

How to overcome the **FEAR** of Public Speaking

A practical guide to get you confidently speaking
in public



By Graeme Goodings

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Introduction

What do these famous people have in common - Warren Buffett, Prince Harry, Margaret Thatcher, Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Princess Diana, Arnold Schwarzenegger? They all feared public speaking. So if you have a fear of public speaking you're in good company. They all managed to overcome it and so can you.

Are you ready to take up the challenge?

None of us is perfect - So why should we expect perfection when we take on public speaking? If ever there was an inexact task this is it.

But, time and time again I speak to people who are so critical of their performance before an audience.

The reality is even the greatest public speakers make mistakes. The secret is how they recover and go on to turn that mistake into a positive and win the audience over. The audience will be oblivious to most of your mistakes anyway unless you highlight them.

Many people who are called on to speak in public are already successful in one field or another. Remember public speaking is just a tiny part of your overall professional persona.

As you've overcome setbacks and learned new skills so can you improve your public speaking.

Everybody, whatever your role in life, needs the skills of public speaking. For younger people starting out on a career, or even before, learning the skills of public speaking sets you on the on the road to success.

For those a bit older, even CEO's and middle management need to work on their communication skills. I have encountered two types of executives who should take a public speaking course.

Firstly, those who are nervous before an audience and need to learn how to overcome their anxiety.

Secondly, those who are super confident but don't realise, while they might be very successful in the business world, on the podium, they have a lot to learn. These are the types who think they know their subject so well they can "wing it" without any preparation. **Big mistake.**

Having been taught the skills of conquering fear or over confidence it's amazing how quickly they become very good public speakers.

Multi billionaire Warren Buffett was terrified to speak in public until he took a Dale Carnegie course. He rates completing the course the most important of all the diplomas he's received.

***"Now, you can improve your value by 50 percent just by learning communication skills--public speaking."* - Warren Buffett.**

Public speaking is not just getting up behind a lectern and addressing 150 people. Public speaking is anytime you are talking to a group of people, from 2 to 200 or more.

At your tenth birthday party when your mother asked you to thank the guests for coming and thanks for the presents, that was public speaking.

When you had to get up in front of the class and read out an essay or homework, that was public speaking.

When, as a teenager, you tried to influence your group to take a holiday or which movie to see, you guessed it, that was public speaking.

You can't avoid it, but the longer you keep trying to, the further behind you fall among your peers who have embraced standing up in front of an audience.

In an era where so much communication is non verbal e.g. email, text message, social media, our ability to communicate orally is increasingly being called in to question. It's for that very reason that those who display the skills of public speaking, the art of persuasion, the ability to entertain and inform, will rise above the rest. Such is the power of public speaking.

But so many are held back by fear.

You have to understand almost everyone feels nervous before a performance - it's how you handle the anxiety that sets you apart.

Rock legend Bruce Springsteen gets nervous before he performs in front of a live audience —his stomach gets all knotted up, he feels nauseous, his heart is pounding, he's getting clammy and even sweaty. But that's when he knows he's ready to go on. He's ready to give his audience his best show ever!

Harness your nerves and you'll give your absolute best.

There are some simple methods to help you overcome your performance anxiety.

So jump in the deep end.

Let's get started.

The greatest orators in the world are those who put hours and hours of work into every public performance.



Chapter One

Fear is the Key - How to Overcome it



According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you'd rather be in the casket than delivering the eulogy.
— Jerry Seinfeld

Jerry Seinfeld slgckgc [CC BY 2.0]
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Seinfeld got a lot of laughs for that line but it's basically true - Public Speaking is what many people fear more than anything.

Let's deal with this straight up - it's OK to be nervous before giving a speech. In fact if you're getting ready to give a talk and have no butterflies in the tummy you're not ready to perform.

A little bit of fear is good - It means you're serious about wanting to do a good job but have a fear of messing it up.

"In more than forty years appearing on television, on radio and being an emcee and keynote speaker I have never lost that anxious feeling just before showtime. I know the moment the butterflies aren't there will be the time to give it away."
Graeme Goodings

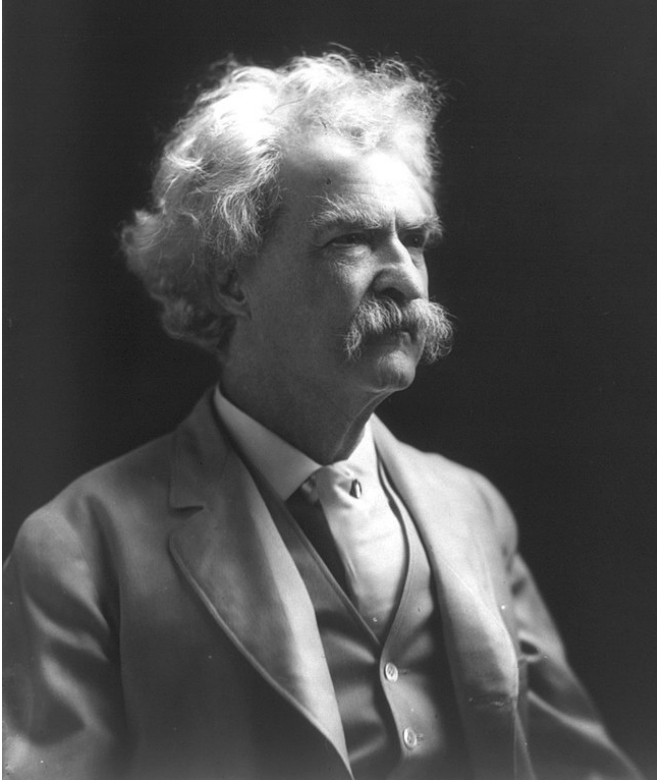


Being a good public speaker is all about controlling that anxiety and making it work for you. Nervousness produces adrenaline, which helps you think faster, speak more fluently, and adds the much needed enthusiasm to convey your message.

Managing the Nerves

So the nerves are always going to be there. How do we do to manage them and make them work for us?

1. Preparation - know your subject matter and once you have worked out what you are going to say practice, practice, practice.
2. Understand it's normal to be nervous.
3. Learn some relaxation methods before taking to the stage. Breathing exercises, light physical exercises all help you to relax.
4. A lot of anxiety is caused by the 'what if factor'. What if I forget what I'm going to say? What if I stumble over my words? What if the audience hates me? You're not going to be perfect - get over it. In fact the audience is far more likely to warm to you if you make the occasional stumble, as long as you press on in good humour. If you expect to be perfect expect to be disappointed.
5. Remember it's about the audience it's not about you.
6. The power of the pause - take a deep breath after making a point it will help calm your nerves and shows the audience you are confident and not rushing through your speech.
7. Audiences don't expect perfection but they do love passion. Be passionate about your subject and don't fear showing your emotions.
8. Look for receptive faces in the audience, better still if it's a friend who is there to support you.



