

## **Key points to remember when speaking to the public**

Relax... Studies have shown that people fear speaking in public more than any other fear, including fears of sharks, snakes and death. Use these tips to become a better public speaker:

1. Prepare a key word outline. Don't read from a script. You'll put people to sleep. Your goal is to communicate a message in an engaging manner.
2. Know your audience. Research the group you are speaking to, find out what it wants to hear and how much time you have to deliver your message. Also, dress accordingly. You want to do your best to fit in, it will help the audience identify with you. And the better your audience identifies with you, the more credibility you will have.
3. Avoid using non-words such as "uh" and "umm." Also, avoid using verbal pauses "I guess, you know," and others. If you need to pause during your conversation, it is safe to do so. Nothing will lose your audience faster than these two mistakes.
4. Don't use jargon or language your audience will not understand. Explain ideas in simple terms that people can easily comprehend. It is best to communicate to express, not to impress.
5. Maintain eye contact effectively. Don't keep your head down at your key word outline, but don't stare at one person the entire time, either. People in the audience will be able to tell if you are ignoring them.
6. Use hand gestures. Using hand gestures to emphasize important points will help audiences remember the key points you are trying to get across. Former President Clinton was a master at this.
7. If the setting permits, walk around, but don't wander. If you are standing in front of a lectern, it is safe to come out from behind the barrier to emphasize key points. Also, as people are asking questions, approach them. Audiences will be more engaged to ask questions.
8. Smile. A welcoming smile will engage the members of your audience. Besides, research indicates that people who smile are perceived to be 10 percent brighter than people who don't.
9. Encourage people to ask questions. You may want to write three questions on note cards and plant them in the audience.
10. Practice, practice, practice. Practice in front of family and friends. Enroll in public speaking workshops if you are truly serious about becoming a more effective public speaker.

Remember that the key to public speaking is to earn and maintain trust from current and potential supporters.

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