



Saskatchewan Municipal

Management Resource

Public Speaking Made Easy

Public speaking is sometimes seen as a daunting responsibility that too many people shy away from. It may seem like a tough job, but there are many tips to use to help improve your public speaking ability. By following this list, it might make your next public speaking experience a little more pleasant.

Know your Topic

You need to know what it is that you really want to communicate. Keep in mind your specific objectives as you write your speech, and include what your audience needs to know. A speech is for communication, not a performance so be sure to be yourself, and to be sincere.

Know your Audience

By familiarizing yourself with your audience, you can better communicate your message. Anticipating what the audience wants to know about your topic, and speaking to them in their terms, will help you hold their attention.

Know your Plan

Every presentation should be well thought-out and planned. Though you don't need a lengthy manuscript, trying to make a speech up on the spot often wastes your audience's valuable time. By carefully preparing your material ahead of time, you can better engage your audience and be more comfortable presenting.

The most common approach for an effective presentation includes three parts:

- ▶ **Introduction**
 - This is where you will catch your audience's attention. Tell them what you are going to tell them.
- ▶ **Main Content**
 - The standard format includes three main points with supporting information. This is the main portion of your presentation. Make sure to use good transitions between your points.
- ▶ **Conclusion**
 - This is where you summarize your main points and connect with your introduction - tell them what you just told them. This is also where you tell your audience what action you want them to take, if any.

Practice Makes Perfect

After you prepare your material, you must practice your delivery. Practice in front of a mirror, in front of a friend, or even record your presentation. Pay attention to any distractions from your message, such as your speed or volume, gestures, eye contact, length of your speech, even parts of your presentation that seem too complicated. Make sure to be energetic in your presentation – if you seem bored, chances are your audience will be too.

Although the more prepared you are, the better your speech will be, don't try to memorize the entire presentation. Most speakers use notes or an outline to keep them on track. However, it is a good idea to memorize good phrases, quotes, or examples.

Great Expectations

Before you speak, make sure to familiarize yourself with the setting and the expectations. Some common questions are:

- Will the setting be formal/informal?
- Will there be a table or a podium at the front?
- Will you need/have a microphone?
- At what point on the agenda are you scheduled?
- How long are you expected to speak?
- Will the audience be ready for a break?

Knowing all you can about what is expected of you as a speaker will help minimize the inevitable surprises that can cause you or your audience to become distracted and lose focus.

Ready, Set, Go!

Some final pointers to keep in mind as you prepare yourself for your presentation:

- Preparation is the key – know your topic, audience, and plan.
- Get – and hold – the audience's attention right from the start.
- Help the audience absorb your message by speaking slowly and clearly.
- Use pauses, facial expressions, and gestures (sparingly!) to mark important points.
- Look at the audience as you speak – it will help you gauge your audience's interest.
- Remember you are there to help your audience learn.
- Leave the audience with something to think about – people remember best what you say last. Choose your words carefully.