***“There are two types of speakers:
those that are nervous and those
that are liars.”***

— Mark Twain

Dry Mouth Syndrome

A major side-effect of feeling nervous before a talk

Every speaker has experienced it at one time or another - just as you are about to speak you get that cotton mouth feeling where your mouth dries up completely making it virtually impossible to speak normally.

So what do you do?

On the day of your talk you should make sure you drink water regularly to stay hydrated (this applies to every day not just speech days).

Avoid coffee, smoking, alcohol, salty and fried food - all cause dehydration and make dry mouth symptoms worse.

Chewing on gum before (not during) your talk can get the salivary glands working.

Take several deep breaths before taking to the stage it will help reduce your anxiety which can cause a dry mouth.

At the lectern have a glass of water handy. It's OK to take a sip occasionally during your talk it provides a natural pause and helps settle your nerves and lubricate the vocal cords.



“I was dreading winning. I didn’t even prepare an acceptance speech. I was worried that I would slip up or do something horrible. I was shaking in my seat, putting on a posed smile. Inside I was petrified.” – Leonardo DiCaprio (at the 1998 Academy Awards)

Thore Siebrands CC BY-SA 3.0

So many famous, talented people have overcome a pathological fear of public speaking and so will you.



Chapter Two

Know your Audience

“They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” – Carol Buchner Motivational Speaker

Whether you are presenting to a small group of 12 or a larger group of 200 knowing all about your audience will go a long way to ensuring your success.

If you are to make a connection with your audience your topic needs to be important to them. You could have the best talk prepared on skateboards but if your audience is made up of retirees you're unlikely to get a great response.

If you are asked to give a talk and are not familiar with your audience ask relevant questions beforehand to organisers or some of the attendees. What is the age group? What are their interests? What would they like to hear about, and why have you been invited to talk?

It is also important to know the amount of knowledge they have about your topic, so you can present the information at the correct level to keep people interested and engaged. There is nothing more insulting than to present basic information to a highly knowledgeable audience, and conversely, speak at too high a level for a novice audience.

Leave out the Jargon

Jargon to avoid - 'Heavy lifting', 'Facetime', 'due diligence', 'down sizing'. OK if you are speaking to a group of business people but not a cross section of the community.

Likewise, '10-4', 'code eight', 'unsub,' all fine for a police seminar but no other group. You might be familiar with the acronyms but unless it's the obvious ones like RSPCA, YMCA, FBI, say them fully, not ATO but Australia Taxation Office, not POTUS but President of the United States.

If your audience members are wracking their brains trying to work out what DFAT is they're going to miss a vital part of your address (DFAT is the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). You want your audience to take in and understand your every word. Don't make it harder for them than necessary.

A good tip about learning about your audience is to turn up well before you're due to talk - this serves two purposes, firstly you can inspect the venue, do a microphone check and find out if they have a lectern etc.

Secondly, by arriving early you can meet people and get a feel for your audience. Many times I have arrived early to a function and after chatting with people have heard a couple of good stories about the group and different people involved that I have been able to refer to in my speech.

It's amazing the reaction you get if you can work in a 'local comment' like 'it's good to see Barry James here tonight, congratulations Barry I hear you have been awarded life membership with the club, well done.' A comment like that will get the audience on your side.

Before you give a talk to a group or organisation check out their website and Facebook page for any recent news that you might be able to work into your speech.

You can also learn more about your audience by throwing out a few general questions early in your talk. Find out how much experience they have with the topic and adjust the speech accordingly. Using this method you can also gauge the attitude of the audience.

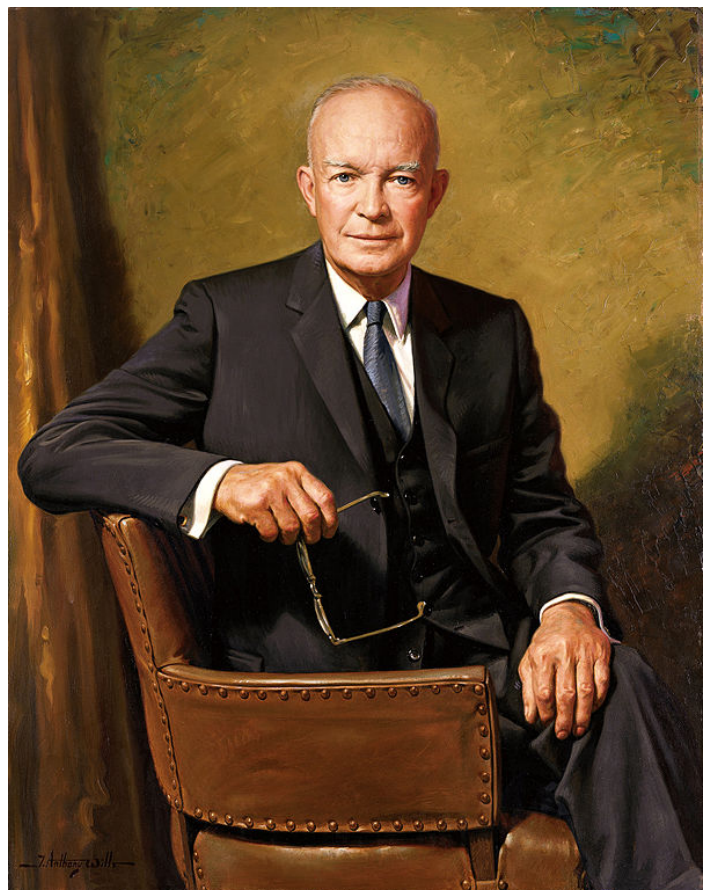
If they seem to be in a lighthearted mood you can use humour to build rapport with the audience. If they seem to be serious or the topic is of a serious nature, then you should get right to the heart of the talk.

“Once you get people laughing, they’re listening and you can tell them almost anything.” – Herbert Gardner American Playwright

Although you might have prepared your talk in a certain way be flexible to take advantage of any new information you may get before you are called on to speak.

Always read the mood of your audience. If they react positively to a story you are telling, tease it out, give them more. Conversely if a story is not going so well wrap it up quickly and move on to your next point. Remember you are there for them.

"A sense of humour is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done" - Dwight D. Eisenhower former US President



Chapter Three

You're not Going to be Perfect - Get Over It!

"Perfect is the enemy of good" - Voltaire



Public Speaking is not About Perfection. It's About Communicating.

Aiming for perfection is aiming for disappointment. The very nature of public speaking means even the very best may perform brilliantly, but never perfectly.

There are too many variables - a basketball player practices for hours shooting from the three point line, but he'll never shoot the perfect game. When it comes to public speaking there are many more variables. Too many to hone your skills to perfection.

