

# Tips for Delivering Presentations

## *The Best Tips for Vocal Quality*

1. Practice varying your inflection by reading passages from children's books because that type of delivery lets you exaggerate and experiment with your vocal tone and range.
2. Before you speak, don't eat heavily or drink soda or milk. Carbonated beverages will give you a dry mouth, and milk products can make you feel like you need to clear your throat.
3. Try deep-breathing exercises before your presentation. Practice using your diaphragm so that your stomach puffs out, but your shoulders don't rise.
4. Practice by recording your speech. Listen to identify what vocal qualities you need to work on.
5. Vary the pitch of your voice. Our voices often go higher when we're nervous, so try breathing exercises to help normalize your voice.
6. Vary your tone, volume, and pace to add emphasis and color to your presentation.
7. Warm up by stretching your face and neck before the presentation.
8. Use practice phrases to help you improve your enunciation.
9. Don't end sentences with an upward tone like you do when you ask a question.
10. Articulate plosives, such as *b*, *d*, *t*, and *k*, especially at the end of words. This helps with your diction.

## ***Best Tips for Presentation Gestures and Body Language***

- **Take the body language quiz.** Rate your body language. Is your posture straight? Are your gestures natural and unforced? Are your body movements fluid and comfortable? Does your face display a pleasant expression? Are you making a connection with your eyes? All of these signal confidence and build rapport with your audience.
- **The eyes have it.** Darting eyes make people nervous. Staring at people for too long makes them uncomfortable. How do you decide what's long enough to look at a person? Follow the same rules you do when speaking one-on-one. Three to 5 seconds is fine to look before moving on to the next person. And if you're not comfortable looking your audience directly in the eyes, remember that you can look at foreheads or right over their heads. It gives the same effect as eye contact.
- **Find your "friendlies."** We've all noticed that some people have friendly faces. They smile back at you. They nod and respond when you acknowledge them. Find these people in your audience and, when you get nervous or thrown off course, look back at them for reassurance.
- **Use the pause.** This is the best method for looking calm even when you're not. Because of nervousness, many speakers start talking on their way to the podium. Don't fall prey to this urge. Walk to the podium and take a moment to put your notes down. Take a breath, look around at audience members, smile, and silently count to three. Then you can start your presentation. It's a sign of confidence that will earn respect before you even say your first word.
- **Use big moves or not at all.** Keep your hand gestures above the waist. Gestures below the waist look nervous and don't convey confidence. If you don't feel comfortable with gestures, don't use them. Forced gestures look worse than none. (Watch a hometown car commercial and you'll understand what I mean.)
- **Show the audience what you want them to do.** Use prompting gestures to help your audience understand what you want them to do. Raise your hand to show you want them to respond that way. Clap to get them to start applauding. It's part of leading by example.
- **Smile like you just found a quarter.** A smile is the best gesture you can use. It not only makes you feel more confident, but it also helps your audience feel less stressed. After all, they want you to do well. There's nothing more uncomfortable for them than watching a nervous person who looks like he or she wants to cry.
- **Attention, please.** When someone in the audience speaks, use active listening gestures that show you're paying attention. Actions such as maintaining eye contact, nodding, smiling, and moving closer to the speaker assure that person that she or he has your full attention.
- **Shake it off.** Don't worry if you're shaking. The audience can't see it. What feels huge at the podium is not even noticeable at a distance. And those pauses that feel like an hour are usually not more than a few seconds. Keep all of that in mind to maintain perspective.

- **Break the habit.** Eliminate distracting habits. Videotape yourself and watch objectively for actions like rocking, swaying, fidgeting, jingling pocket change, adjusting hair or clothing, or leaning on the podium. Start working to avoid these movements.
- **Avoid wardrobe malfunctions.** Don't wear a new outfit. Standing in front of a group is not the time to find out that the shirt won't stay buttoned or that the shoes hurt too much to stand for 20 minutes. Don't wear jewelry that you're tempted to play with. Wear something tried and true.
- **Remember that your body talks.** Crossed arms can make people feel like you're closed off. Hands on hips can make it look like you're mad at them. Looking at your watch makes it seem like you're ready to run out the door. Be aware of all of these signals and practice positive body talk.
- **Take a walk.** Try stepping out from behind the podium and moving around during your presentation. It not only helps keep the audience's attention, but it lets you work off a little nervous energy.

