



**The
Public
Speaking
Bible**

**A survival guide for
standing on stage.**

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All materials within this book are for informational purposes only. You should apply discretion combined with the consultation of both a health care practitioner and a personal trainer before undertaking any of the exercises or techniques described within this book. To the best that we can ascertain all information was correct at the time of writing. In addition, the author and his team

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¹ Author's footnote to the editor's disclaimer: we do assume liability for any awesome effects that arise from using this book!

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ROUGH BEGINNINGS.

I NEVER WANTED TO become a public speaker, in fact, *I freakin'* hated talking in front of an audience.

But my hopes of avoiding any and all matters oratory were dashed when, as a freshly signed author, my editorial team informed me that they'd booked me for a two-week whirlwind tour.

At first, I thought they were joking. But their po-faced expressions clearly indicated that they weren't.

The bitter cruelty! I couldn't believe it; what twisted piece of fate would offer up my dream of becoming an author, only to give me a side serving of public speaking fear? When I tried to weasel out of the task, I received sharp schooling from my publishing house in the realities of the industry. If you were an author and wanted to succeed in today's marketplace, you *simply had to tour* . Exposure was a necessity and talking directly to potential customers was the one sure way to make headway. And I very much wanted to succeed. Being an author was my dream job so I pushed aside my doubts, grabbed hold of my confidence and went to work.

The first week was a nightmare. Each day I was rushed from event to event and told to stand in front of an ever-increasingly large crowd. I visited schools, book shops, academies and colleges and damn, did I make a lot of mistakes! I mumbled, I stuttered, I got my slides mixed up, I alienated a crowd by messing up my lines and in general there was a lot of blushing and soul-crushing moments. As if that wasn't enough, there were calamitous moments over which I had no control; projectors failed, audio speakers shrieked, venues posted incorrect starting times and in one crowded establishment the spectators barely stopped chatting to each other while I spoke.

At the end of the first week I went out and partied with my friends, drank a lot of tequila and blew off as much steam as possible. The following morning I pummelled my hangover into submission with multiple espressos

and paracetamol and went to work correcting my presentation, working on my animations and practising my delivery.

The second week wasn't much better. I made more mistakes, I continued to make a fool of myself and I juggled even more technical faults. But there were good moments too. I got a foot-thumping round of applause at one school and the book-signing queue at another was so long that I actually got cramp in my fingers. Cramp! More than that, the Q&A sessions and the opportunity to encourage young readers and share tips with budding writers was truly exciting. By the end of that second week I was surprised to find that I was beginning to enjoy the talks.

From that point, I started to search for more talking opportunities and with the reviews garnered from my two-week tour, managed to get my foot in the door with a professional speaking agency. In the six years since that rough beginning, I've given over 1,600 paid talks in thirteen countries. In addition to the three agencies that I work with, I have my own team chasing leads and arranging events on my behalf. And in an odd reversal, I find that I now love touring every bit as much as I do writing. In fact, I spend more of my time touring than writing and earn a far greater income through talking than I do putting pen to paper.

Crazy, right?

* * * *

With a growing focus upon lifestyle choices, public speaking is in demand more than ever before. There are YouTubers, Ted talkers, motivational speakers, personal training gurus, online super teachers, Instastars, Snapchat celebrities and more. All of which means that the old adage of 'those that can, do, those who can't teach,' no longer rings true. The public has the time, the money and the desire to improve their lives. They want to learn new skills, new languages, new hobbies and new ways to exercise. Increased disposable income, the rise of the internet and the ability to travel cheaply has caused a surging escalation of demand for public speakers.

Unfortunately, becoming a good public speaker is neither easy nor straightforward. It takes practice, a *lot of practice* to iron out the wrinkles in a performance. You must master your voice, make the best of body language, adopt crowd control techniques and learn how to deliver your speech in a way that your audience can understand. And once these steps have been conquered, you must learn resilience to ensure career longevity

and flexibility to overcome the hurdles and tripwires that will frequently arise while talking on stage.

Which is where I come in. I have a wealth of experience built upon the foundation of a thousand mistakes; some small, some large, some painful and too many that were simply mortifying! After spending weeks, months and years talking to audiences that numbered in the hundreds and thousands, I've developed a well-tested skill set that ensures I get repeat bookings and that my calendar starts to fill eighteen months in advance. I want to share these with you in the hopes that you can climb the ladder both faster and smoother than I did. But don't get me wrong, I, of course, expect you to go out and make your own mistakes. Mistakes are a necessity, they're the greatest of teachers but perhaps by sharing my lessons and experience, you will rise to become part of the next generation of public speakers that will be greater than the last.

The very best of luck and fingers crossed I get to bump into you on the Speaker's circuit soon.

MARCUS ALEXANDER

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK.