No two venues are alike, no two audiences are the same, different groups react differently to exactly the same lines. Just ask a stage actor, they'll tell you a line that received riotous laughter one night can be met with almost silence the next. Why? Who knows, but it is a fact each group of people, be it large or small, has its own personality.

The professional speaker will detect this early and adjust their talk accordingly. If the audience is in a light-hearted mood, play it for laughs. If they're a no nonsense give us the facts group, then you play it that way and keep your delivery pretty straight. Whatever the situation you must continually read your audience because even within your talk they might drift from "playing it straight" to "give us a laugh." This is where you need to draw on your skills to go with the flow. The better you establish a rapport with the audience at the start the easier it will be to give them what they want wrapped up inside what you want to tell them (your core message).

Don't forget giving a talk or presentation is a two-way street, the audience are involved ever bit as much as you are. They are not looking for perfection, they're looking for passion and honesty.

Let go of the "I'll practice til I'm perfect" and work on "I'll practice til I'm the best I can be."

As you are working without a net of course there'll be a stumble or a hesitation here or there. That just shows you are human.

In fact I know speakers who deliberately work in a stumble or a gaff to get a laugh. It's a great icebreaker and one of the quickest ways to get your audience on side. And if/when you make a mistake move on in good humour, don't apologise just carry on. Apologies and cries of I'm very nervous don't invoke sympathy. As often as not it'll just make the audience ask themselves why they gave up their valuable time to be there. Everyone makes mistakes - it's how you recover that is the important thing.

Time to replace the quest for perfection with the quest for authenticity and empathy. That means letting go of who you think you should be and accepting who you really are. That's how you connect with your audience.

It's a damn sight easier to identify with an authentic person than one who continues to strive for perfection. And that's not just in the public speaking world but in life itself.

Winning over an audience can only be done built on trust, and if you come across as a genuine, passionate person then you are well on your way to achieving your aims.

“Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.” — Oprah Winfrey



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/aphrodite-in-nyc/15445694840>

“Those who run to long words are mainly the unskillful and tasteless; they confuse pomposity with dignity, flaccidity with ease, and bulk with force.” — H.W. Fowler



Chapter Four

How to Structure your Speech

“Designing a presentation without an audience in mind is like writing a love letter and addressing it: To Whom It May Concern.” – Ken Haemer, writer

Like writing a book, a speech must have good structure if it is to succeed.

By giving your speech a beginning, a middle and an end you will set down the foundations for a compelling speech.

The Opening

The first thirty seconds of your speech are possibly the most important. It's here where you must grab the attention and interest of your audience. Lose them and it's a long way back.

There are several good ways to begin. An interesting or controversial statement, a thought provoking question, a relevant quotation or even telling a joke (be careful with this one). A good beginning and the audience is yours and you can move seamlessly to the body of your speech.

The Middle

This is the largest part of your speech. You will have introduced your subject in your opening and now the audience will be ready to hear your central discussion.

The best way to achieve this is by having a series of key points that you will address. Don't make it too many. Three or four points are enough.

Make a point then tell a story to reinforce that point. Personal stories are best and people can relate to them. Use each point to build your case or your argument.

The Conclusion

You want to wrap up the conclusion and in some way you want to bring it back to your original message or if possible the core message that you are delivering.

The conclusion is probably the thing they will remember the most.

Find an interesting way to do that and if appropriate give a call to action.

The call to action could be “So make sure you have a regular checkup”, or it could be something like, “We go to the polls next Saturday don't forget to make your vote count.”

Overview

A classic way to structure a speech is the introduction is 10% of your speech, content 80%, and conclusion 10%. This allows for your audience to remember the substance of your speech versus an over-long introduction or conclusion.

Audiences make judgments about you and your message in the first 60 seconds.

Ways to Start Your Speech

There are many ways to start a talk, each in their own way can be very effective. This isn't one of them.

"Hi my name is Trevor Styles I work in tele-marketing I'm married with two kids and have a wonderful wife and we live in....." BORING.

Everyone's time is precious and that sort of intro is going to have the audience looking for the exits.

So How do you Start Your Talk?

1. **Ask a question** - "What would you do if you won \$10 million?"

A question immediately gets the audience thinking and draws them into your talk.

2. **Present an amazing or shocking factoid** - "In the time I am speaking to you 50 children will have died from malnutrition." The audience will lock-in wanting to know what comes next.

3. **Tell a story** - "15 years ago I was stranded on a desert island with little hope of rescue..." the audience is hooked but you then have to make it relevant to them.

4. **Humour** - tell a joke (but be careful, if you're not a natural joke teller leave it alone).

5. **Evoke an image** - "Imagine if you could become a time traveller - what era would you want to visit?"

These certainly aren't the only ways to begin your presentation, given time you will come up with your own. However, no matter which method you choose it has to be relevant to your message.

I often prepare a speech with two or three different openings, a question, an amazing factoid, or an amusing story.

I'll go through the speech using each opener and after numerous run throughs I'll decide on which is the most appropriate.

Sometimes, if I'm called on to give a similar speech I'll go with one of the alternative openers. It helps keep the presentation fresh.

But whatever style of opener you choose and how you prepare the rest of your speech always prepare with your particular audience in mind.



"It takes one hour of preparation for each minute of presentation time." - Wayne Burgraff 18th century American Philosopher



Chapter Five

Practice, Practice, Practice

“It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.” – Mark Twain

In any endeavour in life the more you practice the better you get. Public Speaking is no different.

No matter how well you think you know your subject you can always improve on how well you tell your story.

You only have to look on the sporting field where, invariably the greatest players are also the hardest trainers.

We all have seen great speakers take to the stage and effortlessly deliver a compelling speech. “Ah! it’s easy for him, he’s a natural.” But speak to him or her later and they’ll tell you the hours and hours that have gone into a 45 minute address.

***“If you want me to speak for two minutes, it will take me three weeks of preparation, it will take me a week to prepare. If you want me to speak for an hour, I am ready now.”
—former British PM and famous orator
Winston Churchill***



If some of the greatest minds, the greatest orators, and the greatest influencers in the world see the benefit of practice, practice, practice how about you?

To speak concisely requires more preparation than rambling. The more work and time and rehearsal you put into your talk the greater the rewards both personally and professionally.

Hone your speech, trim the fat, work to get the greatest impact with an economy of words.

Practice Techniques

So you've prepared your talk now you need to practice it. Where to start? A friend or partner can be a good audience. Deliver your talk to them but ask them to be honest in their assessment. Take in what they tell you and make the necessary adjustments.

A smartphone can be your friend. Video your talk and then watch it back. It's amazing what things you pick up and mannerisms you never thought you had. Remember don't be super critical, even the best stumble and make mistakes.

It's how you recover that's important. The more you practice the better you'll get and you'll become very familiar with your material.

Also when you practice, run a timer. You will have been allocated a certain amount of time for your talk. Don't be disrespectful to your hosts, run as close as possible to time. A 30 minute speech means just that not 35 or 40.

It is the height of rudeness to think that what you have to say is so important and so interesting that you can go past the time allotted to you and leave little time for other speakers or events. If you aren't aware of how long you have to go ask one of the organisers beforehand to give you a 2 minute signal so you can wind up on time.

You can write out your speech word for word but that should just be a template or guide. After writing out the speech condense it to key dot points that you can refer to onstage.

Eye contact with your audience is vital, but impossible if you're looking down to read a script.

Practice, practice, practice and after that go and practice again. There is no substitute for proper preparation.



“Whether you're delivering a sales presentation to a new client, going on a trip, speaking in front of a thousand people, or handling a customer complaint, when you are prepared, you are more empowered to do your best and perform at a higher level. It feels great!”

– Susan C. Young, The Art of Preparation: 8 Ways to Plan with Purpose & Intention for Positive Impact



Chapter Six

Know your Setup

“I once hosted a charity event without checking the setup beforehand. It was all too late I realised there was not enough light to read the copious awards I had to announce, so I spent the night using the light from my smartphone. Not smart.” - Graeme Goodings



No amount of preparation will be enough if you aren't familiar with the venue where you are speaking.

Walking in cold is a sure way to push your nerve level into over drive.

Allow time to check the venue whether it be on the day or even beforehand.

Is it a big room or a small room? The size and layout can affect the way you deliver your presentation. A small venue is more intimate and your movement and gestures should reflect that.

A large room with a bigger audience allows you to be more expansive and theatrical. Small gestures in a large hall will be lost - big hand gestures and body movements are more appropriate.

In a small venue the audience is closer they will see a half smile, rolling your eyes but in a big auditorium that would go unnoticed.

Small details, but used properly your performance will go from good to great.

While you're there, check the stage - is there a lectern - how's the lighting. Too late to be introduced on stage only to find there's no lectern for your notes or the lighting is too poor to read them.

Do a mic check to make sure you can be heard at the back of the room.

A check of the setup is your responsibility - don't rely on the organisers to have it right for you because once you're on stage the audience will blame you, not the organisers. if you are struggling to be heard or see your notes.

Doing a location check will also give you confidence because you will be familiar with your surroundings which gives you a feeling of control and will help calm the nerves.

No two venues are alike. They come in all shapes, sizes and layouts.



Here is a check list you can ask the organisers :

1. How big is the venue?
2. How many will be attending?
3. Will I be on a stage or delivering my speech at ground level?
4. Is there a lectern?
5. Is there a microphone?
6. Will the stage area be well lit?
7. Are there audio visual facilities for a Powerpoint or Keynote Presentation?
8. Will I be on the stage for my introduction or will I be seated in the audience?
9. Do you have an introduction for me or should I prepare a bio for you?
10. How long do you want me to talk?

A lot of those questions should be asked ahead of time but there is no substitute for actually going to the venue and seeing first hand if everything is to your liking. On the night if anything isn't right - no mic, no lights, no lectern, it's your fault. It's you the audience will blame not the organisers. A good public speaker leaves nothing to chance.



Chapter Seven

Learn How to Relax

Speech anxiety and pre-talk nerves can be beaten



"Picture yourself in a living room having a chat with your friends. You would be relaxed and comfortable talking to them, the same applies when public speaking."
Richard Branson

(Photo: UNClimateChange / Flickr)

At least five minutes before you go on stage find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted. Sit down take a few slow deep breaths and close your eyes. Be aware of your breathing as oxygen fills your lungs.

Listen to your breathing for a full 60 seconds. Now with your eyes still closed visualise a place where you have gone, maybe on holidays, a quiet, peaceful place perhaps a secluded beach or a gently flowing stream, anywhere you have found peace and tranquility. Stay there in your mind and recall the wonderful feeling it gave you.

Then visualise you are walking up to the podium to warm applause, you are smiling and acknowledging the crowd. see yourself giving a wonderful speech and the audience responding positively to your every word.

Open your eyes and then smile in anticipation.

Don't expect all the nerves to be gone, because they won't. Every great speaker, great sportsman, or great actor will tell you before the start of an event or a speech the nerves are always there until the game starts or the curtain rises. It's all about harnessing that nervous energy. It's when the adrenaline is flowing that your body and mind are at their peak and ready to perform.

Focus on why you are about to speak, what you hope to achieve and how you are going to connect with the audience and get your point across.

As long as you've done the hard work with your preparation the rest will happen just as you wish.

Remember the purpose of your speech is to make a difference - not to make yourself feel special. (Although you will feel pretty good if they love you).



Chapter Eight

Three Types of Speeches

We Live in a World of Information Overload

By the end of WW2 The amount of knowledge in the world was doubling every 25 years. Today it's doubling every 12 hours.

With such a tsunami of knowledge, communicating information in a way that is accessible to others is more important today than ever before.

One of the biggest barriers to people getting on in life is a lack of good communication skills. There are many very learned people who are now saying we need to elevate speaking to the same level as reading and writing.

Every single day people across the world stand up in front of some kind of audience and speak.

As communication becomes even more vital the chances are, whatever your walk of life, at sometime, be it personally or professionally, you'll be called on to give a speech in public.



The chances are, if you haven't been called on to give a speech, make a presentation or pay a tribute you soon will be.

So you better be ready for it.

BE PREPARED.

Although public speeches are of various types, they can generally be grouped into three categories : informative, persuasive, and entertaining.

Informative Speaking

When the speaker is presenting lessons or interesting facts to an audience or explaining how to do something. For example - a teacher lecturing about economics, a student delivering an aural assignment, or a doctor explaining a surgical procedure.

The primary purpose of informative presentations is to share one's knowledge of a subject with an audience. Reasons for making an informative speech vary widely. For example, you might be asked to instruct a group of co-workers on how to use new computer software or to report to a group of managers how your latest project is coming along. A local community group might wish to hear about your charity work during your holidays, or your classmates may want you to share your expertise on Thai cooking. What all these examples have in common is the goal of imparting information to an audience.

We are all called on to communicate in an informative way throughout our lives.

Persuasive Speaking - Motivation or Call to Action

Another common reason for speaking to an audience is to try to influence them in some way.

In our everyday lives, we are often called on to convince, motivate, or otherwise persuade others to change their beliefs, take an action, or reconsider a decision. Talking your clients into buying your company's products, motivating people to exercise and change bad eating habits, or trying to convince electors you are the best candidate for political office all involve influencing people through public speaking.

Whether public speaking is something you do every day or just a few times a year, persuading others is a challenging task. If you develop the skill to persuade and motivate effectively, it can be personally and professionally rewarding.

