How to Speak Well and Confidently

Good communication is the key to success, whether you're speaking in front of a large audience or trying to get a point across to a new friend. If you want to know how to speak well and confidently, you've got to believe in yourself, speak slowly and carefully, and have strong convictions about what you're saying. If you want to know how to sound intelligent and thoughtful when you speak, then see Step 1 to get started.

1. **State your opinions with conviction.** Before you speak, you have to make sure you really believe in what you say, whether you're saying that a new album is amazing or that the growing inequality gap in the United States should be the government's #1 concern. You don't have to sound arrogant to get your point across and to sound like you really believe in what you're saying instead of turning to other people for validation or approval.
   - It's all in how you say it. If you start a sentence by saying, "I think that..." Or, "But maybe..." then nothing you say afterwards will sound as forceful as it would have if you just made the statement.

2. **Make eye contact.** For one thing, it is polite for others. Also, eye contact will help others to listen to your thinking carefully. Find a few friendly faces to focus on so your confidence goes up while you're speaking and that you're communicating your message even more clearly. If you look down at the floor, you won't look confident, and if you're looking around while you talk, people may think that you're distracted or looking for something better to do.
   - Look people in the eyes when you talk to them - you can look away for a moment or two to get your footing, but in general, stay focused on the eyes of the people you're talking to.
   - If you see someone looking confused or concerned when you're speaking, you may even think about whether or not you're being clear enough. However, you shouldn't let one confused person get you off track.
   - If you're talking to a larger group where it's difficult to really make eye contact, focus on looking at just a few people in the audience.
3. **Use the shortcut method for better speaking.** Chances are that you'll sometimes have to speak in public as part of your role. While this can seem intimidating, the benefits of being able to speak well outweigh any perceived fears. To become a better speaker, remember the following strategies (deliberately kept short for ease of memory):

- Plan appropriately.
- Practice.
- Engage with your audience.
- Pay attention to body language.
- Think and speak positively.
- Cope with your nerves.
- Watch recordings of your speeches. This will help you to improve each time.

4. **Visualize success.** Visualize yourself giving your speech. Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear and confident. Visualize the audience clapping – it will boost your confidence. Close your eyes and imagine the most confident and well-spoken version of yourself up in the audience, dazzling them with his words. Or if you're nervous about speaking in a smaller social setting, picture yourself wowing a small group of friends with your words. Picturing the scenario you want to enact can go a long way in making you succeed.

   - This way, when it's time for your big moment, remember what you visualized -- how can you get there?

5. **Know your audience.** Knowing who you're talking to can go a long way in helping you speak with confidence. If you're addressing a large audience, it's important to know where they come from, how old they are, and what their general knowledge is about your subject. This can help you prepare your words accordingly. If you're talking to a handful of people, knowing as much about them as you can -- their political beliefs, their senses of humor -- can help you say the right thing (and to avoid saying the wrong one).

   - One of the reasons people get nervous when speaking is because they don't like the unknown; that's why you have to gather as much information as possible.
6. **Have confident body language.** Body language can go a long way in making you appear and feel confident. If you want to have confident body language, here's what you should do:

- Have great posture
- Avoid slouching
- Don't fidget with your hands
- Avoid pacing around too much
- Look ahead of you instead of down at the floor
- Keep your face and body relaxed

7. **Speak loudly enough for everyone to hear.** While you don't want to shout, you should speak loudly enough so that people don't have to ask you to repeat yourself. Speaking quietly or softly will make people think you are shy and that you don't have confidence in what you're saying -- that you don't really want to be heard anyway.

- If you speak in a low voice, not only will others not be able to hear what you say, but you will also portray a submissive demeanor, which suggests the opposite of a confident one.
- On the other hand, you don't want to speak so loudly that you're talking over people just to be heard. Your words alone should get people's attention.
8. **Expand your vocabulary.** Read as much as you can, from online journals such as Slate or Salon.com to serious literature like *Anna Karenina*. The more you read, the more you'll know and the more expansive your vocabulary will be. You'll be learning new words and understanding new phrases without even knowing it, and soon, you'll be using the words you read while you're speaking. Having a wide vocabulary is a must if you really want to speak well.

- This doesn't mean that you have to throw fifty $100 words into your speeches or everyday conversations every time. Just a few key "fancy" words can make you sound more intelligent, but not like you're trying too hard.
- Keep a vocabulary journal. Write down all of the new words you've encountered while reading and define them.

9. **Repeat your main points.** You may think that stating your main points once is enough and that your audience will get what's most important about what you have to say. Well, that's where you're wrong. If you have a few main points that you really want to get across, whether you're addressing a crowd or trying to make a point during an argument with a friend, stating your main points again, perhaps at the end of your conversation or speech, will help you define your message and make your point even more clearly.

- Think about writing an essay. You have to repeat your main points at the end of every paragraph and in your conclusion, don't you? Well, speaking is not so different.
10. **Practice, practice, practice.** Rehearse out loud with all equipment you plan on using. Revise as necessary. Work to control filler words; practice, pause and breathe. Practice with a timer and allow time for the unexpected. The more you practice, the more natural and well-spoken you will sound when it's time to speak. And the better you feel like you know what to say, the more confidence you'll have when it counts.

11. **Don't apologize.** If you're nervous or have accidentally misspoken, don't draw people's attention to it by apologizing for it. Just get on with what you have to say and people will forget all about what you said. Saying, "Sorry guys, I'm just so nervous," or "Oops, that was awkward," will only make things more awkward and uncomfortable. Everyone makes mistakes and there's no need to acknowledge yours unless you're really, really good at poking fun at yourself.

12. **Realize that people want you to succeed.** Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They're rooting for you. Think positively about what you have to do before you begin and know that no one wants you to trip, stumble over your words, or forget what you were going to say. Everyone wants the best for you, and you should want that too. Speaking can be a scary thing, whether you're talking to a football stadium of people or just your class, and everyone wants you to do your best.
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Directions: Write the bolded rules from each number. Include Punctuation.

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2. ____________________________________________________________________________________________________
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