

10 Presentation Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgLNCn9gY54>

Work with your neighbor. List some mistakes people can make when giving a presentation.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

Listen to the tape and list 10 mistakes the speaker mentions. How can you avoid these mistakes?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)

PRESENTATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Sweaty palms? Butterflies in your stomach? Frog in your throat? Knocking knees? Mind going blank? If any of the above symptoms describe how you feel when giving a speech or presentation to more than an audience of one, read on ... this is for you.

In our ever-shrinking world, the role of effective *communication skills* is gaining increasing importance. Not only must professionals be adept in their fields, but they must also be capable of *communicating* with a greater number of *individuals* in similar, overlapping or different fields. Speaking to others effectively – whether *informally* (e.g. expressing views to co-workers) or *formally* (e.g. giving a presentation at a company meeting or a conference) – is a skill which professionals must master.

Communication can take different forms, but the majority involves *words*. To ensure that your words are not in vain, it is necessary to carefully *analyze your intended audience in advance* – to get to know their occupations, interests, educational background and perspectives.

In order to be an effective speaker, it is imperative to organize one's ideas and the speech itself into a *logical pattern of thoughts*. By clearly identifying the key issue or problem, and then logically leading the listener toward an acceptable solution, the speaker will gain the attention and interest and often the approval of their audience. Unprepared speakers usually leave the audience confused and unconvinced of their ideas. Unfortunately the saying often rings true: *Failing to prepare, we prepare to fail*.

An effective speech is logically organized into three basic components:

- opening
- body
- conclusion

The opening itself should be brief and to the point. The purpose of it is to capture the attention of the audience and to arouse their interest. It can include a startling question or challenging statement, or perhaps an anecdote appropriate to the topic, or even a display or demonstration of a relevant item or process.

The body of your speech carries the heart of your message and must be informative, precise and persuasive – you must clearly outline your basic points, supporting them with facts, and build a sound argument.

The conclusion should be the climax of your presentation and should make a lasting impression on your audience. It may be in the form of a summary of the emphasized points made in your speech presented along with their conclusions.

In giving our speech we are judged not only by verbal signals but physical ones as well.

So called *body language* is a collection of physical movements such as *posture* (stand up straight, hold your head high, keep your chest out and your stomach in), *body movements* (synchronize them with your message and be natural), *gestures* (keep your hands and arms free, do not put them into your pockets and do not fold them across your chest, do not distract the audience by running hands through your hair, etc.; use them effectively to punctuate your verbal interactions, especially when talking about size, weight, shape, distance, location, when comparing things and counting), *facial expression* (remember that it is a barometer to your mindset and it sends its own message to the listener), and *eye contact* (establish and maintain eye contact with various members of your audience). Research findings indicate that non-verbal interaction accounts for over half of human communication, and that listeners

Using your *voice* effectively can also determine your success. Some key factors are *volume* (should be varied for emphasis), *pitch* (not sounding monotonous), *rate* (125–160 words per minute), and *voice quality* (careful articulation and relaxing your voice to achieve an air of friendliness and confidence).

Although it may seem of little comfort when you are seized by stage fright, it should be said that *nervousness* is a natural reaction and even the best speakers experience it from time to time (more often than they would ever care to admit). So when you know you 'have done all your homework' (e.g. careful preparation and rehearsal), stand before the audience, take a deep breath, look them straight in the eyes and channel all your energy into enthusiasm for your topic and for your audience. If you believe in your message and express yourself in a clear, sincere and enthusiastic manner, you will be able to accept the applause graciously.

1. Answer the following:

- Read the underlined expressions at the beginning of the text and try to think of suitable expressions in your language. Then explain the English ones in English.
- What do you have to consider before giving a speech (presentation)?
- How should you prepare your speech?
- What does it mean: Failing to prepare, we prepare to fail?
- What are the most important parts of a speech?
- How would you describe "body language"?
- What does "stage fright" mean?