Entertaining Speaking

This type of address involves speaking at occasions ranging from introductions to wedding toasts, to presenting and accepting awards, to delivering eulogies at funerals and making a tribute. It also includes after-dinner speeches and introducing a special guest at a major event.

As with persuasive and informative speaking, there are professionals who make a living simply from delivering entertaining speeches. They range across many and varied fields from sporting identities to comedians, from social commentators to religious leaders. The secret all successful public speakers have is their apparent ease and comfort in speaking in public. They make it look so easy, but as they all will tell you, many hours work and practice goes into every sermon, address or comedy routine.

Speaking to entertain is a task that requires preparation and practice to be effective. It's a skill that you will never perfect, but you will be able to improve every time you take to the stage.

Note what works and what doesn't - keep the stuff that works and ditch or refine the material that doesn't.

It's well known comedians will start with a routine "off Broadway" and polish and change it to get it as good as possible before the "Big Opening." The final routine is often barely recognisable from where they started, but it will be much better.

On a smaller scale you can rehearse and practice in front of family and friends and, depending on their reaction modify and re-work your speech. Polish it until it is as good as it possibly can be.

Be mindful that these categories of speech can often overlap. You might want to use some forms of entertaining while informing or persuading your audience. There are no absolutes in public speaking it's about preparing and rehearsing, then performing the speech, then making a note of what worked and what didn't so next time you will do even better.



The Impromptu Speech

This is the speech people dread the most but by keeping a cool head it can be the easiest to pull off. As long as you have a plan.

CASE STUDY

I was invited to my uncle and aunty's 50th wedding anniversary. Every one was having a great time when I was approached by my aunty who said it was time for a speech but no-one in her immediate family felt comfortable about saying a few words in public. "*Graeme would you be happy to make a speech.*" I felt honoured to be asked but laid down a few ground rules. I would need 15 minutes preparation time and would need to talk to a few people to get some stories to talk about.

After doing my "research" I made a few notes which I worked into a template which I use for situations just like this.

Feel free to copy and use this template.

- 1. The Greeting - Hello everyone, my name is**
- 2. The Event - Well you all know why we're here to celebrate theof..... and....**
- 3. Common Ground - mention something that you and your audience can relate to. "Like most of you I have**
- 4. The Story.... I'm sure you all have your own stories but one I most fondly remember about.... andhappened when I was just a boy....."**
- 5. The Big Ending - We all have a lot to be thankful for in knowing ... and ... So please join with me now in toasting and**

Obviously change the names and stories to suit

It's just a basic template the can be adjusted for farewelling a work colleague, a family 21st. or any similar event.

The secret is, don't be rushed, buy some time to do some preparation, then attack your speech with passion. Remember all the rules we've covered so far are just as important in this situation - make eye contact, smile, note the audiences reaction and respond accordingly. If they are enjoying your speech draw it out a bit. But not too much.

In the business world you can also be called on to speak "off the cuff." It's here you can plan ahead of time. You could be asked to give a brief status report for your project at a department meeting.

So, even if you're not expecting it, put together a brief status report on your department or project you're working on. You may not be called on to give it but think of the impact you'll have on the boss if he sees what you're capable of.

Even if your "talk" doesn't see the light of day the work you've put in in preparation and practice will stand you in good stead for when you are called into action.

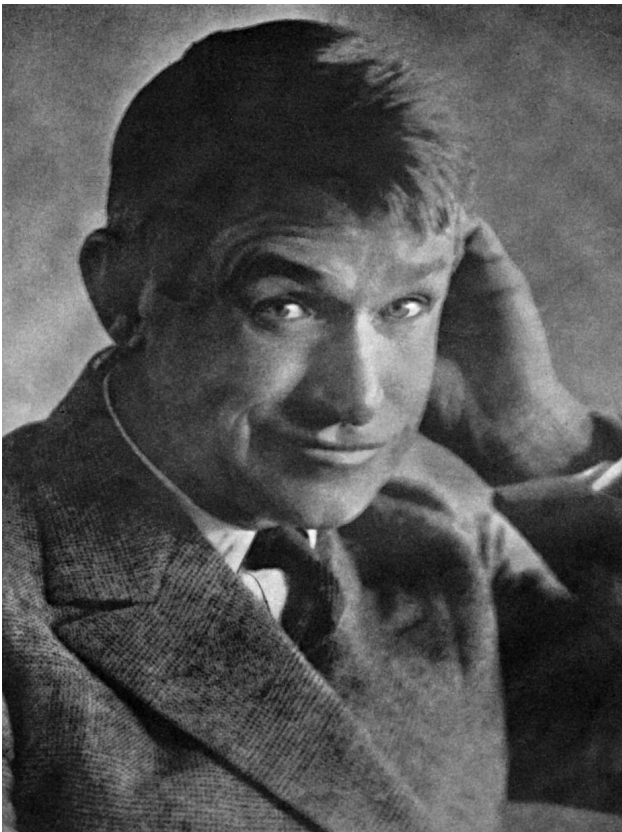
Exercise - Imagine one of your friends is leaving for interstate or a work colleague is moving on. Using the template above (adjusted for the situation) work up a 2 or 3 minute talk. Then practice delivering it, recording it if you can on your smartphone. Play it back and note where you could improve. Then do it again, and again.

With practice, when the time comes you'll be ready to take centre stage.



Chapter Nine

The Importance of Appearance



“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”
- Will Rogers

The audience will start forming an opinion about you before you utter your first word. After your introduction and as you approach the stage they will have noted what you are wearing, how you are groomed and your physical demeanour.

In other words, before you open your mouth most people in the audience will have a firm impression about you. So if it is a negative impression you have to work hard to get them back.

Make it easier on yourself by making sure the first impressions are the right ones.

Remember that your presentation begins the moment you're recognised as the speaker.

“90% of how well the talk will go is determined before the speaker steps on the platform.” – Somers White

Dress appropriately, that might mean asking the organisers what the dress code for the event is.

I believe it is better to dress slightly above the dress code than below. It's hard to command respect if the men in the audience are in suits and ties and you're in jeans and a sweatshirt.

By the same token if you're talking to a group about surfing you might look silly in a suit and tie. Dress for the occasion.

For women don't wear clothing that can be distracting, which might mean avoiding flashy jewellery or flamboyant shirts and scarves. However, if outrageous dress is your trademark go for it. Your appearance should complement your content and the audience to which you are speaking.

Avoid noisy accessories - bangles, banging the lectern can be very annoying, also large earrings can be very distracting.

When you are giving a talk try to wear something that makes you feel good.

Dress comfortably, don't wear tight or restrictive clothing particularly if you are moving around the stage .

