



# General Speaking Tips

Rhetoric is not an innate ability – it is a learned skill. Behind every delivery is hours of **careful preparation**. The only way to become a good speaker is to practice. Take every opportunity you can to speak.

Effective **body language** is important every time you step in front of an audience. Although some formal or political speeches call for subdued movements, you should usually not be afraid to let your body speak. Body movements should be deliberate and precise, but look natural and spontaneous. Your movements should always enhance what you are saying. If it will detract from your words or confuse your listeners, leave it out.

In public speaking, how you say something can be more important than what you say. If you want to be an exciting speaker, learn to use **vocal variety** to add vitality to your delivery. Perhaps the single best thing you can do to improve your delivery is to vary the pace, pitch, volume, and demeanor of your voice to fit the words you are speaking. Your vocal variety should combine with your words and body language to enhance your entire delivery.

Remember that **the audience wants you to succeed**. If you are prepared, your mistakes will be few and the audience will usually not notice them. If you do make a mistake, just pick up the pieces and carry on. Don't stop speaking and don't apologize. If you do speak with uncertainty or make an obvious mistake, you will probably only endear yourself to the audience. They will feel your pain too, and they will understand what you are going through.

Above all, **be yourself**. Don't try to be someone else when you are speaking. People will like you and listen to you for who you are, not who you pretend to be.

*Adapted from Stephen M. Fournier*