

**TOASTMASTERS**  
INTERNATIONAL

# Step Up Your Public Speaking Skills!

3 reasons

5 tips





# Step Up Your Public Speaking Skills!

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**The fear of public speaking is a very common one, but you have the power to conquer anxiety and find your most confident voice. And not just on a stage or in front of a crowd—public speaking is a valuable skill that can be learned and applied to your everyday life, too!**

Toastmasters International, with a proven, international club program that develops more confident communicators, offers you some public speaking career and presentation basics.



# 3 reasons

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### 3 reasons

# why your career needs public speaking skills

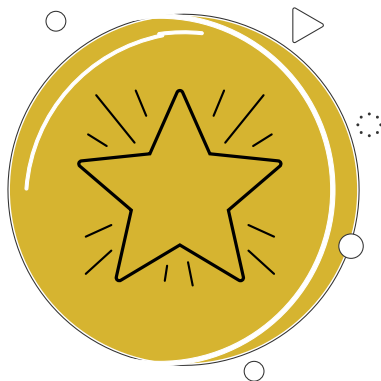
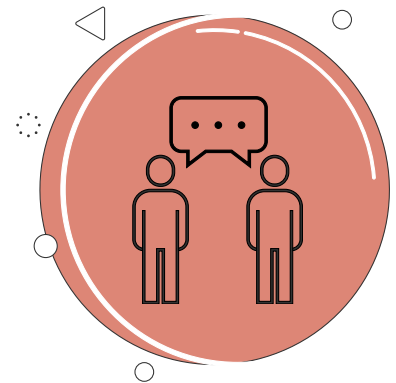


## Public speaking skills create opportunities.

Great speakers attract opportunities by being visible. **This can be you!** Whether you are in front of a room or in front of a camera, your credibility is enhanced when you speak well. People might even pay to hear you speak; your talent can lead to speaking engagements, promotions, and other speaking scenarios you might not have thought of as professions or side professions such as auctioneer, tutor, vlogger, and so much more.

## Public speaking skills have influential power.

The ability to speak well can enhance how you share your message. **Your ideas can guide and empower others.** Your storytelling and presentation skills can first make an emotional connection with colleagues, teammates, and managers, which can then open them up to your ideas. Effective verbal communication can help others consider a completely new topic or one from a different viewpoint. It gets across facts, opinions, and anecdotes to ponder or act on. It has the power to change lives. It can lead to career growth.



## Public speaking skills can greatly improve your self-confidence.

The fear of public speaking—or speaking in front of any small or large group of people—is a common phobia that causes anxiety and stress, thereby diminishing self-confidence. However, if you conquer the fear and master public speaking, it will have quite the opposite effect. Public speaking skills are essential components that can help you advance your career, grow your business or personal brand, create collaborations, build networking opportunities, and enhance your leadership skills. By practicing and continuing to improve your skills, **your comfort level will increase, as will your self-confidence.**



# 5 tips

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## 5 tips you can use for your next presentation

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1

### Practice and revise.

It should go without saying that you need to know your material, and not just memorizing the key points and facts, but knowing how you will get your audience engaged and keep them interested from start to finish. Whether you have a short or long presentation to memorize, breaking each component down into small pieces will help you organize your speech. For example, in a short presentation, you can divide it into simple pieces such as: Introduction—with a short quote or personal story, then the main content—which is your facts and key points, and finally, a conclusion that wraps up your presentation or ties into your original short quote or personal story.

For a longer presentation, with a topic such as adopting new software for your company, you could break down your presentation into: What is the new software? Why do we need the software? What is the cost savings for the software? What is the plan to adopt and train people on the software? And when will the software be tested and released? In each example, by breaking the components of your talking points into smaller pieces, you will have a reference piece to refer to in case you get lost. This is extremely helpful if you get distracted or interrupted and need to get back on track. **Break down your presentation in pieces**, practice each piece in order and out of order so that when or if you get lost or distracted, you will know your pieces well enough to get back on track.

2

### Slow down.

According to American Writer, Humorist, Entrepreneur, Publisher, and Lecturer Mark Twain, “There are only two types of speakers in the world: the nervous and liars.” Nervousness is inevitable, even for experienced speakers, and it affects how you speak in front of people. It often contributes to much more rapid speech than normal. When you speak faster, your audience may pick up on your nervousness, get distracted, and not understand what you are saying, thereby losing their confidence in your expertise and knowledge. A simple remedy is to just slow down and speak very slowly when rehearsing. Speak each word and annunciate each syllable as you practice. Also, don’t be afraid of the pause while speaking; let the audience digest what you are saying. **The good news is that filler words will decrease with the pause!** Make your sentences shorter and say to yourself, “FULL STOP” silently to force you to slow down and speak at a more normal pace.