If possible, just before your presentation find a mirror and check everything is in place and looking good. Check the teeth for foreign objects - a winning smile isn't going to score you many points if its spoiled by a piece of spinach stuck in your teeth.

When you're introduced take to the stage with enthusiasm and a smile. Don't make an entry like you're going to the gallows. You want to be seen as someone who can't wait to begin. Enthusiasm is infectious.

When you reach the lectern don't launch straight in to your talk. Pause, look around your audience with a smile on your face. Make eye contact. They'll already be warming to you and you haven't uttered a word.

The pause will focus their attention and heighten their expectation. That's when you launch into your killer opening.



“The first thing others see is YOU—not your resume, background, or credentials. A picture is truly worth a thousand words and how you dress is the “picture” you provide for all the world to see.”

— Susan C. Young



Chapter Ten

How to Handle the Q and A

The Q and A session at the end of a talk is a critical part of the overall presentation. Blow it and all your hard work winning over your audience can be lost.

Whether you're talking to six people in a boardroom or a large audience in an auditorium the way you handle the Q and A will either reinforce your message or totally undermine it.



The Q and A is every bit as important as your talk so you should prepare for it accordingly.

Preparation - Just as you need to prepare for your presentation or speech you need to put as much work into a Q and A session. When you have prepared your talk review it and see what type of questions it generates. Get a third party to listen to your presentation ahead of time to see what questions they come up with. Armed with that review, research those possible questions so you can provide the answers.

Respect - show respect to your audience even if they ask questions that you might find irrelevant or unnecessary. Your audience has given you the courtesy to listen to you so handle all questions sensitively. If the question is inappropriate say so in a nice way. Or “I’m happy to talk with you after the session.”

Admit it when you don’t know - Don’t wing it or try to fudge the answer - you will get found out. It’s better to say “That question is outside my area of expertise.” I’m happy to find out the answer for you and will let you know later.”

Keep your sense of humour - If a question comes out of left field that throws you but draws a laugh from the audience join in. Being the butt of a light hearted comment will endear you to the crowd.

Repeat the question - one of the big problems with a Q and A is that unless there's a roving microphone most of your audience won't hear the question. So repeat it for them. That serves two purposes firstly by repeating the question all the audience will hear it and secondly it will buy time for you to formulate an answer.

Pause - it's OK to pause before replying, it shows you are evaluating the question to come up with the best possible answer.

Be warm - many speakers who have engaged with the audience during the presentation, cool markedly as the fear the worst from the Q and A. The goodwill they'd built up is lost immediately. So begin the session with a warm smile, show you are looking forward to answering their questions. Remember the Q and A is a great opportunity to cover ground missed in you talk and to cement a positive relationship with members of the audience.

Time - Always be aware of the time remaining. It's very poor form to run over time as there maybe other speakers or sessions that will run late. During the Q and A keep your audience aware. "we only have a few minutes left so time for two more questions." Always apologise when time runs out but give your contact details and say you will respond to any questions via email.

Conclusion

As the Q and A session comes at the end of a presentation, how you perform during that time will have a lasting impact on the audience members. So you must work to end on a high note and make a final, positive impression on the audience.

Think through possible scenarios and develop a strategic plan for how you will handle each situation. The more prepared you are for tough questions, the more successful your presentation will be.

Don't end with "well we don't have time for anymore questions. Thank you and goodnight." That's pretty lame.

Leave a minute at the end to wrap up the session with two or three sentences that encapsulate your talk and perhaps a Call to action. "So remember we can all make a difference when we go out to vote on Saturday."

"Life is an unanswered question, but let's still believe in the dignity and importance of the question."

Tennessee Williams



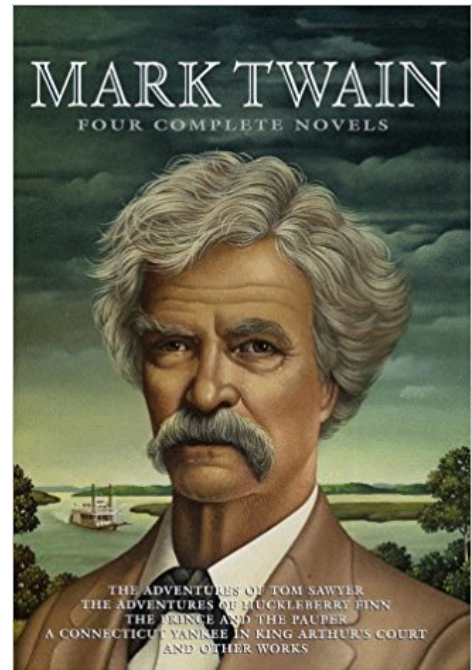
Chapter Eleven

The Power of the Pause

The Pause may Well be the Most Powerful Tool in a Speakers Arsenal

“The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause.”

Mark Twain



This is a chapter about nothing - the space between words, thoughts, sentences. The pause.

But it can be every bit as powerful as any words ever written, and used properly can increase the power of those words.

But you just don't go throwing pauses in for the sake of it. They need to be carefully crafted like the notes in a symphony.

Just as comedy is all about timing so is public speaking. Used correctly it will add drama, emotion and clarity to your message. However, use pauses incorrectly and you can come across as confused, laboured and uncertain.

When used well a pause will have the audience captivated - waiting on the outcome. Particularly effective with a rhetorical question... *“What have we done to deserve the standard of politicians we have in office?”* (Pause)

The audience will consider the question, perhaps formulate their own opinion, then they'll focus on you for your answer. All in the space of 2 or 3 seconds. Then, with their full attention you answer.

The audience is yours. Make sure you have the answer to keep them captivated.

Just as you practice your delivery you practice your pauses. When to use them and for how long.

Pauses can be divided into four categories.

1. **The transition pause** - where you are moving on from one idea to the next. In writing, punctuation performs the role of separating trains of thought. In speaking the pause performs the same role.
2. **The dramatic pause** - is used to heighten tension, to focus your audience on what's to follow. " ...and then he said something that changed my life forever...(pause).... (pause)...(pause) "He said...." You've just raised the stakes and the audience is totally involved.
3. **The reflective pause** - After a deep and meaningful statement"*every 30 seconds a child dies of starvation...*(Pause)....(pause)..(pause) giving your audience time to realise the enormity of your words.
4. **Pause for pace** - your delivery shouldn't be one paced - very quickly your audience will become bored. You need to inject light and shade. Pauses can help you change the pace to keep your audience concentrating and to allow your message to sink in.

The pause is also very effective in a Q and A session. When asked a question don't rush to answer with the first thing that comes into your head. Pause to digest the question and show the audience that you are giving the question serious thought. In that two or three seconds you can formulate a reply. Then, after you have completed your answer, pause again to show you have completed your train of thought and the audience has time to take it in. Then move on to the next question.