THIS BOOK IS NOT a novel, it's a *bible* ; a repository of knowledge. It's been pieced together, not with the intent of being read from cover to cover (which would be exceedingly dull!) but with the desire to provide budding speakers with all the skills required to get the job done. As a future public speaker, you are hopefully already a master in your particular field and have the ability to talk endlessly about your given topic. Because of this, you won't find any chapters in this bible that covers writing or developing a speech; there are books aplenty on that. This book, instead, looks at the skill of performing to an audience; you'll find instructions on effortless voice projection, insights to engaging and controlling listeners, oratory tips on turning dull topics into exciting performances and insider knowledge on the business aspect of the Speaker's circuit.

The Public Speaking Bible: A Survival Guide For Standing On Stage is split into five parts.

Part I – Longevity: the business know-how required to become a paid professional:

- Putting a Price on a Speech and other Business Matters.
- Personality, Attire and Unique Selling Points.
- Checklist.
- Travel, Packing and Speaker's Kit.
- Working with Clients.

Part II – Mechanics: the technical skills required for speaking and performing.

- The No-Mic Method.

- Memorising a Speech.
- Communication & Teaching Points.
- Cadence, Crowd Control and Body Movement.
- Body Language.
- Quarrelsome Audience Members and Troublemakers.

Part III – Maintenance: working insights for career endurance.

- Glossophobia – the Fear of Public Speaking.
- Exercises for Public Speakers.
- Health, Fighting Sore Throats and Keeping Your Voice.

Part IV – Agencies: a global agencies contact list.

- Agencies.

Part V – Additional Skills & Reference

- Sound.
- The Stage and its History.
- The Clap and the Handshake.
- Projectors, Slideshows and Visual Content.

Speaker’s Experience

In addition to sharing my own experience, I’ve reached out to friends and associates who use their voice to earn a living. These include motivational speakers, lecturers, authors, thespians, singers and coaches, all of whom have supplied their best tips to help you out.

One further note on experience; I’ve listed many of my worst experiences in the hope that you can learn from them and avoid repeating them. I can’t stress, however, how awesome it is to be a public speaker! The majority of my experiences are full of laughs and outrageously positive but because I haven’t listed these within this bible, I’d hate for you to think the career is

full of potholes and obstacles. It isn't. Once you're on the path, you'll soon find that speaking is not only a lucrative career but an exciting one that offers opportunities for travel and meeting a range of inspiring individuals.

Quotes

Public speaking has a history that reaches back through the millennia. I'm a huge admirer of these early masters and have used their teachings to further my career. You'll find quotes and nuggets of wisdom from these golden orators littered through the following pages.

Images

Gaining publication permissions for large numbers of individuals is notoriously hard. Due to this you won't find any images of myself talking to a crowd within this bible. There are however images that have been cleared for marketing use on social media, if you'd like to see these please do pop over to the following Instagram feeds [@marcusalexanderauthor](#) and [@keeperoftherealmsseries](#)

That boring health and safety notice

There are physical exercises suggested within this bible. Because of this, I'm going to have to sound like a complete fool and urge that:

you confer with a physician before undertaking any new forms of physical exercise and while learning the mechanics of these exercises, you should do so with the guidance of a trained personal trainer.

Yeah, health and safety, it's the best.

PART I

LONGEVITY.

PUTTING A PRICE ON A SPEECH AND OTHER BUSINESS MATTERS.

IF YOU'RE EMPLOYED TO speak for a company, you're paid for your time and expertise with a monthly wage in which case this chapter won't apply to you. But if you are a freelance public speaker and you're making a start in the industry, you'll need to consider how much to charge for your expertise and time.

It's not an easy decision; there are no proven formulae to follow and for newbie speakers entering the industry, a lack of confidence and experience can lead to pricing patterns that aren't sustainable. Before you sell your time, expertise and services, consider shifting your definition of public speaking. Stop perceiving it as a service and instead, start to think of your speech as your product and your audience as consumers.

'As a vessel is known by the sound, whether it be cracked or not, so men are proved by their speeches; whether they be wise or foolish.'

DEMOSTHENES

In this chapter: Pricing your speech, Invoicing, Sole Trader or Limited Company, Public Liability Insurance and Business Costs.

PRICING YOUR SPEECH

Experience

If you're a speaker and you're invited to talk at an event, it's because of your expertise. Whatever your field or industry, you've spent years of your life learning your craft. You've made mistakes, tripped, fallen, studied, experimented and generally worked like a beast to get to where you are. When you give a lecture and you deliver your insights, secrets and industry

know-how, you are in effect giving all of your hard graft and personal investment away.

Of course, skills and insight should be passed on and experience should be shared. Giving others the opportunity to learn improves both industries and society. Inherently this is a good thing. But don't sell your skills for free; do not undervalue what you've achieved and do not underestimate the opportunities you're providing to your listeners.

Time – If you give a one hour lecture where you pass on a piece of knowledge that took you two years to achieve, you've given everyone in the audience a huge shortcut to benefit their career. That's two years of your time in exchange for an hour of their listening time.

Income – If you pass on a piece of expertise that historically allowed you to upsell your services or goods by an extra 10%, you've passed on extra earning potential to your audience that they weren't aware of previously.

When you price your talks, ensure you're putting the correct value on the *time* and *income* that your audience will benefit from.

Life Changing Moments

Motivational speakers might not necessarily be passing on expertise. They might not be masters in any particular field or have invested years of their lives working their way up the ranks of industry. Instead, what they are offering are life skills and the opportunity to change someone's life in a meaningful way.

Motivational speakers may offer increased opportunities for happiness, marital success, psychological insights, self-improvement, social development and a plethora of other know-how that people aren't able to grasp without guidance. These insights can completely change a person's life.

Clearly it's impossible to put a price on life changing moments but all of us have had them; we've all experienced a 'eureka' moment that caused us to change direction in our lives. As individuals who've experienced such moments, we should be able to consider how our lives have been enriched and perhaps what we would pay for similar occurrences.

Given the value of these moments, we should ensure we price our services accordingly.

Crowd Numbers

When it comes to pricing your performance, you need to consider not just your time on stage but how many people are actually consuming your product. In other words you need to factor the size of the crowd.

If you're speaking to a very large crowd, either bump up your speaker's fee or negotiate a percentage of ticket sales.

'If you put a small value upon yourself, rest assured that the world will not raise your price.'

ANON

The Five-Six-Seven Factor

If you're still unsure how to put a price on your performance, consider the tried and tested *five-six-seven rule*. This is a basic yet efficient way to scale your everyday income by a factor of five, six or seven to arrive at a billable amount that you can invoice to event organisers.

- For a one day event, multiply your daily income by FIVE.
- For a half-day event, multiply your hourly income by SIX for each billable hour.
- For a single event of one hour or less, multiply your hourly income by SEVEN.

Examples:

A programmer who historically earns £360 a day or £40 per hour would bill:

- One day event: $£360 \times 5 = £1800$
- Half-day event of four hours: $(£40 \times 6) \times 4 = £960$
- A single event of one hour: $£40 \times 7 = £280$

A landscaper who historically earns £190 a day or £21 per hour would bill:

- One day event: $£190 \times 5 = £950$

- Half-day event of four hours: $(£21 \times 6) \times 4 = £504$
- A single event of one hour: $£21 \times 7 = £147$

Freebies

As a rule of thumb, you should never offer free events – it devalues the Speakers’ circuit and reduces your perceived worth to other industry experts. Having said that, there is a time and a place for offering your speech gratis:

- **Starting out** – if you’re a newbie, unpolished and need experience, giving a free talk can grant you access to larger audiences and a chance to work on your stagecraft. I’d suggest giving two to three free events before charging a fee.
- **Feather in the cap** – whatever your industry, there will be high-profile prestigious events. Being able to say you performed at such an event (or venue) can act like fairy dust; the kudos and additional exposure can reap increased bookings for the rest of the year, bringing you extra revenue streams that you might not have had otherwise.
- **Increased customer base** – some events can grant you access to elite customer bases or push your product sales (if you have a product!) through the roof. If you think you can generate sales that would outweigh any potential speaker’s fee, then go for it!

INVOICING

As a public speaker, you’re providing a service which raises some different invoicing procedures from a goods-based business. I’ve dealt with clients, festivals and event organisers who wanted invoices in advance, on the day and in some cases post event. Do not expect any set rule; instead when working with a new client get in touch with their Finance department. Inform them of your normal procedures, ask about theirs, then find a comfortable middle ground.

Your invoice to clients should include:

- Your business name, address and contact details (both mobile and email).
- The client's business name and address.
- An invoice number.
- A clear description of your services rendered.
- A total payable sum.
- Payment options – BACS details including your bank account and sort code. Indicate if you accept cheques or not.
- A payment deadline (normally within two weeks after client's receipt of invoice).
- UTR or unique tax reference if you're based in the UK.

Over the years I've been lucky and only ever had to chase one or two late invoices. However, if you have any concerns about a client or booking new venues, reach out to other speakers in your field. Most speakers are very affable and will share information about late paying clients (or bad apples!) allowing you to avoid any financial pitfalls.

SOLE TRADER OR LIMITED COMPANY

Unless you have a fondness for paperwork and accounting, there's no need for newbie speakers to register as a company; you can simply get by in your early years as a sole trader. It is only when you reach the VAT threshold that you will need to become a limited company.

The difference between sole traders and limited companies

When you start to earn money outside of employment, you become self-employed. When you become self-employed, you need to notify the government of your new status for taxation purposes. For those within the UK, you should register with HMRC to receive your UTR (or unique taxation reference number). Once you're self-employed you have a choice to make; either register as a sole trader or as a limited company. Do note that while they sound wildly different, sole traders and limited companies

are simply business structures for self-employment. The main difference between a sole trader and a limited company is largely concerned with liability. Regardless of your business, you have a duty of care not to defraud or hurt anyone else. If you do cause injury (financial or physical) you are *liable* which means you can be sued in a court of law. In the event of going to court and being found guilty, you will have to pay a fine. Some fines you will be able to afford, some you will not. This is where limited companies have benefits over sole traders. If you are a limited company and you have to pay a gigantic fine, the sum is *limited* to company assets. If you are a sole trader the courts can come after both your company assets *and your private assets* (these could be your house, your private car etc).

In short:

Limited Company – more complicated to set up, more accounting and paperwork involved but protects your private assets should you be found liable.

Sole Trader – simple to set up, reduced accounting but offers no liability protection for private assets.

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

Public liability insurance protects you if clients or members of the public suffer personal injury or property damage during a performance (or as a direct result of doing business with you).

For sole traders, public liability insurance can act as a shield, giving you an added layer of protection and until you convert your business to a limited company, it's an essential piece of kit! (You've set up as a limited company? Great! However, you still need public liability insurance. It's not just there to protect you; some venues demand to see an insurance policy number and won't allow you to perform without one).

BUSINESS COSTS

Accountancy and bookkeeping can be a pain; however, there's a silver lining: you can book certain costs as a tax write off! In addition to the norm, consider the following:

- Travel costs (petrol, vehicle maintenance, train tickets, taxi rates etc).
- Accommodation costs (hotel, all reasonable costs of eating while away from home etc).
- IT costs (hardware, software, web design etc).
- Clothing (all performance-specific shoes and attire).
- Training (voice coaching, industry specific education that allows you to perform as a public speaker within your field).
- Advertising (business cards, flyers, handouts, bill-boarding, online ads etc).
- Cost of content (specific adventures or experiences that you use specifically to display on stage).

Like all businesses, never pay more tax than you have to. However, it's worth noting that public speakers, by and large, tend to be a service-based business and quite an unusual one at that. To avoid any mishaps or wandering into too many grey areas, do invest an hour or two sit-down time with an accountant so you can arm yourself with a precise understanding of business costs applied to your specific performances.

'In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.'

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE I

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: EDWARD RENNIE

Edward is a political consultant and something of a wizard when it comes to public speaking. Not only does he have years of government-level oratory beneath his belt but he writes speeches for others and advises both movers and shakers on how to up their talking game.

On public speaking:

In any political speech, you want to engage both the rational and emotional views of your audience. Effective politicians will achieve this by telling an anecdote to deliver a point. The key to this is ensuring that the anecdote promotes your point yet is also relevant and relatable to your audience.

When writing a speech, always aim to finish talking before your allotted time. (For a five-minute slot aim to talk for four minutes etc). An audience is rarely forgiving if you run over time but always happy if a speech ends up being a bit shorter than they were expecting.

Edward on insider knowledge:

One of the tools that politicians use to emphasise a specific part of their speech is known as 'the clutch'. This hand gesture encourages extra attention from an audience. Even if a politician knows that the clutch will be out of view of an audience due to poor camera angles, for example during close up interviews, they'll at least ensure that the interviewer or TV producer can see it as a non-verbal means of saying 'hey, this bit is important!' This leads to an increased chance of that particular part of the speech being included in the version that gets aired.

(The clutch: make a fist but instead of forming a traditional boxer's fist, place your thumb so that it rests on the middle joint of your index finger. Now raise and lower the clutch in time with the words you wish to

emphasise. Of interest this hand gesture has also been dubbed the ‘Clinton thumb’ as both Bill and Hilary use it frequently).

EDWARD RENNIE.

*Political consultant, advisor,
former-councillor and all-round good guy.*

PERSONALITY, ATTIRE AND UNIQUE SELLING POINTS.

I REMEMBER HOW AWKWARD the start of my career was. All I could think of was: if I'm an author but also a public speaker, how am I supposed to behave on stage? Do I do 'me', do I do the 'author thing' or should I act like the visiting school speakers I remember from my youth? The lack of guidance didn't make things any easier and I ended up with a working persona that was a bit of a mess.

We're all familiar with that stereotypical image of traditional male authors, right? In our mind's eye they're serious characters that talk about the worlds they've created while wearing tweed jackets with padded elbows and if they don't have spectacles perched atop their nose they'll make up for it by wearing an oddly coloured pair of formal trousers.

That stereotype was everything that I'm not. I'm a funk-loving, hip-hop listening adrenaline junkie. Yet in my naivety, I felt the need to conform this outdated image of an author for the simple reason I believed that that was what an audience would want and what they would expect. Of course, I tried to marry that look with my own, making it a hodgepodge of the two; hoodie beneath formal jacket, smart trousers besmirched by loud sneakers. But if the look was confusing, so was my personality on stage; I'd reign in my natural fondness for jokes to replace it with gravitas. Worse yet, when it came to signings at the end of the day, I'd treat fans with an air of serious politeness.

What a chump!

It took me a full year and a half to realise there was no need for this ridiculous conformity and that I could just be myself. I now punctuate my talks with laughter, I dress in hip-hop or sporting attire and during signings I drop as much banter as possible with my fans. And it's done me well; it's a formula that allows me to perform with a natural confidence and as a sign that it's working, bookings continue to roll in far faster than they ever did.

In this chapter: Personality, Attire and Unique Selling Points (USPs).

PERSONALITY

If you're not yet confident, it's wholly understandable that you might decide to choose a persona to adopt while on stage. While you might not yet know how to go about it, please don't be that guy that goes totally over the top or worse, adopts a fake persona. (Seriously, don't be that guy).

Most speakers work with a persona, or rather an existing part of their personality which they simply magnify. For myself, I take the loud, mischief-loving part of my personality and give it a bit more va-va-voom.

Here's a list of well-known speakers/presenters and their personality traits:

- Comedian Jack Dee – grumpy.
- TV host Ellen Degeneres – upbeat and giggly.
- Life guru Tony Robbins – confident and optimistic.
- Strength coach CT Fletcher – endlessly energetic (and also known for his magnificent cursing)!
- Guru and mystic Osho – calm and knowing.

None of the above examples maintain their working persona throughout the day, it's just a tool for performing. Behind the scenes they'll be normal people capable of running the gambit of everyday emotions; happy, sad, stressed, buoyant etc. The trait that they show on stage is the part of their persona that a) they're comfortable with and b) they know will work well with their content and delivery.

So give some thought to yourself. Consider what part of your personality you're happiest and most comfortable with. Once you've chosen a specific character trait, play around with your speech and see if it adds to your delivery.

Bear in mind there is no proven method to this. It's only through trial and error that you'll get this right. With each event, gauge if you feel comfortable and if the audience is receiving. As always think of longevity; you must choose a persona or character trait that allows you to work stress-

free on stage. If it vexes either you or your audience, then try something else.

Do you need a persona? – if you're a specialist with exclusive knowledge that people need then no, you don't need a working persona; people will come to you anyway. However, having a known character trait can help; it'll make you memorable and if you've got it right, it's a step towards building charisma. Most importantly, it's a working tool that you can wear no matter your mood or current state of affairs. If you're feeling tired or even a bit grumpy, being able to slip into a familiar persona while you get on stage will allow you to distance yourself from your problems and concentrate on your content and performance.

A word of warning – a unique personality isn't the be all and end all. In fact, you should place your personality behind other needs! The most pressing requirements for a public speaker are:

1. Content.
2. Communication (the ability to make your content accessible).
3. Delivery (keeping your audience focused and attentive).
4. Passion.

Fifth in the list? That's personality. It comes last. Don't get cocky and think you're the main selling point. You're not, it's your content.

ATTIRE

If you're employed, there's very little room for manoeuvre. More likely than not, you'll be required to wear business attire. If you're fortunate enough to be self-employed, then you've got the freedom to dress however you want.

'Good clothes open all doors.'

ANON

A few rules:

Hygiene first! Your clothes must be clean and freshly laundered. A good speaker will integrate with the audience, walking among or around them during the talk and greeting them during signings so don't be that smelly or grime-covered individual (sounds obvious but you'd be surprised by some speakers)!

**TOP TIP – some performances can be physically demanding and the heat of spotlights in a packed amphitheatre can cause a speaker to break a sweat. A pocket atomiser containing eau de toilette or perfume can spruce you up in time for following performances or signings.*

Comfort, next. You can't afford distractions during a performance and if you're hustling hard during a day with multiple talks and workshops, you need to be comfortable. Resist the urge to buy new shoes or clothes without breaking them in first.

When it comes to style, consider your content and branding. If possible, wear something that aligns you with these.

'Peacocking' is a term historically used by men who wore bright luxurious clothes to draw attention to themselves. (Think of the male peacock with its resplendent tail feathers then think of medieval men who wore bright red trousers, gold earrings and plumed hats). Nowadays both men and women will use peacocking to draw attention to themselves or their message while on stage. Speaker Lucy Bloom is known for her super loud, super fresh pink hair. Author John Dougherty has a preference for loud Hawaiian shirts and researcher Matthew Lesko wears suits that are brightly coloured and covered in question marks!

