

Ten Tips for Terrific Speeches! Abridged

I. Test the waters.

Start small by speaking in front of friends! As you grow confident, add more people and speak at larger events.

II. Take a public speaking class.

This class is for those who want to become better public speakers. It includes tried-and-true methods of delivering exceptional presentations. This class will have others who are as nervous or inexperienced speaking in front of others as you may be. This is a good thing because it can foster unity among your peers.

III. Appear confident – even if you aren't.

Remember playing “pretend” as a child? Bring it back, this time to the stage. Own that speech – or pretend to! Either way, you will appear as a strong speaker and people will be more respectful and attentive.

IV. Know your stuff.

Practice makes perfect. A well-practiced speech makes you less nervous and more confident. If possible, pick a topic you know a lot or are passionate about.

V. Use your hands sparingly.

Using natural hand motions is fine in most circumstances – just try not to mime your speech or whack the podium microphone in the process!

VI. Focus on the speech's content.

Focus on what you are saying – not how well you think others are viewing your speech. Keep your purpose in mind, and your focus will remain there.

VII. Realize your audience wants you to do well.

When someone speaks, are you always judging them, waiting for them to slip up? Neither is the audience when you are the on the stage. People want you to succeed and are typically attentive to your message. So give it to them!

VIII. Expect changes.

No speech goes according to plan. Even if it did, the delivery would likely be rigid and boring. Stay loose and move past any mistakes without calling attention to them. Your audience won't even notice.

IX. Maintain eye contact.

Eye contact = respect. Looking at people for a few seconds at a time brings them into the conversation, which is good because people are typically self-interested and want to feel included in conversations. A brief outline* or notecards (don't write your speech out word for word!) will help you focus on the audience more as you deliver.

X. Record yourself.

See yourself through the audience's eyes! Look for nervous ticks such as playing with your hands or leaning on the podium. Work on stopping these actions and your speeches will shine that much more brightly!