The length of the pause is critical. While the transition pause is very short, a second at the most, a dramatic pause can run to several seconds. The longer the more the tension builds. The pause for pace is pretty much just a breath pause one maybe two seconds.

The pause isn't limited to what you are saying. If you're the kind of speaker who likes to move around the stage a pause in your movement can be very effective. As your flow of words stops, think about pausing your body movement too, just as you are about to deliver a key point. The impact on your audience can be very effective as their attention focuses on you to find out what happens next.

Pauses allow what you're saying to fully sink in - to build suspense - to share an emotional moment, to ponder a situation, to move from one train of thought to another.

Don't ever underestimate the power of the pause.



"The most precious things in speech are the pauses." - Sir Ralph Richardson

Ralph Richardson By Paramount Pictures - Ebay, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=30813980>



Chapter Twelve

Always Tell a Story

***"Those who tell the stories rule the world."* – Hopi American Indian proverb**

The key to being a great public speaker isn't trying to be perfect or memorising your lines word for word - it's telling a good story, because telling a story comes from the heart.

It's all well and good regurgitating facts and figures but that won't endear you to your audience. It's not the way to connect.

So how do you combine the necessary "nuts and bolts" of your talk with telling a story that is relevant?

Stories help us connect to solutions and form bonds with those with similar experiences or show them a path to go to where they want to be.

Hearing stories about someone's successes or failures help us feel more confident to make the right decisions. It's comforting to know others have trodden the same path. A story is inclusive, we can all relate to it. The secret is weaving in the right information while your story is unfolding.

How do I find the right story to tell?

This is where you draw on your family, your friends, business colleagues and customers, things that happened in your life that lead you to where you are. It's a matter of being observant and when an interesting event happens in your life note it down, as the story might be useful for one of your presentations.

Stories about things you are passionate about are always going to resonate better with your audience.

To tell a compelling story you need three elements:

1. **Honesty** - it's the only way to go. You can embellish a story as long as you're drawing on your own experiences. But don't try to fake it, an audience will see straight through you.
2. **A lesson** - whatever the story, business or personal it has to carry a message, a moral, a gem of knowledge that you can share and your audience can take away.
3. **End on an inspiring or motivating theme** - Your story should end on a positive note - something that fills your audience with excitement or a reason to take on a challenge.

'I often give talks about dealing with cancer. It's a pretty heavy topic but I make a point of keeping it light while not avoiding the heavy stuff. Highlighting that even in times of despair there's room for a good laugh. In fact humour is a tonic that we all need more of. At the end of my talks I invariably am told by cancer sufferers or their carers that after hearing my story they have renewed hope and energy to succeed in their battle.'
Graeme Goodings

A Good Public Speaker Needs to be a Good Story Teller



So why are stories in speeches so important?

Life is about stories - whether it be listening to your friends latest holiday adventure, a bizarre event in the shopping mall, the kids bad day at school or watching your favourite TV show or taking in a movie.

How does this translate to the business world?

It's because we're looking for answers. We are all experiencing similar things, but we often think we are the only ones facing a particular problem. We are not always aware the problem we have has already been faced and even solved by someone else.

Stories help us connect to solutions and form bonds with others who have navigated similar paths.

Hearing stories about other people's successes and sometimes failures helps us feel more confident in the choices and decisions we make every day.

Hence the power of the story.



***"Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today." — Robert McKee
author/lecturer***



Chapter Thirteen

Visualise your Success

Visualisation is a Powerful Weapon in Becoming a Good Public Speaker.

“Visualise what you want to do before you do it. Visualisation is so powerful that when you know what you want, you will get it.” Audrey Flack
painter/sculptor



Assuming you've done all the research and preparation for your talk, positive visualisation will help you take the stage with confidence and nerves under control.

Visualisation is the way to use your mind to actually experience the event in a positive way before you go out and give your speech. It's best to do it in a quiet place, where you can close your eyes and think about what it would be like to be up on stage giving that speech.

The Keys to Positive Visualisation

The Introduction

See yourself being introduced to enthusiastic applause. Visualise approaching the stage positively, in a purposeful way. Then as you are standing at the lectern look around the audience, smiling and making eye contact.

See yourself delivering your opening words and the audience responding positively, laughing at a humorous comment.

The Audience

Remember your talk is about the audience, not you. Visualise how they are interested and absorbed in everything you have to say. Notice how they react to key aspects of your speech.

Imagine the audience is in the palm of your hand, taking in everything you have to say.

Visualise your speech being delivered with passion, pauses in the perfect places, no umms no ahhs.

See your speech ending to rapturous applause, then visualise members of the audience coming up to you and congratulating you on your presentation.

Regular visualisation convinces your brain that you are a confident speaker.

“There is good evidence that imagining oneself performing an activity activates parts of the brain that are used in actually performing that activity.”

Professor Stephen Kosslyn, director of Stanford’s Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences.



Chapter fourteen

Do's and Don'ts

The Do's

1. Prepare your speech and rehearse and rehearse.
2. Embrace your nervous energy.
3. Have a strong opening.
4. Make eye contact.
5. Be passionate.
6. Use gestures - only if it comes naturally.
7. Involve your audience.
8. Use the power of the pause.
9. End with a Call to Action
10. Make a note of what worked in your speech and what didn't.



The Don'ts

1. Read from a script.
2. Talk too fast or too slow.
3. Use jargon.
4. Forget to use pauses.
5. Make excuses.
6. Act superior or patronising.
7. Use gestures - if it doesn't come naturally.
8. Slump or lean on the podium.
9. Try to be perfect.
10. Run over time.



Chapter Fifteen

Last Minute Check List

I'm About to go on Stage - What do I do Now?

