

NORTH SHORE

Fear Factor Public speaking worse fate than death

A room full of faces with their full attention directed toward you is intimidating. Your pressure rises while sweat escapes pores at an exponential rate. You attempt to speak in well-constructed sentences to an intently focused audience, but your voice is shaky thanks to your trembling body.

Given the above scenario, it is easy to understand why many people fear public speaking more than death. However, there are simple remedies to alleviate the potential for a frightening experience when speaking in front of a group of people.

Know what you're saying. Consider the audience. Practice and be confident.

"Winging it" works for a small percentage of people, mainly those who are experienced speaking to large groups. Having the ability to think on the spot or being able to pull information out of any choice of location is an acquired skill. Knowing when a speech needs to be presented allows time for research and development of ideas.

Think of a speech as an oral essay. A main point needs to be conveyed with examples and substantial evidence for support. The topic needs to be introduced, developed and

then concluded. Following the steps involved in the writing process creates a solid speech.

Use documented research to illustrate and support main points. Take time to gather information from a variety of sources, not just the Internet.

Organize thoughts and knowledge into an outline. Depending upon the assignment or nature of the speech, either write the speech out, as would be done with an essay, or make note cards with the key points to remind you of what to say. Research and preparation demonstrate to the audience that the speaker knows the subject.

During the preparation of the speech, consider who will be hearing it. Are they strangers or people you know? Will the room be filled with adults, students or a mixture of both? Presenting a great speech that captures the interest of everyone listening is easier to accomplish when you know general information



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ON THE CHALKBOARD

about the audience. This data is important for word choice and appropriateness of subject matter.

Completing the groundwork by

obtaining and arranging information with the knowledge of who will be listening to this eloquent and dynamic speech is half the challenge. Practicing and presenting make up for the other half. If the speech is written out to be read verbatim, indicate where to make eye contact or emphasize particular points.

Speeches delivered with the assistance of note cards should include words and phrases while avoiding complete sentences. In both cases, practice is imperative. The more a person practices, the better the speech will be. If speaking doesn't come easy for an individual, avoiding the situation does not improve it. It just enables the person to be a sub-

par public speaker.

Rehearsing the speech is an effective and productive method of practicing. Ideally, having a live audience is best, even if it's just one or two other people.

They can provide feedback for improvements. If animate objects are unavailable, use a mirror or create an audience of stuffed animals. Seriously, the objective is to go through the motions of delivering the speech.

Body language is an indicator of confidence. Prepared speakers should stand up tall, use proper eye-contact, avoid fidgeting and employ a clear strong voice. The adage of practice makes perfect holds true in public speaking. Prior preparation increases confidence, which in turn promotes the potential for a successful oral presentation.

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