



Effective Eye Contact

Effective eye contact is **necessary** to create strong and memorable presentations. It bolsters your credibility, engagement with your audience, portrays confidence, and allows you to get feedback from the audience. Consider these tips in order to improve your use of eye contact.

Relax!

Your audience consists of human beings just like you with all different levels of public speaking experience and all worried about being judged or making a mistake. View them not as a panel analyzing your every move and word, but rather as interested in what you have to say, supportive, and willing to learn from your example.

1, 2, 3

The most basic tip for eye contact while giving a speech is to choose three spots on the wall: a light switch, picture, or some other reference point in the left, middle, and right of the room. Alternate between looking at all of these points as you speak.

Full sweep

Include all of your audience at once by scanning the room side-to-side roughly once a minute during your presentation.

Look into my eyes...

If you feel weird looking directly into people's eyes, don't worry. Instead, look at the point right between their eyebrows, their nose, their forehead, or directly above their head. From an audience member's perspective, the visual contact will appear as effective as ever but without potential awkwardness for you! 95% should be looking at audience, 5% looking at notes

Eye contact using a script

Sometimes, speeches require a pre-written manuscript. While reading something out loud, the natural tendency is to keep your head down, which inhibits effective eye contact. To combat this, try arranging your speaking notes as if they were on a teleprompter:

When you must read a text
to a group,
making good eye contact
with your audience
—as well as with your notes—
gets trick.
When reading something aloud,
your natural tendency
is to keep your head down.

Since each line only has what can be taken in at a glance written, you can look up at the audience more often.

Adapted in part from Laurie Schloff and Marcia Yudkin. *Smart Speaking: Sixty Second Strategies*, 1991.

If you want more information, check out the following
UMW Speaking Center Handouts:

[Effects of Body Language](#)
[What Should I Do With My Hands?](#)
[Posture and Body Stance](#)