



District 31 Toastmasters
Serving Eastern Massachusetts
and Rhode Island



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10 Tips for Improving Communication

When at a briefing, meeting or networking situation, you are “selling yourself.” While feeling some nervousness is natural -- even beneficial -- too much nervousness can be detrimental. Here are some proven ways to prepare for success.

1. **Prepare.** Do as much research on the company, audience, and/or forum as you can. Find out the names of people who may be present at the interview or networking situation. What is their role? Are they peers, potential employers, HR representatives, buyers, managers? It's easier to speak to a group of familiar people than to strangers. Pre-select a handful of topics that may arise and prepare your answers.
2. **Practice, Practice, Practice!** Rehearse your thoughts out loud. Get familiar with your own voice in this context. Review it with video or audio recordings. Revise as necessary, but rehearse in its final form. Use conversational language and a conversational tone -- try not to sound too stiff.
3. **Introduce Yourself.** Make sure your first impression is a positive one. Remember to smile and make good eye contact with the person to whom you're speaking. Use a firm handshake and don't be afraid to speak first.
4. **Know the Venue.** Arrive early and allow yourself time to get familiar with the building and its surroundings. Loosen up by talking to the receptionist or any people you encounter while waiting.
5. **Relax.** Ease tension by taking deep, diaphragmatic breaths. Transform nervous energy into enthusiasm. Focus on the aspects of the process of meeting and talking to new people that you enjoy. Look for the upside of the other aspects of communicating.
6. **Visualize Success.** Imagine yourself speaking to your audience, your voice clear and confident. Clearly picture the situation that you are preparing for -- an interview with potential employers or networking with people in your industry. Focus on a receiving a warm reception and success with your conversation. It will boost your confidence.
7. **Realize that People Want You to Succeed.** Your audience wants you to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. Interviewers are hoping you will be the candidate they are seeking. Networking associates want to enjoy their interaction with you. Companies are hoping your product will benefit them.
8. **Be Confident.** Don't apologize for any nervousness or problem. Any misstep is probably more obvious to you than to your audience. Your audience may not have noticed. And even if they did, there's no benefit in highlighting it. Maintain your poise and exemplify your ability to handle yourself in stressful situations.
9. **Concentrate on the Message.** Focus your attention away from your own anxieties and concentrate on your message -- and your audience. Think about educating your audience about you and your knowledgebase. Make your case as to why the company should be interested in you or your product.
10. **Gain Experience.** Experience builds confidence, which is the key to public speaking. Look for opportunities to speak in a safe, friendly environment. Volunteer to speak at weddings, gatherings, family outings -- every chance you get. Visit a local **Toastmasters Club** and ask for opportunities to participate.

Speaking with Your Whole Heart Resources and Opportunities

Strategic use of Special Resources can support your presentation. They can draw the audience into your speech, paint a clearer picture, aid in transitions and can focus the conclusion or call to action. Some of these tools will require extensive preparation because they may be outside your current comfort zone.

Remember, these tools can help a great speech. They can seldom compensate for weakness in sincerity, planning, preparation or practice, practice, practice.

Painting Colorful Word Pictures

Humor: Softens the audience, disarms, builds connections

Emotion: Tenderness, touching, heartbreak, sorrow

Singing: Connects with the audience (or at least entertains them)

Getting Physical

Gestures: Lets the audience see while they hear

Physical Surprise: Slapstick, falling down, jumping, banging

Acting Out: Physical behavior that lays a broader backdrop for the words

Costume: Helps direct the audience to the appropriate context

Props: Clarify some points that might be hard to explain

Written Information

Easel Pad Flip-Chart: Write large, legibly

Display Board: Large Font, Use Colors sparingly

Pictures: Need to be as large as practical

Pass Around: Needs to be clear and simple

Handouts: Pass out after presentation

Audio/Visual: Test the system prior to use

Slide Shows: Use it to supplement, not dominate your speech