

# Tips for Delivering a Speech

- Be aware of your body. Research at UCLA has shown that how we look when delivering a speech has a major impact on our believability. If we look nervous and unsure, the audience is less likely to believe us. The research says that 55% of our believability comes from the way we look while speaking. Several of the tips below will help you improve the visual component of your speech.
- Be aware of your posture. Swaying, slouching and fidgeting will distract from your message. Stand with your feet about shoulder distance apart, knees slightly bent, back straight but not stiff.
- Be aware of your hands. Hands often give away nervousness. A speaker who is wringing her hands clutching them behind her back or folding her arms does not give the impression that she wants to be there. Leave your hands hanging relaxed at your side.
- Add gestures. Effective gestures help you release your energy and help the audience stay focused on you. Exaggerate your natural gestures by making them bigger and bolder. When possible, show words with your hands. For example, if you are talking about profits being high, raise your arm high into the air. The visual reinforcement will help the audience remember your points.
- Use movement effectively. Pacing can be very distracting to an audience. Instead, use movement deliberately to show transitions in your speech. Move at least two full steps whenever you move to avoid the appearance of fidgeting. Always use movement intentionally, never just because you're nervous.
- Practice good eye control. In our culture, eye contact is a big component of trust. If you want your audience to trust you, you have to look them in the eye. Don't dart from person to person. Instead, focus on one person for a phrase or sentence, then look at another person for the next phrase or sentence. Be aware of connecting with people in all parts of the room.
- Work from an outline or mind map, not from a script. Reading word for word from a script puts a big barrier between you and your audience. You will be more effective if you speak from your heart and connect with the audience through eye contact.
- Consider not using the podium. Use the podium as a tool, not as a crutch. If you are giving a very formal presentation, the podium may be a good choice, but too often speakers use it just to have something to clutch or hide behind.
- Vary your voice. Vocal variety help you emphasize points and helps your audience pay attention. Vary your rate, volume and pitch.
- Visualize success rather than failure. Before you speak, spend your energy thinking about a successful speech rather than all that will go wrong. This technique is widely used by athletes and performers.