

**Speak UP!**  
**Beginner's Guide to Public Speaking**

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## **Tips to Overcome Your Fear of Public Speaking**

Most people have some fear associated with public speaking. Some people say they fear it more than death and spiders! A well-prepared speaker can overcome their fears and learn to enjoy the experience of presenting a speech in public.

Here are some tips to help you with your fears:

1. Make sure you have practiced your speech a number of times. Knowing what you are going to say can help alleviate some of the nerves. You may wish to practice in front of the mirror or in front of family and friends to help with your anxiety. This will make you feel more confident with your material.
2. Prepare palm cards with the main points of your speech written on them. These will help you remember what you are going to say and keep you focused.
3. Being nervous before giving a speech is natural. It gets the adrenalin pumping and is nature's way of preparing you for your speech. It is a normal phenomenon for most public speakers. Harness that fear and use it to your advantage.
4. Warm up before you speak. Your vocal chords need to be moving freely when you start your speech. A good technique is 'mooring'. It not only warms the vocal chords but relaxes you as well. (You may wish to do this in a private place otherwise people may think you are a bit odd!)
5. Deep breathing will also help calm your nerves. Inhale through your nose and then slowly release the breath through your mouth. Think about your breathing as a pressure valve and you are releasing it as you exhale, expending all those nerves.

6. Try not to show your fear to the audience. They want you to do well. If they know you are nervous that will make them become apprehensive and worry about how you will perform.

7. Some people develop a 'on stage' persona – one that is perhaps more outgoing and vibrant than their real one. This can help with fear, as you will be stepping into a different character so you feel that it's not you up there fearing failure, but a different person.

8. Open your speech with an 'icebreaker'. This can be an interesting anecdote or a funny quote. This will get your audience laughing or relaxed. It will help you relax too if their response is a positive one.

Above all, have confidence in yourself. Try and enjoy the experience and what you have to say to your audience. If you appear relaxed and confident with the information you are imparting, the audience will enjoy your speech and you'll be surprised by how good you feel during your speech and even more so, once it's over.

## **What is the Objective of Your Speech?**

The objective or purpose of your speech could be many things. You may have to give a speech in class on a theme that everyone is presenting on. You may be running for President and want to persuade people to vote for you. Perhaps you have been asked by the local Rotary club to give a speech on your experiences overseas.

Anything is possible. But knowing your objective is a little different from the topic of your speech. Is the objective to entertain people as the after dinner speaker at a sports function? If so the topic may be your choice. If you are presenting a speech as part of an assessment, you may have no choice in the topic, but your objective here is to get a passing grade. Here are some things to keep in mind when contemplating the objective of your speech:

1. If your objective is to inform the audience you will need to give a well-researched speech. If you are familiar with the subject it will be easier to write. Know your key points and back them up with facts. In this type of speech you are there to impart information and educate your audience.
2. If your objective is to persuade the audience, such as a speech before a vote takes place, then you will need to present to your audience reasons why you are the best person for the position. Being persuasive in a speech not only depends on your words, but also on your personality and how you present yourself.
3. If your objective is to integrate the members of the audience then you will need to be a persuader and also a facilitator. In this type of speech it will not only be about the information you present, but how you deliver it. Your 'stage presence' will need to be credible so as your audience will do as you ask.
4. If your objective is to entertain your audience then more than likely you will fill your speech with anecdotal stories and humor. You would hope that any speech you

give is entertaining, but for certain types of speeches that is the main objective. If you are being paid as a speaker at a function, entertainment is definitely the main objective.

So your objective is what you want to accomplish from the speech. Write this down before you begin to prepare your speech. This will help get you in the right frame of mind for writing your talk.

