

# How to Give a Good Speech

We all have a message to convey, a story to tell, and a truth to impart to others. To choose not to communicate, or specifically give a public speech, due to fear, discomfort, or lack of know-how keeps us in a comfort zone and cheats others out of hearing our life-giving truth that could radically impact their lives.

Whether it is an audience of 5 people or a stage in front of 5,000, embrace the opportunity when you are invited to speak. Use the following tips and guidelines to be prepared!

## PREPARE

Oftentimes those who invite you to speak may not even know to provide you with the information you need to prepare for a quality presentation. Do not hesitate to follow up with them for additional information after you have accepted the opportunity, *“Here are some questions that will help me prepare. Can you help me?”*

**AUDIENCE:** Do your best to understand the audience that you will be addressing. Who are they? What is the age? What is their profession? How can you best relate to them? Is there anything specific about this audience your host would like you to be aware of?

**FORMAT:** What is the time restraint and what is the format? Will there be a Question and Answer period? Are you part of a panel? Is this part of an all day summit?

**GOAL/PURPOSE:** Ask the Host to define for you, what is the ultimate goal of the presentation? What is it that they want the audience to garner from your talk? Perhaps you can leave them with a lesson to ponder or a specific call to action.

As the speaker, your ultimate goal is that the audience would be *moved*: moved to change, moved to grow, moved to improve or moved *to do something*. Public speakers have the opportunity to always inspire their audiences to *grow, be better, think differently, and to impact their world*. Those who are inviting you to speak may have a specific thing they need you to “drive home.”

**ENVIRONMENT:** Understand the event aesthetics or environment for where you will be speaking. Is the event in someone’s home, on the stage of a church, in a private board room, or in the great outdoors where a microphone will not be provided? Perhaps you are being asked to speak inside a school gymnasium with bad acoustics and sound travels? All of these elements will influence *how* you give your speech.

## DOING THE WORK

Give yourself plenty of time to prepare. Oftentimes setting up your presentation in an outline format will guide you so you stay on course.

A simple goal is to make no more than 2 or 3 poignant points in your presentation. An easy way to break your presentation down is to do it in three parts: Introduction (what will you speak about), Body (covering the 2-3 points) and Conclusion (summarizing what you have just discussed)>

Depending on your audience, different elements could be helpful in your presentation: if you are speaking to a group of Professionals, they may appreciate data to make your point. Students in high school will appreciate fast energy, fun stories, and the ability to relate the point you are making specifically to heroes and icons in their world.

Rehearse and review your presentation. Practice in front of a mirror. As you verbally talk it out, as though you were on stage, you will find points you want to add, or elements that take too long to articulate and are best saved for another day. Always work to have a speech that is shorter than the time allotment they gave you. Work to end on a positive and hope-filled note. Go above and beyond their expectations so that you get invited back for more.

### **DOING THE PRESENTATION**

As the guest speaker, the mindset you have will make all the difference in how people perceive you and how you will be received. If you go in looking nervous, sounding hesitant, and feeling fearful your audience will pick up on that and they too will be cautious about you and your presentation.

When you go in with a smile on your face, shoulders back, confidently shaking the hand of your event host, looking them in the eye, and appearing at ease, you will exude confidence and feel more confident.

As you are speaking, do your best to not just read from your notes. Make eye contact with the audience. Remember to breathe. Be creative with your delivery: smile as you talk. Employ pauses, convey emotions, change your tone and speed. Take your time.

Let your gaze sweep the room as you speak to all corners of the audience. Do not just default to one side of the platform as it will insinuate favoritism and that you have “forgotten” or don’t care about the people on “the other side of the room.”

Be energetic, intentional, and authentic. Let your audience know by your demeanor and your delivery that you care about your topic and they should as well.

### **ONE FINAL TIP**

One of the biggest elements is to be creative in the beginning (or introduction) of the presentation to catch the audience's attention. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Ask a question to them to get them to participate: *“How many of you ...”* and let them show by a raise of hands.
- Use a story: Start the presentation with *“I want to tell you a story ...”* and intrigue them with a story that ties into your theme and focus. After you do this introduction story, launch into your speech.
- Use props that get their attention and tie in with the points you are trying to make.

Talk in their lingo, at their level.

Give a call to action even if it is simple: *“This week, remember to call your grandparents to check in on them.”* Or *“I challenge you to read these books ...”* It does not have to be complex but if you

have inspired the audience they will be inspired to take something from you as they work to be better humans going forward.

## **CONCLUSION**

Being presented with the opportunity to speak to an audience is a great honor. When someone approaches you with the invitation they are saying to you, *“I see you, I trust you, I think you have something to say to my audience.”*

Giving good public speeches is a lifetime of learning. There is no one person perfect at giving public speeches and there is no one perfect speech.

Continue to learn with additional resources like Dale Carnegie’s [\*The Art of Public Speaking\*](#). And always welcome feedback and suggestions from those who care about you.

Never wait to give a speech until you are “perfect”. Even those who have been giving speeches for years know it is an art that must always be developed but it is a cause and action worth the effort due to the impact it can make on others.

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