### ***The Best Tips for Using Presentation Notes***

1. Do not read your presentation directly from a script. Use notes so you're not tempted to read it word-for-word.
2. Highlight your notes to help you find key passages easily.
3. If using full sheets of paper, don't write on the bottom third of the page. You'll be looking too far down to read it and the audience will be looking at the top of your head.
4. If using note cards, be sure to write large enough to read. Many meeting locations have lower lighting at the podium.
5. Number the pages of your notes. If you drop them, you'll be able to get them back in order more easily.
6. Even if you memorize your presentation, have a set of notes available in case you forget or get nervous.
7. Memorize the opening and closing of your presentation. This lets you present those elements with authority and confidence.
8. Write down hints on your notes to remind yourself to pause or slow down.
9. Use your visual aids for notes. The borders of transparencies can be used to write notes. On flipchart pages, you also can write notes in pencil that are invisible to the audience.
10. Rehearse with your notes so that you develop a feel for where the segments are on the pages or cards. This makes it easier to find the information when you glance down at your notes during the presentation.

# ***The Best Tips for Managing Q & A***

## **A Five-Step Approach:**

1. **Invite the Question** in a way that is welcoming, i.e., that audience members feel it is safe to ask (because more often than not – they have them!).
  - *“What questions do you have?”*
  - *“Who has my first question?”*
  
2. **Acknowledge & Repeat the Question**
  - *“[NAME ] is asking [repeat the question].”*
  - Ensures the rest of the audience has heard the question.
  - Ensures you have heard the question.
  - Buys a little time to organize your thoughts and your response.
  - *“(NAME ) If I heard you correctly, your questions is.....? Is that right?”*
  
3. **Answer the Question**
  - Don't make it a one-on-one with the person who asked the question.
  - Begin by addressing the answer to the person who asked the question, but then, as you answer, scan the room and make eye contact with other participants.
  
4. **Confirm with the questioner that you answered their question.**
  - *“Did I answer your question?”*
  - *“Does that answer your question?”*
  
5. **Prompt the next question:**
  - *“Who has my next question?”*
  - *“What other questions do you have?”*
  - *“I have time for 2 more questions. Who has them?”*

## **Additional Tips:**

- If no one is asking any questions, consider saying, “I often get asked...,” or “Another common question at this point might be...”
- Anticipate questions commonly asked on the topic. Prepare and rehearse your answers to these questions.
- Have a “Parking lot” or “bin list” on the wall to collect audience questions you may address later in your presentation or if you would prefer to hold questions until the end.
- Remember to prepare a second closing so that you can end your presentation strongly and memorably.

## ***The Best Phrases to Use When Presenting & Facilitating***

1. *“Are we getting off track?”* This is a good question to remind people of the focus topic and to bring the conversation back on target.
2. *“That’s a great question.”* This gives you time to think.
3. *“I’ve never had that question before. Let me find out for you.”* We should not be afraid to admit that we don’t know an answer.
4. *“Let’s not all talk at once. You first. Then you.”* When conversations get out of hand, it’s your job as facilitator to make sure everyone plays fair.
5. *“Why don’t we take a short break?”* Sometimes, when tempers flare or it seems that there’s no resolution, stepping away and taking a breather is the best solution.
6. *“Let’s hear from some of the folks who haven’t had a chance to give their ideas yet.”* When a few people are dominating the conversation, this is a good method to give others a chance to talk.
7. *“Could you rephrase that question?”* If you can’t understand a question, this can be a useful way to get another chance to hear it. If you still don’t understand, ask someone else in the audience to restate it for you.
8. *“Let’s put that one in the parking lot.”* When there’s a topic that’s important, but not on the current agenda it’s a good idea to keep a sheet titled “The Parking Lot” to capture those stray ideas or queries for later discussion.
9. *“What do you think?”* Asking for input from the silent members of the group can solicit some surprisingly good ideas that could have been missed.