## How to Select a Topic for Your Speech

In some instances you may not have a choice as to what your speech is about. You will be given the topic and the length of presentation and a certain amount of time to prepare it, such as a speech for a class presentation. However, in most other speaking engagements you may be given a basic theme for the speech, but the actual topic is for you to decide. For example if you are presenting at a conference on hearing loss you may decide to give a speech on new developments in hearing aids, which could be your area of specialty. Being able to give a speech on a topic you know well and are comfortable with is the most preferable scenario. Here are some tips for selecting the topic of your speech:

1. Firstly select a topic that fits the parameters of the speech. How long is your speech to be? What will the audience expect? What are your objectives for the speech? There is no point giving a talk on doll making at a sports function and if you only have to give a five-minute speech and you want to discuss the theory of relativity then perhaps you will need to re-think your topic.
2. Talk about what you know. If possible present a speech on a topic you are well versed in and are comfortable speaking about. These are the best speeches to give in many aspects. You will feel relaxed speaking about a topic you are knowledgeable in and your preparation will be easier than if you had to research a subject you know nothing about.
3. So you are going to write your speech on something you know – is it also something you are passionate about? Or something you are very interested in? It is much easier to write a speech on a topic that is interesting to you than one you may know a lot about but isn't of any interest to you.
4. And how about your audience – what topics will interest them? As in Tip 1, if you want to talk about your excellent rose garden but you have been asked to speak as

Best Man at a wedding reception, you may need to readdress your topic. Is there some way you can interpret your passion for roses into a theme that will get their attention? Perhaps your roses were an inspiration for the groom to ask out the bride.

Learn to think laterally when choosing a topic that will be of interest to you and your audience.

## **Tips for Collecting Information for your Speech**

Information for your speech can come from many places. Be prepared to look around and research to come up with effective points for your presentation.

1. Stick to a couple of primary points for your speech and gather information on these. If you have too many ideas in your speech your audience may not follow the main reason of the speech. Remember your objective and your topic and gather information directly relating to these.

2. Facts, facts and more facts. Relevant, interesting facts will sell your speech. Think about the type of audience you are talking to and select facts appropriate for them. If you are presenting a speech on fund raising money for new school facilities and you will be presenting to the PTA, make sure your facts are about schools in your area, for example how other schools have raised money or how much support you could expect from local businesses. There's no point discussing how much money a school in Indonesia raised for new books; it won't be relevant for your audience.

3. What information do you already have? If it is a topic you are familiar with and passionate about, first write down points you already know. Have you written a paper on this subject? Have you presented on it before? Don't re-invent the wheel, but ensure your facts are up-to-date.

4. Visit the library and go to the reference section. Talk to the librarian and make sure you are looking in the right place for the information you need. Read as much about your subject as you can.

5. Gather information from the Internet. There are many search engines that can give you appropriate websites to gather information from.

6. Find interesting and relevant quotes for your speech. These can add impact and credibility to your topic if they come from well-known sources.
  
7. Can you present anecdotal evidence in your speech? Whether these are funny or serious, telling 'true' stories about your topic will add interest to your speech.
  
8. Interview other people who know about your topic and see what information they may have for you. Write everything down, don't try and recall it later. You want to have your facts straight.
  
9. Brainstorm and note down all your ideas. How can you implement your knowledge of fishing hooks into a topic on fast food? Are the statistics on water pollution relevant to your speech on town planning? Write everything down and investigate each idea to see if it can be used in your speech.

## How to Create a Speech Outline

Creating a speech outline enables you to formalize your thoughts in order so you can construct your speech effectively. The actual writing for the speech comes last. If you prepare a speech outline, your speech writing will be far easier. An outline will not only organize your ideas but help you link your points. It will give your speech focus.

There are many different ways an outline can be written and you should do whatever works best for you but here are some points to keep in mind when creating your speech outline:

1. Divide your outline in to four sections – Topic, Introduction, Body and Conclusion.
2. Under Topic you need to note the topic of your speech, your objectives for the presentation, the type of audience you are presenting to and the main points you wish to cover. Setting out the information like this under Topic will help you analyze what your speech is really going to be about and how you would like to pitch it. Now you can move into the actual speech itself.
3. The Introduction section will look at setting up your speech. You may like to start with an ice breaker so note down how you will do this (with humor, anecdote, quote, etc) This ice breaker will in some way be related to the topic of the speech and it is here that you note the topic/ purpose of your speech, for example, “Discuss the relevance of homework in today’s education system.” Next you will need to present why you are giving the speech – what makes you able to speak knowledgeably on the topic. “Jim asked me to be his Best Man because we’ve know each other since our first day at school.” Following this, you should note the main points you will be discussing and why you will be using these points in your speech. Now you are ready to move on to the body of your speech.

4. In the Body section you will look at your main points further. You will need to move from the introduction with a transition sentence so note this down in your outline. Now write down all your main points and number them in priority. Try to have between three to five points. Keep in mind how much time you have for your speech and delete those that aren't vital. List all the supporting arguments for each point. Decide the order in which you are going to present your points. Begin with the most important then go to the least and work back up to the main point and re-emphasize this.

5. The Conclusion will be reached with another transition sentence. In this part of the speech you will be re-summarizing the main points and emphasizing the most important ones. You will also need to finish with a sentence that leaves a lasting impression on your audience. You can think of this as a 'take-away line' that attendees will use when discussing the merits of your presentation.

Now that your outline is in place you can begin to write your speech.

## **How to Create the Opening of Your Speech**

The opening of your speech is exceptionally important. Not only do you have to relay the topic of your presentation but also you only have approximately thirty seconds in which to get the audience's attention and make them think, "This guy is going to be interesting".

There are certain components that need to be addressed in the opening of your speech. As well as including these components you need to connect with the audience and build a rapport with them. Present a good opening and you will have the audience hanging on every word. Deliver a dud and they'll be asleep before you get to the main message.

1. Greeting – This works as an attention getter as well. Think about how you can get a reaction from the audience right from the start. You could deliver a famous quote that is relevant to your speech. You could relate an amazing statistic, (again a relevant one) or you could tell a funny story. You may ask a provocative or even rhetorical question. Alternatively you could thank your hosts for inviting you to speak or pay the audience a compliment. There are many ways to greet your audience. Some performers start with a joke but unless you are great at delivering gags, stay clear of this greeting.

2. Thesis Statement – The main purpose of your speech comes under this heading. If you are presenting a speech on writing for children, this is where you state it. Your thesis statement is one sentence outlining the purpose and topic of your speech. For example: "Writing for children is a rewarding yet frustrating career choice." Make it very clear what the remainder of your speech will be on in the thesis statement.

3. Establish Credibility – Why are you an authority to speak on this topic? What makes you the expert? In this part of the opening you will explain why you are an authority on the subject. Are you a children's author or do you lecture on children's

literature at a university? State your credentials so you are a believable speaker in your area of expertise.

4. Overview – Here you will outline the main points of discussion in your speech. Three to five main points are a good number and most speakers try and stick to only three. Let the audience know what these points will be.

5. Answer – You will aim to answer one specific question in your speech – why this presentation will be useful to the members of the audience. Answer this question in your opening with a statement like this: “You are here today because you want to write for children. I’m going to tell you about the ups and downs of this career path. My speech may help you decide if this is the job for you.”

If you follow these steps, you will have created an attention-getting and interesting opening for your speech.

## **How to Organize the Body of Your Speech**

Most presenters write the body of their speech first. This enables you to get the ‘nuts and bolts’ down of what it is you want to say. The body of your speech will take on what you said in the opening and build on it. There are some components that you will need to include in the main body of your speech:

\* Transitions or segues. These sentences or change in what you are doing signal to the audience that you are moving into a different section of your speech. You need to begin the main body of your speech with a transition from the opening. If you are talking about writing for children your transition from opening to main body might be a simple sentence like “I first thought I should write for children when I realized the books I was reading to my children were rubbish”. This will signal to the audience that you are moving in to the central part of your speech. Transitions need to be another form of ‘attention getters’ for the audience. If you are losing the audience’s interest, your transitions should gain their attention again. Some are funny, some might involve audience participation (“if you turn to the second page of the handout”) or you, the speaker, may move about the stage to your flip chart or other visual aid. Transitions keep your audience’s attention right where it should be – on you.

