

Public Speaking Tips, Tricks, and Shortcuts

A. Research and review materials for the session. This is critical to success, yet the amount of time required is often significantly underestimated. Expect to spend at least four times the hours in preparation that the session will run.

B. List and outline the key points you want to emphasize. This will organize your information for delivery.

C. Reduce this list of key points to five or less, with no more than three supporting points for each major topic. By outlining in this manner, your information is given further organization and allows you to determine if you are attempting to communicate too much (or too little!) for the allotted time.

D. Prepare and know how to use your visual materials and audio-visual equipment. You should always use visual aids, as they are one of the most effective tools for teaching. The power of the visual is tremendous, as 83% of everything your audience receives in your communication is received visually.

1. Flip charts and posters. Most effective when used informally and in a small room with fewer than 30 people.

- a. Writing on flip charts and posters should be legible and clear and large enough to be read by those sitting in the back row. Black, block printing on white paper is easiest to read.
- b. Make sure the flip chart pages are in the sequence of the information you will be vocalizing during the presentation. In correct sequence, the use of the flip chart pages for “cues” in the progression of the presentation facilitates an easy, professional flow of communications.
- c. Make sure your charts and posters follow the KISS principle: Keep It Super Simple — simple in details and wording. Present only highlights in your posters and charts, not full sentences.
- d. Title or head each chart page in a different color for emphasis.
- e. You may find it convenient to “pencil in” notes of your presentation on the flipchart pages to “cue” you of what you want to say when referring to the chart and at a loss for words. These pencilled-in notes are written very lightly for only you to see — not the audience.

2. Blackboards. If used, blackboard writing should be done ahead of time, if possible. Always write as little as possible — and it is better not to do so at all to prevent the distraction of “screeching chalk.”

3. Slide projectors. If used, seating in a semi-circle provides the best audience viewing. Make sure your slides are in the proper sequence for your presentation.

4. Overhead projectors. Recommended more than slide projectors because room lights can remain on, the information is easily seen, and you can write on the transparencies during the presentation — yet remain facing the audience. Prepare your transparencies and have them clean and ready beforehand.

5. Films/video clips. Make sure they have been cued for play.

- a. Rehearse with your aids before actually using them “live.”
- b. Make sure the aid is a help — not a hindrance — to effective communications.
- c. Handouts should be quality products, worthy of distribution. Good typesetting...correct grammar, punctuation and spelling...clear copies — are essential. With well-designed handouts, your audience is not required to take extensive notes, because you have already prepared written “take home” material for them.

E. Using visual aids.

1. When using a visual aid, do not point to each written line. Point only for emphasis.
2. Do not talk to your visual aid: talk to your audience. Stand facing the audience. Do not turn your feet toward the chart, or you will be talking to it. Simply peek at the chart, or refer to it during your presentation. And remember to stand to the side of your charts, so that everyone can see the visual.
3. If you are going to use a pointer, do not pick it up before you are ready to use it, or your audience will race ahead of you and sit waiting for you to catch up. If you are right-handed, take the pointer and walk to the left of the chart.
4. Do not cross your arm over your body to point, or you will automatically turn your shoulder and head away from your audience. This will make it more difficult for them to see your face and follow your presentation.
5. When using the pointer, point directly. Do not wave the pointer around the general area.
6. If using a blackboard, write as little as possible. It is better to have the writing completed before your session begins.
7. Whatever aids or audio-visual equipment you use, do not show them until you are ready to use them in the proper sequence of your presentation.
8. Do not pass samples around the audience. Show the samples to the group as a whole, or show them after the presentation. This will prevent your audience's attention from being taken away from what you are saying - to what you are showing.
9. It is best to give handouts after your presentation — to avoid confusion and people trying to read when you want them to listen.
10. Keep talking when referring to your aid, and do not interrupt your talk when changing aids. The aid is simply an aid. Its purpose is simply to help and not hinder communication.

F. Prepare the location. Arrive early for setup so that you can prepare the physical arrangements and start on time. And do start on time!

NOTES: