



# Key Elements of Successful Public Speaking

## WHEN PREPARING YOUR CONTENT:

### ***Write like you're writing a paper...***

<b>Know your purpose.</b>	Are you writing to persuade? To inform? To entertain? Some combination thereof? And is it in response to a specific question, issue, or prompt? Make sure that you are clear on this first; it will drive everything else.
<b>Consider your audience.</b>	The "who" to whom you are speaking will determine much of your "how." See the CAL handout on audience for helpful guidance.
<b>Present your ideas with clarity.</b>	To effectively communicate with <i>any</i> audience, you will need to achieve clarity of language, ideas, and progression of logic. See the CAL handout on clarity for helpful practices.
<b>Structure your ideas coherently.</b>	This element is in service to clarity. Well-structured content makes it easy for your audience to follow along with your thoughts and ideas, which more effectively communicates your main points and keeps the audience more engaged. Outlining is a helpful practice for achieving coherent structure.

### ***... but DON'T write like you're writing a paper.***

<b>Know your available "ingredients."</b>	Public speaking offers you a different menu of creative options for communication than a paper does. Utilize gestures, inflection, audio/visual aids, personal stories, etc., deliberately and effectively to enhance your content.
<b>Be more flexible with language and tone.</b>	Be precise and thoughtful about your language and tone, but allow your speech to flow more naturally when you speak than it would on paper. When you speak publicly, your voice and presence add the warmth of human presence to the mix, and your language can follow suit. For example: contractions, "lots," and "really" are allowed (but again, use them thoughtfully!).
<b>Let your personality shine through!</b>	Let your strengths enhance your content when you speak. Are you a good storyteller? Do you have a great passion for your topic? Do you have a good sense of humor? Add personal touches to your public speaking to help you connect with your audience.

## WHEN PREPARING YOUR DELIVERY:

<b>Gestures and other movement</b>	The way you embody your delivery can either enhance or distract from your content. Try taking a video recording of yourself as you practice, then watch the recording with an eye toward your gestures and movement. What worked well? What was distracting or awkward? Do your movements need to be bigger or smaller? Do you have any recurring tics? Being aware of these things can help you practice a more relaxed delivery that effectively incorporates your physicality.
<b>Outlines, notes, and scripts</b>	Depending on your context or mode of presentation, you may want different kinds of content guidance in front of you as you speak. If you need to speak the words verbatim (such as when leading call-and-response liturgy), a script will be helpful; if you must be able to move around freely and only need guidance for the major points and flow of the content (such as when teaching), you may prefer notes or outlines. Depending on what you use, doctor your materials (e.g., change the font size, color code, mark pauses, etc.) to make them easy references for you.
<b>Additional materials/aids</b>	If you are using handouts, slides, multimedia clips, or any other additional materials, determine how you will introduce and interact with those materials as you speak. Let these materials <i>complement</i> your speaking rather than displacing or distracting from it.
<b>Be mindful of the parameters you have been given</b>	Is there a time limit? A page limit for handouts? Any specific questions you are expected to answer? Any types of media you are expected to engage? Know the parameters you have been given, and operate within them.

## WHEN (FINALLY) SPEAKING:

<b>Pace</b>	Our speech often speeds up when we get nervous. Remember to breathe, and remind yourself every once in a while to slow down. A slower, steadier pace will help your audience follow what you are saying more easily.
<b>Inflection and energy</b>	If your speaking is low-energy and monotone, your listeners will tune you out, no matter how interesting the content is. Speak with inflection and energy to keep them engaged.
<b>Eye contact</b>	Audience members like to be acknowledged, and they are more likely to stay attentive to you if you have established the personal connection of eye contact.
<b>Anxiety</b>	It is natural to feel anxious when speaking publicly. See the CAL handout on managing public speaking anxiety for helpful tips to tame your nerves!

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