\* Once you have a few segues or transitions you need to look at the main points you wish to discuss in your speech. Write them all down then list them from most important to least important. Whittle down the number to approximately three. Your first point should be the most important. The least important point next, then build back up to the most important point. These statements will have all been outlined in your opening so there should be no surprises here for the audience. If you said you were going to talk about the difficulties of getting an agent and you completely miss this point, members of your audience won't be happy. If possible, present both sides of the picture to the audience, the positive and negative of each statement. Use your own personal experiences to demonstrate at least one of your points. Human interest is important when presenting a speech. If you are using visual aids they can help

explain some points. Write two or three paragraphs on each point, noting what visual aids may assist in the explanation.

Once you have prepared the body of your speech, you will need another transition to move into the conclusion. Some speakers will recap the main points. How you finish the body of your speech is up to you, just ensure you have covered what you said you would in your opening.

## How to Properly Close Your Speech

Closing your speech properly will leave your audience with a lasting (positive) impression of your presentation. When organizing your conclusion you will need to have a transition into the closing part and recap the main points of your speech. Think about the most important statements you made in your speech and summarize these for the audience. And finally, you will need to come up with a closing sentence that will stay in the audience's mind once you are long gone. This sentence will be the one they repeat when asked to sum up the speech for someone who missed it. The closer emphasizes the main purpose of your speech.

Here are some tips to remember when closing your speech:

- Carefully consider your conclusion and make it memorable and, if the subject is appropriate, end on a humorous note. If your speech is for entertainment purposes, ending on a laugh is a must.
- Your closing should constitute about 5 – 10% of your speech time.
- Before you begin your close you may wish to pause for effect (another type of transition).
- Recap the main points and don't introduce any new points. The ending is often the most important part of the speech as it is what the audience will most likely remember. Build up to a climax, making sure it relates to the most relevant point in your speech.
- Refer back to your opening and the main thesis statement. Outline briefly how you have come 'full circle' by addressing the thesis.
- Don't drag out the conclusion because people will know you are wrapping up so they will be anxious for you to finish.
- Don't apologize for anything and finish with strengths not weaknesses.
- If you have time for questions, make that clear. Give only a specific amount of time for questions and leave when that is over. Once you have left the lectern, stop speaking.

- Make sure you speak for the full length of time provided and don't go over.
- Say your closing remarks once only. Make sure your body language and facial expressions are all indicating a close. Once you have finished, don't hang around or look uncertain or you might run the risk of repeating yourself. Finish up and leave the stage.

By the time you have reached your conclusion, you should be feeling relaxed and pleased that your speech is coming to an end. The adrenalin may be pumping and this should gear you up to finish on a high note. Enjoy it and revel in the audience's applause.

## How to Practice your Public Speech

Once you have written your speech, from outline to full presentation, you must now face the task of rehearsal. The only way to appear familiar with your material is to have practiced it many times beforehand. No one expects you to memorize your speech so you know it word perfect, but you need to be comfortable with your topic of presentation so you look and sound like a creditable speaker. Try practicing your speech in the following ways:

- Read your speech out loud. Hopefully your speech has been written in a conversational tone, no matter what the subject. It should read, as you would speak on a day-to-day basis. If this is how it is written you will feel much more comfortable with the material. By reading your speech out loud, you can hear how the words sound together. Do they flow? Do they make sense?
- Tape your speech once you have read it aloud and are starting to feel comfortable with it. Listen to the pitch and intonation of your voice. Is it appropriate for the subject matter? Do you vary it to add interest for the audience? Are you projecting your voice well? Be critical when you listen back to your taped performance and see where you can improve.
- Rehearse in front of the mirror and use body language and gestures to help convey your message. Are you comfortable moving around giving your talk? Do your gestures punctuate important points or do you just look like a crazy windmill? Watch your facial expressions and see that they are in sync with your message.
- Once you have practiced for a while and are feeling comfortable with your material, it's now time to rehearse in front of your family and friends. Ask them for feedback on your performance and delivery. You don't want to hear "yeah, that was great". You want constructive criticism about content, presentation and voice control. You want to know if you come across in a conversational way or a not. If your practice audience says you sound like a pompous fool take what they say on board and improve where you can!

- If part of your speech will involve a question and answer section, practice this as well. Note down questions you think you will be asked (especially difficult ones) and think about how you might answer them. Being prepared for this section of your speech will add to your credibility.

If you have had sufficient practice then your audience will be impressed by your presentation. You want them to remember you and your message and perhaps even take action because of what you said. A well-prepared and well-rehearsed speech will enhance your chances of achieving these goals.

## **Tips for Remembering Your Speech**

There are many ways you can enhance your ability to remember your speech. Don't be fooled into thinking you need to recall it word for word – this isn't advised.

However, there are some things you can do to make your speech easy to present and not have to completely rely on notes.

1. Mindmapping is a brainstorming session you might do when you are creating your speech outline. Mindmapping uses the right side of the brain, which has strong links to your memory. This process involves writing the topic of your speech in the middle of a piece of paper and then brainstorming as many ideas as you can. Each idea is to be written on the paper and then connected to the main thesis by a line. This 'mind map' of your speech topic will stay in your memory and make it easier to recall your speech when you are presenting it.

2. Once your speech is written, practice it – out loud! The more you rehearse your speech as if you were really giving it, the more likely you are to remember it. You could even tape your presentation and listen to it – this will help you recall it when necessary. Include your body language and gestures in your rehearsal. Movement will prompt your memory banks.

3. Use cue cards, (also known as palm cards or note cards). This simple, but effective tool, will keep you on track. Have your main points written on each card, not your whole speech. Write down your quotes and reminders when it is time to tell a story. If you lose your place it will be easy to pick up your thread of discussion if you have prepared cue cards.

4. Before you begin, have a quiet moment for meditation or relaxation. Breathe deeply and calm yourself. Exercise can also stimulate your memory. If you can afford a brisk walk before your presentation (without making yourself perspire too much!), this will also stimulate your mind to recall your presentation.

5. If you are using visual aids such as slides or overheads during your speech, these can work as reminders. They can also be effective in getting the audience to focus on something other than you if you have fumbled or lost your place. Use bullet points not paragraphs of text in your slides. Using pictures and visually enhanced words on the slide can also prompt your memory.

6. When it is time to use examples your story telling should prompt your memory. If the story actually happened to you, you should remember it vividly. This anecdote will help you keep on track. Using humor in your stories will also help you remember them.

If you do happen to make a mistake or lose your place, don't worry. Recover as gracefully as you can and move on. Take a deep breath and find your place. You may have even prepared for this eventuality and have an activity for your audience while you find your place and begin again.

## Why Presentation is Important

How you present yourself for your speech will leave a lasting (or forgettable) impression. Apart from ensuring your speech is relevant and stirring, your visual aids are working and up-to-date and you have practiced your delivery, you need to think about your appearance. Here are some points to keep in mind for a top-drawer presentation:

- You have practiced your presentation so it is familiar and you are comfortable with how you deliver it.
- You are passionate about the speech topic so you can present with energy. Your audience will feel your passion and be moved into action.
- You have researched your audience and you can relate your material to their circumstances.
- Your facts are backed up with relevant statistics and anecdotes. You have checked that all visual aids are in order and working.
- When you step on stage to present your speech you are prepared to give a performance. You want to be remembered as a powerful speaker, so each time you will 'perform' to the audience.
- Your voice intonation is interesting. You vary the pitch and loudness of your delivery. This will again enhance the presentation and help the audience to stay with you.
- Making eye contact with your audience will personalize your presentation. They will feel that you are personally talking to them.
- Smile! Use your facial expression to deliver your speech, but above all remember to smile in appropriate places. This makes you more personable and smiles are infectious.
- Think carefully about the clothes you wear. No matter what the occasion you are speaking at, over dressing is far better than under dressing. A suit gives you credibility. Make sure your hair is neat and your suit is clean and pressed. If you show up to the venue and feel over dressed can you remove your jacket to feel more

comfortable? Assess the situation, but always maintain your image as a credible speaker.

- Try not to appear too nervous. This is difficult if your hands are shaky and your voice quavering. Do some deep breathing and relaxation exercises before you take the stage. Voice exercise such as ‘mooring’ not only warm up the vocal chords but relax you.
- Think about how you stand and move around the stage. Don’t slouch, but don’t be too stiff. You want your audience to relax and not be intimidated by you, but you also want them to respect you. Practice your stage stance before you present your speech.