If you think peacocking will help you and your brand stand out from the crowd, then go for it.

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – I'm hugely active during talks; I jump off stage, walk among the audience and often do acrobatics. In addition, I travel to gigs via motorcycle. Because of this, I wear sports attire: basketball shorts, sneakers and athletic tops. These allow me to perform gymnastics yet are small enough to bundle into the kit bag that straps on my motorcycle. Furthermore, distancing myself from the standard attire of other authors has done me well, allowing me, at least in the mind of my audience, to stand out from other speakers they've seen.*

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

A unique selling point (USP) is the thing that allows a service or product to stand out from the crowd. It's what makes something desirable. With an ever-increasing number of public speakers, it's vital that you find and promote your USP in order to remain competitive.

Examples of famous USPs:

Ikea , at their time of origin, was the first manufacturer to make cheap and reasonably stylish furniture available to the general public.

Michael Jackson cornered the pop music world with a combination of great singing and smooth dance moves.

Apple took a huge slice of the personal computing market by producing reliable, good-looking and easy to use computers that they pitched towards creatives.

Cards Against Humanity stormed the games market with their witty and outrageously rude cards, going from a \$4,000 start-up to become a multi-million dollar company.

THTC produce fashion branded hemp clothing and work with environmentally conscious music stars, becoming the UK's largest green clothing company.

Examples of USPs among public speakers:

Jane Elliott , a diversity expert who conducts anti-racism workshops separating participants by eye colour. These workshops not only gave participants a better understanding of the concept of racism but allowed them to experience it first-hand. What made this groundbreaking was that Jane started these workshops in the late 60s/early 70s in middle white America. Something that was daring and exceptional at the time and has allowed her to position herself as a leading speaker on diversity and workplace training since. *Jane's USP is her specialisation and her decades of industry experience.*

Maggie Alphonsi's experience as a ex-rugby champion (and now an MBE!) has placed her in prime position to speak about thinking big and achieving outstanding goals. *Maggie's USP is her experience.*

Chris Bradford , author and karate instructor, performs exciting shows with Japanese swords, making him one of the most sought-after school speakers. *Chris' USP is his one-of-a-kind performance.*

Nick Vujicic , born without arms and legs, delivers exceptional talks on overcoming fears. *Nick's USP is his rare experience.*

Julian Treasure showcases his knowledge of sound, demonstrating how an understanding of it can make optimal changes to business workflow. *Julian's USP is his knowledge and industry specialisation.*

As a public speaker your USP can be:

- **Unique experience:** having done what no one else has.
- **Exceptional knowledge :** being top in your field.
- **One of a kind delivery :** offering a spectacular performance.
- **Specialisation :** being the first to speak in an emerging industry or one of the few to talk in an exclusive industry.
- **Location :** being willing and able to travel to venues that other speakers won't.
- **Offering value :** providing your audience with knowledge or access to products in a volume or quality that can't be matched by other speakers.

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – It can take a while to work out your USP. I had assumed mine came from being an author, writing about a strong, confident teenage girl. (When I started writing in 2008 there weren't many big ugly men championing women as role models). It was only when I started standing on stage and working with other educational speakers that I realised I could break the stereotype of boring children's authors by being passionate about my subject matter, exuding energy and performing acrobatics during my talks. This is something that no other authors are currently doing in the UK.*

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE II

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: ANDY FISHER

Andy is both a friend and a role model. He's an educator, a knife thrower, a survival instructor, a close quarter combat teacher and an author! I'm a huge admirer and forever looking for ways to ensure that we cross paths on the speaker's circuit. These are his words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

My worst period as a public speaker was when I was working as a security advisor and consultant. I was tasked with giving two-day training courses so that security guards could continue to work and be recognised as professionals by the Security Industry Authority. The trouble was a lot of the people coming to these courses did not want to be there, English often wasn't their first language and many of them didn't leave school with a lot of qualifications so they associated training courses (like the one I was giving) as bad as having teeth pulled. A tough audience to win over! This was definitely the worst experience I had; more often than not I'd pour my heart and soul into the delivery of this information; I'd use jokes, empathy everything that I could to get them on side, but I'd just be met with tumbleweed. It was brutal. I got through it but it made me appreciate how important it is to have an audience that is invested and wants to be there instead of just 'having' to be there.

Too many people put too much emphasis on their message and what they want to communicate to the audience rather than connecting with the audience, where they are coming from and why they might want to listen (or why they might have reservations) about your speech. My advice is this: in preparation of your speech, project yourself into the audience and imagine the demographic of the typical person who is going to be sitting there. Consider how they might respond to what you're saying and what their

hopes and dreams might be around the subject that you're presenting. In other words, start with your audience in mind.

