

Present With Confidence

Everyone has some level of nerves when speaking in public. Don't mention it when you speak, it can make you focus on it. Take some deep, cleansing breaths.

Work on your voice, monotone presentations can be hard to listen to.

Use good eye contact. Not furtive sweeping looks, like you're looking for an escape! Work both sides of the room. Pick a person to connect with for an instant, maybe see a nod. Do this repeatedly in a relaxed way.

Use gestures in a controlled way. Be careful not to jam your hands in your pockets, rattle change/keys, etc. Use gestures naturally.

PRACTICE! Sometimes we feel embarrassed to practice a talk out loud. It doesn't have to be in front of your family or friends. Try it in a room by yourself, but say it out loud and go through the entire talk. If you'll be using a powerpoint, be sure to incorporate that into your practice talk so you can be comfortable with advancing slides and knowing what's coming. Typically, don't memorize. Just get a feel for how it flows and how long it is. It's not good to go long, or rush through the last bit because you didn't know how long your talk would take. People almost never care if you get done early.

It's ok to take a pause and not say anything. Our tendency is to use filler words such as "Um", or other noises. As a speaker these pauses seem longer than they do to an audience. Just take your breath and move on. Many people say um, or some other "filler words" a lot during a talk and don't even realize it. So if you can have someone pay attention to that for you, it can help you improve.

It's good to arrive early and check out the venue, if you have the opportunity. See it from the stage and also from the back of the room so you'll know what it will look like to someone in the back.

If you're using technology, i.e. computer, projector, etc. Test them out, especially if you'll be showing video and you need sound. Then think about how you'll handle it if something doesn't work. It's good to have a copy of the slides so you can reference them if you're not able to project them for the audience for some reason, or you may just want a sheet with bullets to refer to.

Many people like to move around when they speak, and that's fine as long as you don't pace too much. You may, however, be required to use a lectern. If so, work on feeling comfortable behind it. Garr Reynolds suggests you should get out from behind the lectern, if you are able, to better connect with the audience.

If there is a microphone available and the room is large enough, consider using it. Often, a speaker will say they don't need a mic, but it allows you to just speak at a normal volume and if you turn toward the screen the audience can still hear you.

Know your audience. Is it your employees, administrators, parents, etc.? Each group will warrant a different presentation, or variation, probably.

When using powerpoint, be careful to use fonts and colors that are readable. Check them on a screen, or at least in slideshow mode on your computer.

If you're able to develop a separate handout apart from your slides, it gives you more flexibility to not have to jam all your information into the slides. Besides, if your slides can stand alone, why are you there? See the slideshare links below.

The standard ending to presentations is often to ask if there are questions. Instead, try asking for questions before you conclude. That way you can end the talk on your terms, not some random question. And it can help with the awkward time when you keep asking for questions and when you finally accept there aren't any more, you end with a weak, "Ok, thanks, that concludes my talk."

There are many references out there, of course – here's a few

Confessions of a Public Speaker - Scott Berkun

The Power Presenter - Jerry Weissman

Presentation Zen and The Naked Presenter - Garr Reynolds

Toastmasters International - www.toastmasters.org – find a club near you

Toastmasters is a great place to practice and get great feedback to improve

An interesting slideshare on interesting, effective presentations:

http://www.slideshare.net/thewikiman/4-tips-for-power-point/14-BUT_MOST_IMPORTANTLY_IMAGES_HELP

Stop breaking the basic rules of presenting: <http://www.slideshare.net/thewikiman/stop-breaking-the-basic-rules-of-presenting>

Video resources

Scott Berkun http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhA04D_xfp8#t=234

Susan Cain http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts

Larry Smith <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKHTawgyKWQ&list=UU5TOYIqwnpJCM-mx7-gSA4Q>

M Marshall https://www.ted.com/talks/melissa_marshall_talk_nerdy_to_me?language=en

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