How you present yourself will go a long way to selling your message. Not only will the audience remember your message, they will remember you. Presentation of self and material are equally important – make sure you have covered them both.

## How to Relate to Your Audience

You are giving a speech to a group who has come along to listen to you. How can you make your speech more relevant to them? How can you make an impact on their lives by ensuring you speak to them on a level that is pertinent to their wants and needs? It's not as difficult as it sounds, you just need to do a bit of research before hand and target your speech accordingly. Also you need to be prepared to interact with your audience and build a rapport with them.

1. Find out what you can about the audience before your presentation. Asking the organizers to give you some demographics of the people attending can do this. For example, if it is a business presentation some of the things you may want to know include: type of business, how many people are attending, organizations they come from, male to female ratio, how long have they been in the business, and so on. If you are presenting a speech as an after-dinner speaker you will want to know what the dinner is in aid of. If it is a sports dinner you will need to focus your presentation on your sporting life. If you find out about your audience before your write your speech you can target your talk appropriately and let the audience know what benefits they will get from listening to you.

2. If you are speaking as an expert in a particular field, your audience will be there because they have an interest in that field. You can relate to your audience in this speaking situation by offering them a solution to problems they may be facing. You may even ask the organizers what the participants hope to gain from your presentation. With this type of specifics you can really present relevant information to your audience.

3. Relate your speech with examples and stories that are relevant to the audience. If you are speaking at a quilting conference, relate stories of your quilting successes (and failures) so you will appear more in touch with your audience.

4. Use conversational style speech for all presentations. To effectively relate to your audience, you must not put yourself 'above' them.

5. Interact with your audience, whether it is during or after your presentation.

Workshops and seminar presentations can be sprinkled with audience participant activities. Speeches where you are calling your audience to action can use activities, even if it is only vocal responses to passion-driven questions.

If your audience feels a part of what you are doing, they are more likely to relate to you and take home your message.

## **How to Use Body Language to Enhance Your Speech**

Are you aware that your body language has a large impact on your speech presentation? Just what is body language and how does it contribute to our communication? Often referred to as ‘non-verbal communication’ body language is how we use our body to convey a message, without speech. Most of our body language is unconscious and approximately 55% of the message we convey is through body language. A very powerful tool indeed and one you should be aware of when public speaking. Learning to use your body language effectively will enhance your speech delivery.

Body language can be broken down into three categories:

1. Gestures. These are our arm and hand movements which will help you tell a story effectively or drive home a main point. When delivering a speech, your gestures should be directly in proportion to the size of the audience. If it is a large audience, your gestures should be enhanced and delivered in a slower motion. For smaller audiences more restricted gestures will suffice, but their speed of delivery can be slightly quicker.

2. Facial Expressions. So much information is imparted from the face. Whether we are hearing impaired or not, lip reading and watching faces is a huge part of our communication, even though we are mostly unaware of it. Using your eyes to make eye contact with your audience is an important part of your speech. It will draw them in and feel more connected with you. Smiling at the beginning of your speech will not only put the audience at ease, but it will make you relax too. You don't need to smile throughout your speech – for many topics this wouldn't be appropriate, but a smile can be your gateway into being accepted by the audience.

3. Stance. How you stand on stage will tell the audience a lot about how you feel. If you are stiff and upright the audience will know you aren't at ease. If you slouch over

the lectern, this will give the impression that you don't care much for the topic you are speaking on. Stand tall and be well-balanced. Lean slightly forward, towards the audience and this will make them feel more engaged with you. You can move around the stage, but don't pace restlessly. Break up your body language with stillness and poise, just as you vary the inflection in your voice.

Ensure any body language supports your message. It is a good idea to practice in front of a mirror, watching what your body does in certain parts of a speech. Is your head nodding when you are saying no? Is your topic a passionate one, but your eyes dull and lifeless? Ensure your facial expressions are a mirror to the thoughts you want to convey. Use your gestures and stage presence along with your face to enhance your speech in a positive way.