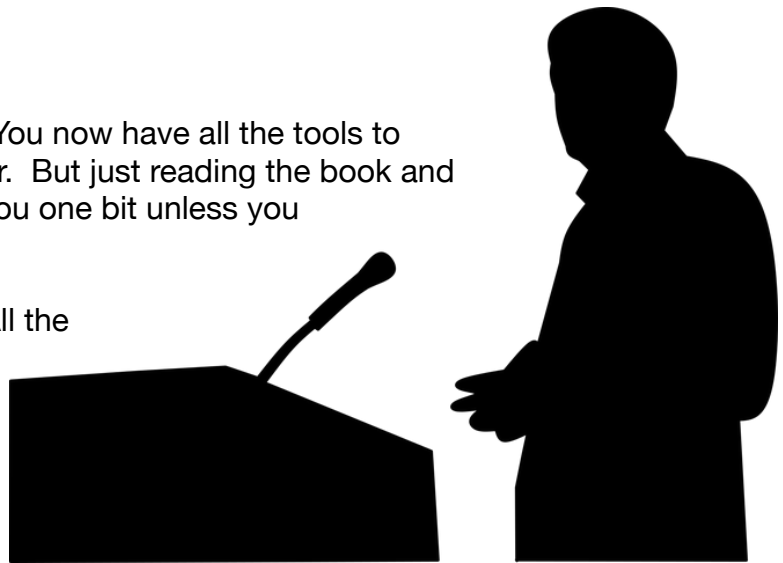
1. Breathe slowly and deeply.
2. Drink plenty of water (should start about 20 or 30 minutes before you go onstage).
3. Find a private place where you can start psyching yourself up.
4. Do some light exercise to help lose some of that nervous energy.
5. Get rid of the negative “what if I mess up?” and replace it with “This is going to be great.” “I can’t wait to get out there.”
6. Some speakers go through a routine to boost their energy levels by beating their chest or chanting a power slogan or mantra (just like sporting teams do).
7. It will all help control your nervous energy but it won’t get rid of it. You need the adrenaline pumping so you can perform at your best.
8. Visualise being called to the stage to warm applause and see yourself smiling at the audience, full of energy and raring to go.
9. Remember the audience want you to succeed, they’re on your side.
10. Focus on your message not on you.
11. Smile before you speak. Smile and look around the audience, smile while making eye contact. Smiling makes you look better, look more relaxed and also relaxes your vocal cords.
12. A presentation is a conversation - interact with your audience, it’s the best way to connect with them.
13. If you have a momentary brain fade and forget what you going to say just pause, look around your audience and smile...the audience will think you are pausing for effect and you’ll have time to collect your thoughts.
14. Expect the unexpected. No matter how well you have prepared something might not go to plan. But that’s OK, if something goes awry just smile at your audience and say something like “...and that’s the joy of a live performance.”
15. and finally, you have worked to get to where you are and to be able to command a live audience is an honour and a privilege. Take a bow!



Conclusion

Well done, you've made it this far. You now have all the tools to become an excellent public speaker. But just reading the book and absorbing its contents won't help you one bit unless you PRACTICE.

There's no substitute for practice. All the theoretical knowledge in the world won't see you graduate in the demanding arena of public speaking, unless you Just Do It!



Every opportunity you have to speak in public take it. You will get better every single time.

It's just like someone who wants to build up their body. They've read the book on body building, bicep curls, squats, bench press. They now know everything needed to get the body of their dreams, but when will it start to take shape? Not until they work up a sweat with the weights and start pumping iron.

The same with public speaking, get out there and start exercising, put what you've learned to the test.

That means volunteering at every opportunity - a family 21st, staff Christmas Party, workmates farewell - if someone has to say a few words put your hand up and volunteer. Don't go in unrehearsed of course.

Stick to the principles we've talked about earlier and put together a brief, entertaining talk.

Here's a tip, and only those you have stuck it out until the end will get.

Every time you open your computer and fire up the webcam give a two or three minute talk, record it and play it back. Keep doing it until it becomes second nature and you lose your inhibitions about performing in front of a camera.

Make sure you have a subject to talk about, don't just waffle on (remember what I said about preparation). Have an opening, a middle and a closing.

Be aware of your appearance, pauses, smiles, ums and ahhs. You'll quickly learn what's good and what's not so good by looking back at the videos.

You can keep all your talks, and after you've done 5 or 10 play them back one after the other and you'll see just how much progress you've made.

Along the way it's good to see how the best do it. Check out TED talks on Youtube. See how the experts command an audience. But just watch for guidance, don't try to become a clone of a great speaker.

Join groups like Toastmasters, Rostrum or the Penguin Club.

One of the great feelings in life is to confidently stand and present in front of an audience and have them hanging on your every word, to end your compelling speech to cheers and applause.

I can't guarantee you'll perform without nerves but I can guarantee the adrenaline flow from a job well done will have you wanting to speak in public again.

“A book may give you excellent suggestions on how best to conduct yourself in the water, but sooner or later you must get wet ...” — Dale Carnegie

If you're interested in taking your public speaking to the next level and would like to take my public speaking course or find out more information contact me at [**graeme@goodinningsmedia.com.au**](mailto:graeme@goodinningsmedia.com.au)

ENJOY!!



About the Author

Hi I'm Graeme Goodings

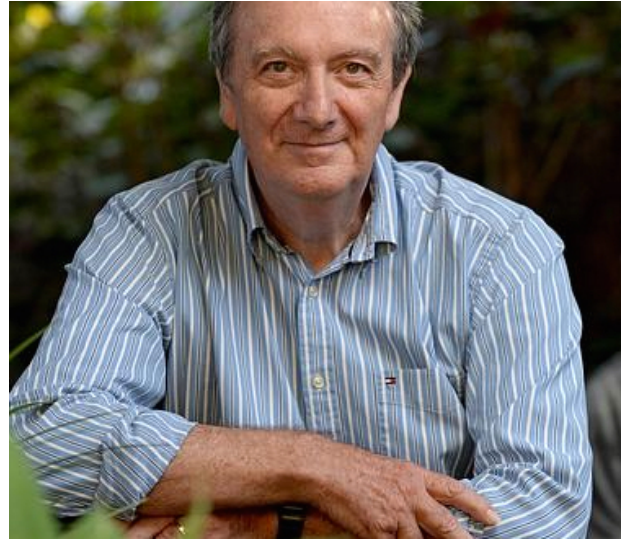
I've spent a lifetime in the media in radio, television, print and electronic media. Over the years I've been called on to emcee events, be a keynote speaker and conference facilitator.

In that time I've met and worked with some incredibly talented people and like to think I learned a lot from them about public speaking.

Two things about public speaking that have come through loud and clear - the best public speakers are those that put in the most preparation, and all of them, without exception, have pre-speech nerves.

The purpose of this book is to help you learn to prepare to be a good public speaker and how to deal with pre-performance anxiety.

I have used my decades of experience to help train sports people, politicians, middle and senior management, and secondary school students to learn the skills of public speaking.



Warren Buffett, one of the richest men in the world said - ***"Now, you can improve your value by 50 percent just by learning communication skills - public speaking."***

It has given me great joy to see my students progress from fearful, hesitant performers in front of an audience to the point where they can take to the stage with poise and confidence and deliver a compelling speech.

That can be you.

There's a popular misconception that great public speakers are born to speak. Not true, great public speakers are made not born and the harder they work at it the better they get.

Since leaving television I have continued emceeing major events, conferences and speaking engagements but have concentrated more on mentoring, teaching public speaking and media training.

If you want to find out more about what I do check out my website goodinningsmedia.com.au or Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ggoodings/>

I am also available for public speaking workshops and Zoom mentoring.
Contact me at graeme@goodinningsmedia.com.au

I know that this book will help you overcome your fear of public speaking and enable you to become a better communicator which will enrich not only your business but personal life.

