

# speaker's notes

\* 3 key points for 'academic' or business presentation

## 20 public-speaking tips for clarity, connection and confidence

by paul evans

I've been speaking publicly for many years, and have learned a few things along the way. The following are some important points I try to keep in mind whenever I'm called upon to take the podium.

■ **No speech is ever perfect.**

Striving for perfection creates fear. Do your best — and leave it at that.

■ **Forget about what you forgot to say.** Trust that the audience heard what was needed.

■ **Use as few notes as possible.**

I like a single index card or Post-it note that has my major points written on it.

■ **Use props if, and only if, they clarify or support a specific point.**

■ **Don't tell jokes — tell stories.** In front of an audience, an anecdote about something foolish you did as a child is going to be funnier than any joke.

■ **Once in a while it's your job to offend.** In such cases, audience members get what they need, not what they want. And that's the way it goes sometimes.

■ **Don't sacrifice clarity for cuteness.** If you're amazed at the cleverness of your speech, chances are your audience won't be.

■ **Outlining your speech should never take more than an hour.** If you're working too hard. Jot down your points on a single piece of paper. Subtitle some illustrations. That practice. The truth is, speaking is much easier than most people make out to be.

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■ **It's said that you should put 10 hours of practice into a one-hour presentation. You can, but it's overkill.** Practice until you feel as though you have 80 percent of it down, and let the other 20 percent take care of itself. If you know your stuff, you may not need any practice at all.

■ **Make your point of view clear.** No rambling. No tangents. The audience should leave knowing your position, whether they agree with it or not.

■ **Be conversational.** Don't try to adopt a "professional" persona. Speak like you would to a friend over a cup of coffee. Be you.

■ **Leave your ego at the door.** It's not about you; it's about giving the audience something of value.

■ **Get to know the audience.** Meet and greet before and after. Get as close to the crowd as possible when speaking. Don't hide behind a lectern.

■ **You become what you think about.** Think scared, you'll be scared. Think passionate, you'll be passionate. Trace your feelings and you'll discover they came from thoughts.

■ **Fear is part of speaking.** Even the best speakers feel some butterflies before they go on. Fear is not unusual; it's normal. Don't let it surprise you — expect it, and let it energize you.

■ **You cannot get better if you do not speak regularly.** Join a club such as Toastmasters International to get experience and exposure. Many inexperienced speakers think they can get in front of an audience and be fabulous the first time. It doesn't happen. No one can play a musical instrument without practicing. The same is true with public speaking.

■ **If you can't summarize the intended result of your speech in one sentence, your intent isn't clear.** There should be no room for doubt.

■ **Don't take yourself too seriously.** Self-effacing humor works miracles. If you're not willing to look dumb, then you're not too smart.

■ **Don't compare yourself with famous speakers.** Your best for this moment is the best you can be. Afterward, you can commit to growing, learning and improving.

■ **Words will never become ineffective.** We live in a world of advanced technology and pervasive multimedia, but *nothing* will ever replace an individual with a bold message, the passion to share it, and an audience that wants to listen. □