## **How to Avoid Word Whiskers and Other Habits**

A word whisker is a meaningless word or phrase used as 'filler' when the speaker is unsure of what to say next, what should be said next or just a bad habit that has formed. Word whiskers and other poor speaking habits stop us from being fluent speakers.

Being fluent in speech delivery comes naturally to some people, but to others, their speeches are riddled with word whiskers, stammers and long pauses. Avoiding these problems is a must if you want to excel in public speaking. Like um, yeah, you see, er, ah, I'm getting to the point but it's taking me a while and in the meantime I'm frustrating my audience. Although word whiskers are viewed as a normal part of every day speech they will not be tolerated in speech presentation. The secret to eliminate the habits that stop your speech from being fluent is preparation. Follow these simple tips and your speeches will become fluent and pleasing to the ear.

- Prepare your speech with words you are familiar with. If you need to use terminology or jargon that is new to you, make sure you research it and practice saying it. Get the new meanings clear in your mind before you even think about talking about them.
- Organize your speech in a logical manner. Develop a speech outline and deliver your main points in a chronological order.
- Practice your speech so as the material is memorable. Although you aren't expected to recite it word for word, you should be comfortable enough with your delivery that if you lose your place you can pause and get back on track without stumbling on with word whiskers and stammers.
- Tape your speech and listen for any word whiskers. If there are a number that appear regularly write them down on a piece of paper. Now draw a circle around the word and strike a red mark through it. Now practice your speech and every time you want to use the word whisker, slow down and pause. Take a breath and move on to the next point in your speech. Be careful that you don't exchange one word whisker

with another. If you practice and be diligent you will rid your speech of any unwanted habit.

- Visualize yourself giving your speech. Say it over and over in your mind without any bad habits. Think about when a word whisker may appear; visualize you pausing, taking a breath and moving on. This way you can program your brain to do the action when necessary.

On the day of your speech be clear in your purpose. If you are well prepared with your material and have visualized fluent speech, hopefully your word whiskers and other habits will be minimal or maybe even non-existent.

## **Tips for Using Visual Aids in Your Speech**

Sometimes it is easier to forget about visual aids than prepare them. It's hard enough work writing your speech let alone having to produce a multi-media extravaganza to push home your point – right? Maybe and some speeches don't require visual aids, such as wedding speeches or toasts.

However for a lot of speeches, using visual aids will not only enhance your presentation, but also help you to remember key points and keep you and your audience focused. Visual aids or 'props' can be as small or large as you want. They can vary in their simplicity or complexity and how much a part of your speech they are used for – it's up to you. Here are some tips for successful use of visual aids in your presentation:

1. Any props should be visually stimulating and supportive of the topic you are speaking on.
2. If using pictures on your slides, fill up the whole screen with the illustration.
3. Don't pack the slide with wordy paragraphs and information. Break your data down into bullet points.
4. Check with the organizers what visual aids are available for your presentation. Ensure everything is present and working before you begin your speech.
5. Make sure every member of the audience can see the visual aids.
6. When you use the visual aid, ensure the audience's attention is focused on it. When you have made each particular point, take the visual away and re-focus them back on you.

7. If you have trouble remembering your speech, use your visual aids as memory joggers.
  
8. Visual aids aren't just overheads and slides. They can be noisemakers, costumes and tricks. Visual aids can be used to induce a laugh, stimulate the audience or make a passionate point. Select your 'alternative props' with care.
  
9. When you reveal your visual aid, make sure you continue speaking to the audience not to the prop.
  
10. Handouts are also considered visual aids. Determine the correct time to give them out. You want your audience to be focused on your words, not reading and discussing elements of the handout during your speech.

Visual aids will support your argument and increase the audience's understanding of the main points. This is because the mind better remembers picture information rather than word information. A visual presentation will enhance your credibility and it may even help you with your nerves. If you have a visual aid to focus on, rather than your shaking hands, your fears will be forgotten as you take the audience through the points on the screen. As with any part of public speaking, practice using your visual aids well before the day of your presentation.