

Delivery Tips

There are **three** necessary conditions to an effective delivery: ample **preparation**, sufficient **time** for development, and multiple **practice** sessions with the completed set of polished speaker notes. Below are some specific techniques for improving the quality of your presentation.

Tips

1. Adopt an **extemporaneous style**: when your presentation sounds like a conversation rather than like you are “reading” from a printed page.
2. Work on **expressive voice, pacing and pause, and volume**. Also work on clear **articulation/enunciation** and **breathing**.
 - a. **Pace**: if you tend to speak fast, **s-l-o-w down**; vary your pace at strategic points, as for example at transitions . . . pick up the pace when you begin the next section; be conscious of your **pause patterns** (or the lack thereof). Write **pause patterns** into your speaker notes.
 - b. **Expressive voice**: voices are naturally “melodic” but stress or anxiety can cause us to speak in a “flat” voice which is not engaging to an audience; work on overcoming anxiety to the extent that your voice is expressive; practice **vocal variation**
 - c. **Volume**: We are housed in classrooms where it is difficult to hear, particularly in the back of the room. Work on “projection” of your voice. If a microphone is available, you may want to use it
 - d. **Articulation/Enunciation**: use your teeth, tongue, lips and alveolar ridge to give “crisp” and “clear” sound to your speech flow; practice your speaker notes at least one time doing exaggerated enunciation
 - e. **Pronunciation**: Be sure you pronounce all words correctly (especially technical vocabulary)
 - f. **Breathing**: Control your breathing; slow breath in and slow breath out can help control stress.
3. **Eye contact** with the audience. This is a **VERY IMPORTANT** part of your appeal to your audience. Conversational practices have taught us that people who really want to appeal to us tend to give us a direct gaze. Practice looking around the room while you speak. Try to look at everyone in the room, at least once. In order to do this you need to:
 - a. Practice your speech multiple times so you are VERY familiar with the speaker notes; and,
 - b. Work with a script that you’ve practiced with multiple times; mark important areas; hand write or type notes to yourself; use colored highlighters for emphasis
4. **Facial expressiveness** – audiences like speakers with expressive faces. That’s what most of us anticipate in conversations. Stress tends to cause some speakers to “freeze” both their face and their voice.

5. **Hand and arm gestures.** Again, human beings use hand/arm gestures in conversation. A speaker who is able to use gestures in a naturally-appearing manner is generally pleasing to an audience. Keep hands free for gesturing (not in your pants pockets).
6. **Posture.** Feet should be evenly spaced, proportionate with shoulders. Shoulders back, head up, head ready to pivot (for eye contact).
7. **Pause pattern:** your audience does not anticipate silence from you; therefore, a strategic pause is very attention-getting, particularly one that lasts more than 4-5 seconds
8. **Practice.** If possible, practice in the room where you will give your speech. Practice from a full set of notes. **Give your speech from the same set of notes with which you practiced.**
9. YOU CAN FEEL NERVOUS AND YET APPEAR COOL, CALM, AND COLLECTED. **Remember that.** Audiences do not know how you feel, so don't tell them.
10. Significantly, your presentation begins from the moment your name is called, or you leave your seat to move to the front of the room. Audiences form impressions of you based on the first few seconds of your behavior. No matter how nervous you feel, approach the front of the room with dignity and poise.
11. When you turn to face the audience, give yourself a few seconds to settle your notes and check your PowerPoint (if using any visual reinforcement). Smile. Open with an engaging statement or question.
12. When you conclude your speech, pause for a few seconds, look directly at the audience and either (a) thank them; (b) ask if there are any questions; or (c) smile and return to your seat.
13. Dress and groom yourself appropriate to the context/situation.
14. Excessive caffeine will make you jittery – beware.
15. Have some water handy, just in case your mouth becomes dry.

Some Common Problems with Delivery

- Avoiding eye contact with the audience.
- Rushing the pacing of the speech; rushing key moments, such as transitions, internal summaries and conclusions.
- Vocal uplift pattern: ending statements as though they were questions
- Speaking in a monotone
- Mispronouncing words
- Inadequate volume
- Breathiness (because of rise in heart rate)
- Dry mouth [have water handy]
- Shaking hands [anchor them to the podium]
- Memory lapses [have notes handy]
- Poor posture [don't lean on the podium or slouch]
- Distracting mannerisms: vocalized pauses, touching hair/face, playing with pen, shifting weight continuously from foot to foot, swaying, tapping on the podium, etc.

The **number one** cause of problems with delivery is lack of preparation; that said, a substantial speech with some delivery problems is preferable to a glib, superficial speech delivered very well.

Speech performance anxiety is:

- Normal (everyone experiences it to some extent)
- Manageable (can be channeled in productive ways)
- Likely to diminish with repeated experiences of speaking in public

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