

Additional Information

Try Not to Think About Your Hands and Facial Expressions.

Instead, concentrate on what you want to get across and let your nonverbal communication take care of itself. Conscious attention to gestures leads to inhibition and awkwardness.

Take It Slow and Easy.

People in an audience have a tremendous job of information processing to do. Slow down, pause, and guide the audience through your talk by delineating major and minor points carefully. Remember that your objective is to help the audience understand what you are saying, not to present your information in record time.

Speak the Way You Talk.

Speak as you do in casual conversation with someone you respect. Expecting perfection is unrealistic and only leads to tension. The audience is interested in your speech, not your speaking.

Ask for Advice and Criticism.

For most people, careful organization and a conversational style add up to a good speech. A few speakers, however, have idiosyncrasies that distract an audience. Solicit frank criticism from someone you trust, focusing on what might have prevented you from accomplishing your objectives.

For more information on building your leadership skills or getting involved in a leadership role on campus, please contact the Dean of Students office. The Student Leadership Institute provides opportunities such as public speaking, communications workshops and a University Leadership Conference. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Delivering
a
Speech

Dean of Students

Delivering a speech

Surveys show that what people fear most – more than snakes, heights, disease, financial problems or even death – is speaking before a group. About 85% of us feel uncomfortably anxious speaking in public and even professionals aren't immune.

There is no magic formula, but recent research that helps us better understand speech anxiety also suggest ways to control it. The most familiar aspect of speech anxiety are its physical symptoms – sweaty palms, dry mouth, increased heart rate, shortness of breath, butterflies in the stomach, etc. With all of this going on, it is no wonder that the experience is unpleasant – for some, so unpleasant that they avoid public speaking completely, whatever the cost.

More important is how people interrupt their symptoms. A few speakers, the confident ones, see their physical reaction as a positive sign that they emotionally ready for the speech. Most of us: however, interpret the feelings as fear. To justify the fear, we need something to be afraid of, so we begin to image what will happen if our speech is less than perfect; when, in fact, audiences usually ignore errors and awkwardness as long as they get something out of a speech. Performance-oriented speakers often assume that the

audience sees how nervous they are, a belief that can have a snowball effect. Researchers have found, however, that most people report noticing little or no anxiety in a speaker. Speakers must orient themselves away from performance and toward communication. It is natural and appropriate to feel some anxiety. A speaker's aim should be to keep this natural nervousness from cycling out of control, not to get rid of the butterflies but to make them fly in formation.

Language

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Communication

Decide on Your Specific Objectives First. Before you think about anything else, know one or two major points you want to communicate. Then plan the best way to get them across.

Put Yourself in your Audience's Place. Recognize how you and most of the audience differ in attitudes, interest, and familiarity with what you are talking about. Then speak to them on their terms, in their language.

Don't Memorize. Don't Read. Expect for a few carefully chosen gems – memorable phrases or examples you know will work well – be as spontaneous as possible. Don't rehearse to the point that you find yourself saying things exactly the same way each time. Use brief notes to keep yourself organized.

Speak to One Person at a Time. Looking at and talking to individuals in the audience helps keep you natural; it feels foolish orating at one person. Speak to that person as long as it is mutually comfortable, usually up to 15 seconds.