



Speaking Apprehension Tips

What is speaking apprehension?

Many people experience some level of speech anxiety when they have to speak in front of a group of people; this is completely natural!

What can I do about it?

- One popular concern about public speaking is the worry of “blanking,” or freezing during a presentation due to forgetting the content of the presentation. This can be helped with speaking notes (if they are permitted by the professor). Use speaking notes to remember “hardcoded” information, such as direct quotes, citations, titles, dates, or names, but do not rely on them as a script. You should construct notes as short bullet-points to remember what topics to talk about. Do not worry about writing full sentences; just put enough information so you can remember what to talk about! When writing speaking notes in full sentences, you may rely too much on reading from those notes, and your delivery may be disconnected and insincere. Writing out a full script can also cause more anxiety because you may worry about delivering the speech perfectly. By writing the key points, you’ll know exactly what you need to say in order to progress the presentation without worrying about the exact wording.
- Put things into perspective; remember that you are your worst critic! Write out or talk through your concerns regarding what may happen during the presentation. Then, you can prepare in advance for how to minimize each possible worry. To combat any self-criticism, remind yourself that you are only human; it is okay to make mistakes. Try not to focus on the mistakes you’ve made in the past and instead focus on how you can improve in the future.
- If you feel any anxiety or nervousness before speaking, acknowledge its presence. Tell yourself that the feeling is only temporary. Remind yourself that you are capable of getting the task done and that you have done this before, so you can do it again.
- Focus on a friend who is in the audience; seeing the support of the familiar face will provide comfort.
- If eye contact makes you more nervous, try looking at people’s foreheads rather than their eyes, or look in-between your audience members. This will still look like you are making eye contact!
 - This can be dependent on the size of the room you’re presenting in. In a smaller setting, it may become obvious that you’re not actually making eye contact.



- Remind yourself that you are the expert on your topic!
- Take a moment before presenting to ground yourself and focus on your breathing. Box breathing (breathing in for the count of four, holding for the count of four, breathing out for the count of four, and holding again for the count of four) can help calm your nerves by interrupting the body's adrenaline response.
- Remember to breathe – pausing helps with transitioning between topics! You do not have to fill every moment that you are presenting. Breathing is also important to make sure that you can finish your sentence without running out of air.
- Appearances are reality! Dressing professionally may also help you feel more confident; when you look good, you feel good. By projecting a display of confidence, you will be able to feel more in control in your presentation.
- Appear confident with your body language by standing with your feet grounded, shoulders relaxed, head up, and back straight. A stance like this can help you both appear and feel more confident. These strategies may also help prevent rocking or fidgeting.
- PRACTICE! Practice will help you build confidence as your body gets used to the mechanics of presenting. If you are familiar with what you will say, you will not only give a more effective presentation, but you will also feel better about how you are presenting. Timing your practice will also prepare you for exactly what you will expect during the presentation. You will know that you will meet the requirements of the presentation. It also helps to practice your presentation out loud rather than silently, and with an audience. It is also more effective to practice the full presentation than to practice only parts of it, as you will become more familiar and comfortable with the entire presentation rather than certain sections.