

Speaking and Leadership Tips from Toastmasters International

Feeling some nervousness before giving a speech is natural and even beneficial, but too much nervousness can be detrimental. Here are 10 proven tips from Toastmasters International on how to control your butterflies and give better presentations:

1. **Know your material.** Pick a topic you are interested in. Know more about it than you include in your speech. Use humor, personal stories and conversational language – that way you won't easily forget what to say.
2. **Practice. Practice. Practice!** Rehearse out loud with all equipment you plan on using. Revise as necessary. Work to control filler words; Practice, pause and breathe. Practice with a timer and allow time for the unexpected.
3. **Know that audience.** Greet some of the audience members as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to strangers.
4. **Know the room.** Arrive early, walk around the speaking area and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.
5. **Relax.** Begin by addressing the audience. It buys you time and calms your nerves. Pause, smile and count to three before saying anything. ("One one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-thousand. Pause. Begin.) Transform nervous energy into enthusiasm.
6. **Visualize yourself giving your speech.** Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear and confident. Visualize the audience clapping – it will boost your confidence.
7. **Realize that people want you to succeed.** Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They're rooting for you.
8. **Don't apologize** for any nervousness or problem – the audience probably never noticed it.
9. **Concentrate on the message – not the medium.** Focus your attention away from your own anxieties and concentrate on your message and your audience.
10. **Gain experience.** Mainly, your speech should represent *you* – as an authority and as a person. Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking. A Toastmasters club can provide the experience you need in a safe and friendly environment.

One of the most important elements of leadership is the ability to motivate people. Without motivation, even the most skilled team of seasoned professionals is unlikely to achieve great things. A highly motivated group of talented people, on the other hand, can move mountains.

While it's true that motivating people involves more than just changing the way you speak, here are some guidelines you can follow to help build team motivation with only your words and your voice:

1. **Be enthusiastic.** Enthusiasm is contagious! Before you present your ideas, think about the aspects of the subject that you find the most interesting, and don't be afraid to let that interest come through in your voice.
2. **Use quotes, stories and anecdotes.** Along with their obvious entertainment value, quotes and stories can lend authority to your topic and provide concrete examples that people can relate to.
3. **Speak with confidence.** Deliver your message loud and clear. Maintain eye contact with your listeners. Don't mumble or slouch.
4. **Say *you* and *we*, not *I* and *me*.** Instead of telling people what you want them to do, present ways for them to work together to achieve their goals. Involve listeners in the success of the group.
5. **Keep it simple.** People aren't motivated by what you say; they're motivated by what they understand. The best way to ensure audience understanding is to break down complex ideas into simple components.

Visit a local Toastmasters meeting

Each club has a different personality – you may wish to visit more than one. Use the 'Find a Club' tool on the Toastmasters Web site to find meetings near you: reports.toastmasters.org/findaclub/. Call or e-mail in advance (if possible) to confirm meeting time and location.