ANDY FISHER,

Educator, motivational speaker, close-quarter combat instructor, polymath.

CHECKLIST.

THE CHECKLIST MIGHT BE a humble tool but it's quite literally the one thing that I can't live without. As a public speaker who runs from venue to venue, I can't recommend these enough. Checklists keep me informed, allow me to move from event to event with confidence and provide me with all the information that I need to get through the day.

My PA sends my checklists out to all clients and requests them completed and returned a minimum of two weeks in advance of the event (or three weeks for international bookings). I, in turn, print these out and leave them on a stack near my desk in a convenient ready-to-grab pile.

In this chapter: Content, Format and Checklist Items.

CONTENT

A good checklist should contain not just the information you need (in an easy to complete form) but the information that your client or event organiser might need to know or would benefit from knowing.

The information that you will require:

- Client and venue details.
- Travel and parking information.
- Scheduling.

The information that the client will benefit from:

- Your estimated time of arrival (simply done by stating you will arrive 30 minutes in advance of the event).
- Your IT requirements.

- Your expected means of transport.
- Your dietary requirements (allergies etc).
- Contact details.

**TOP TIP – while major festivals are run like military campaigns, don't be surprised to find that some smaller events are managed by inexperienced individuals or organisers new to that particular venue. To make correspondence easier for both you and the organiser, I always suggest providing a sample schedule that you know has worked well for you in the past. Clearly the organiser will have the power to edit and dictate timings, however, a little know-how from you to them certainly makes life easier all around.*

CHECKLIST ITEMS

Your checklist should contain the following items:

- Your name.
- Checklist title.
- Basic instructions on how to use the checklist (fill in and return via email).
- Your email/contact details.

A request for:

- Client name and contact details.
- Date of event.
- Venue address and contact details.
- Additional travel information if applicable (private access road/parking restrictions etc).
- Type or length of event (full day, half day or single presentation).

Scheduling:

- Instructions on how to complete your schedule.
- Offer an example timetabled schedule, completed in a format that you would wish the client to emulate.
- Offer a blank timetable to be completed by the client.

Details on performances:

- Your IT requirements
- Additional requests e.g. space, storage, props, sound technician etc

Dietary requirements:

- Indicate if you'll eat at the venue, elsewhere or bring your own food.
- Allergies or requirements.
- Request for water or preferred fluids to be supplied while on stage.

Signings:

- Indicate if you do signings.
- When and where you're willing to do them.
- Any additional preferences.

Products and additional sales if applicable:

- Request if the client is willing to sell your product/book/service at the venue.
- Indicate if you or the client should provide shipping/delivery of the product for the event.
- Request information of audience purchasing (cash, card or venue's preferred method).

FORMAT

You need to send your checklist in a format that the client can easily work with. It needs to be compatible with most operating systems and your client's IT abilities (we all know that person who hasn't updated their technical skills since the 1980s)! Quite simply, I recommend using Word to create your checklist. It's the most widely used piece of office management software and almost always internationally available. It'll allow easy access for even the most technophobic client and for those truly old school practitioners, offers them the option of printing out and entering answers with a pen, then scanning it and sending it back to you. (I still get three or four checklists per annum that have been filled in by hand)!

To avoid any cross-compatibility issues between old and new versions, avoid adding images, watermarks or branding. Keeping your checklist bare-bones, ensures universal access.

ADDITIONAL POINTS TO CONSIDER

Checklists are a personal thing. The more time you spend on the road, visiting venues and working with different clients, the better idea you'll have of what you need on a checklist and what is superfluous. Do keep checklists concise and easy to use for both you and the client. You want to be able to flick through your checklist and find what you need, when you need it, without having to dig through a swathe of papers. In addition, you don't want to irritate an already overburdened client or organiser with additional paperwork.

For international events, don't forget to add sections on: travel, flight details, accommodation, transport to and from hotels. Also request details on local subjects to avoid: religion/taboo/lèse-majesté laws etc.

One last note on IT requirements! IT really is the thing that can make or break an event. Do indicate what you will bring to an event and what items you expect the venue to provide.

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE III

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: CHRIS BRADFORD

Chris is a superstar! He's one of Puffin Book's foremost authors, producer of the 'Young Samurai' and 'Bodyguard' series. He's a karate instructor, known for doing live sword demonstrations and completed his bodyguard training in order to write his latest series. More than that, Chris is a true gent, going out his way to give me some sage pieces of advice when I was first signed to Puffin for which I've always been hugely grateful. I'm a massive fan of both his books and his performances. These are his words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

Bring it to life! – This is crucial for engaging people's attention, especially younger audiences. Listening to someone drone on for an hour – however interesting the topic – is a guaranteed way to lose your audience's attention. So change it up! Display photos, play video clips, have music, show items in real life, demonstrate your topic, involve the audience... For example, in my shows I have interactive book readings, demonstrate bodyguard techniques and perform an authentic samurai sword display! Remember, a talk is never just a talk.