### 3

## Remove stumbling blocks.

While speaking slowly and enunciating is a great way to keep you from stumbling over words and phrases, sometimes the words you choose may hinder the flow, causing you to trip up, get lost, and fumble. If you are struggling with a line or phrase while trying to practice it, **consider changing some or one of the words** for a simpler one. For example, if you catch yourself stumbling over the word “utilize” in the statement, “We plan to utilize the assets by next month,” try replacing it with “use,” which is a synonym that is easier to pronounce and sounds more natural.

### 4

## Remember silence is golden.

When you are nervous or forget a word or idea when speaking, you tend to fill the space between your thoughts and speech with filler words such as “ummm,” “ahhhhh,” “errrrr,” etc. This can be viewed negatively, especially in a job interview. Instead, **consider taking a pause with a brief connected silence**. Whether you are looking at the audience or off in a thoughtful manner, your audience will likely think you are connected to them and will keep their attention—waiting anxiously for the next word you say.

### 5

## Keep hydrated.

It might sound silly, but water is an essential speaking component. Nerves can dry up your mouth, which is why professional public speakers have a glass of water close by during their presentations. By keeping hydrated, you can prevent your lips and mouth from getting dry, which will prevent you from the distractions of smacking your lips or clearing your throat as you speak. **Having water handy can also be a good excuse to take a pause**, take a sip, and collect your thoughts if you need to.

# 5 more speaking tips taken from a Toastmasters webinar on public speaking

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## Keep the audience in focus.

Always think about the audience, stop thinking about yourself, says John Bowe, writer and book author. “Take your mind off yourself and the noise in your head.” **It helps to consider the environment you will be speaking in.** “Before you give a speech, visualize the audience—how old they are, how many will be there, what the place will look like,” Bowe adds. “The more you understand all this, the better you will deliver.” This kind of practice takes the pressure off, believes Tammy Miller, Pennsylvania State University professor and professional auctioneer.



2

## Relax with the ‘Golden Rule’ of speaking.

Remember that people in the audience—your peers and colleagues—want you to succeed, says Liz Jin, a lawyer, Coca-Cola executive, and vlogger. With that in mind, **don’t try to make your communication so perfect**, adds Anwasha Banerjee, a neuroscientist and public speaker. The audience is not looking for details you may have forgotten. If you forget, move on.

3

## Be ready with an ‘oops’ recovery.

The best speakers can still stumble—but they have recovery tools in their back pocket. Professional Speaker and Oxford Adjunct Faculty Member Simon Bucknall once took five seconds to walk across the stage to “defuse the rabbit in headlights,” allowing himself time to collect his thoughts when his mind went blank. This might be a visible tactic or not, but “the audience won’t mind if you don’t get too distracted by it,” he says. Ramona J. Smith, 2018 World Champion of Public Speaking, professional speaker, educator, and author, agrees that the audience doesn’t know your presentation and **if you do stumble, do something subtle**—close your eyes, clasp your hands, say “oh yes,” basically “wing it,” she advises. What you don’t want to do is say, “I forgot,” “so sorry,” or any words to that effect. Stay calm and collected. Keep confident and recover. And if your speech, talk, or presentation was not your proudest moment, just remember that “great speakers became great by bombing and moving on,” reminds Darren LaCroix, professional speaker and 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking.



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## Get your virtual thoughts in order.

Zoom and other online meetings are becoming the new stage, with the same tips as above, but perhaps “a softer way to introduce yourself to larger crowds,” according to Banerjee. There’s more fear in person than virtually, she says, so it’s the perfect way to hone your skills. Remember eye contact is critical, even in Zoom, according to Bowe. LaCroix puts a sticky note next to his camera lens on the computer that says, “Look here” to remind himself. Lastly, **learn the technology and practice with family and friends** so you can shine when presenting professionally, says Miller.

5

## When all else fails, do these three.

**Stand straight, look people in the eye, and smile.** These are guaranteed ways to look and feel more confident when speaking, no matter what the topic or setting, according to Jin.

Ready to practice these skills in a fun and safe environment?

Toastmasters International, with a proven worldwide club program, is a non-profit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills. Join this network of 270,000 members in more than 14,200 clubs in 148 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters has helped people from diverse backgrounds grow personally and professionally to become more confident speakers, communicators, and leaders.

Find a club that meets online and/or in person that is right for you!

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