www.nsaspeaker.org/media_center/fear_of_speaking.shtml)

- Drop your hands: Your hands and your gestures can add great impact to your delivery. When you are not using your hands, just drop them to your side. It will feel awkward at first, but dropping your hands to your side is the most natural gesture you can use. For instance, when you walk down the hallway at your office, do you cup your hands in front as you walk? Is it more natural to lock your hands behind you when you walk? Probably not. In most situations, it is natural to just let your hands drop to your side. When you do this it will allow you to make more purposeful gestures when you need to.
- Realize anxiety exists. What are your fears? Make a list of your fears. Now look to see what is realistic and what is not? Would the entire audience REALLY begin pointing, laughing, and mocking you? Probably not. Could you drop your cards; yes. What would you do? How about pick them up? See...you can plan how to respond to realistic fears.
- Have a "GIMMICK" for each part of your speech...role-plays, skits, poems, music, etc. This helps you to look forward to different areas of your speech.
- Mingle with the audience before the speech – If it's possible, try to meet people in the audience before you speak. A simple chat with a few people in the audience will increase your familiarity with them and improve your comfort level.
- If you are standing in behind a podium, gently push your fingernails into your palm, squeeze a paper clip, or press your foot onto one of the shelves in the podium to trick your brain. You should inflict minimal pain, enough that your brain focuses less on the nervousness and more on the pain felt.
- If maintaining eye contact with your audience's eyes makes you nervous, look at your audience member's ears instead. No one will know the difference.