Keep something in your back pocket – there will be an event when your talk finishes early, or it's not hitting the right spot for your audience, or the organiser simply needs you to fill in some time. So always have prepared a 5-10 minute set piece of content that you can pull out for such situations. This will enamour you to the organiser, prevent an awkward lull in proceedings and demonstrate your flexibility as a speaker.

Most awkward moment at an event – this is actually the 'most dangerous moment' following a BODYGUARD event... During a book signing, a fan asked me, "Have you done knife defence during your bodyguard training?" In context, there was nothing unusual about the question, but the fan's tone alerted me to the fact he had his hand hidden under the signing table. So I

replied, “I’ll answer that question once you show me what’s in your right hand.” The fan sheepishly revealed a sharpened pencil which he intended to stab me with to test my reaction skills! So my advice, always stay alert throughout and beyond your performance!

CHRIS BRADFORD,
*Author of the bestselling ‘Young Samurai’ and ‘Bodyguard’ series.
Gentleman Extraordinaire.*

TRAVEL, PACKING AND SPEAKER'S KIT.

PUBLIC SPEAKING OFFERS AMAZING travel opportunities. I've performed in China, Switzerland, the UAE, the US, Vietnam, Oman, Kazakhstan, Egypt and a string of other countries, in addition to my native UK. But travel and performing, particularly in some fully booked months with back-to-back events, can be tough. However, a little forethought and careful planning can reduce hardships, minimise opportunities for mishap and allow you to take full advantage of the awesomeness of travel!

'Wherever you go, go with all your heart.'

CONFUCIUS

In this chapter: Travel Rules, Choice of Transport, International Travel and Speakers Kit.

TRAVEL

Anyone in business should be familiar with the importance of punctuality and the stress of being late. But that stress you feel for a normal business meeting with seven or eight participants? Forget it, that's old news. When you're a public speaker, you suddenly have the burden of being on time for a crowd. Can you imagine the sensation of being late to perform before four hundred or three thousand people?

To minimise stress and maintain some semblance of sanity, I use the following rules:

Thirty minute arrival rule

Regardless of the location or the venue, I aim to be in the building *thirty minutes prior* to my performance. For festivals and large events this means being sat in the Green Room, relaxed and ready for technicians or to liaise

with organisers to double-check my schedule. For other venues, I aim to have passed through security (if applicable), signed in with the building's reception and be waiting for the client's 'meet 'n greet'.

Arriving early will reduce both your stress and that of the client's.

What's the Green Room? – A room in a theatre or venue where performers can relax when they are not performing.

Travel time rule

Journeys never go as planned! Because of this, I add the following to my planned travel time:

- Travel within your city – add twenty minutes.
- Motorway travel – add ten minutes to every hour of planned travel time.
- Rush hour – add forty percent travel time.

'Sod's rule? If something can go wrong, it will.'

ANON

Packing rule

Sleep is precious and you'll always want an extra couple of minutes huddled over your breakfast and coffee! If you want to avoid being flustered in the morning, pack whatever you need for your event the night before. For international travel, pack your bags 36 hours in advance.

Travel planning rule

Information is king when it comes to travel. Google and modern sat-nav apps are great but they won't beat local knowledge. To avoid surprises, ask your client if there are any key bits of information (poorly signed junctions, road resurfacing, private roads not marked on maps, off-site parking etc) needed in order to arrive at their venue in a timely manner.

(I request local travel knowledge in the checklist that I send to all clients in advance of events. More of this in the Checklist Chapter).

**TOP TIP – many venues simply have names and not street numbers which can be hugely annoying and makes tracking them down on some sat-nav apps very frustrating. If this is the case, ask for the closest named cross-roads in advance to make navigation that much easier.*

Hotel rule

Long journeys, on top of an event-filled day, can be exhausting. If a venue is more than a two-hour commute from my house and I'm required to be on stage for an 08:30 or 09:00 start, I insist on staying in a hotel the night before. A hotel stay will break up the length of your journey and give you a much needed opportunity to get enough sleep to be buoyant for your performance. Some clients will be pushy and request you forgo the hotel but if you want to maintain energy for a busy calendar of prolonged tours, insist upon it.

CHOICE OF TRANSPORT

Domestically, I used to use a mix of car, London underground and trains to get around. But when my event calendar began to swell, it dawned on me that I was wasting long hours of my day stuck in traffic jams or crammed into packed carriages that weren't moving. Keen to take back these precious hours of life, I've switched to travelling via motorcycle...and I love it! Each ride is unique; I never have to stand still during traffic jams and unlike car drivers who always seem bored, I feel alive whenever I ride. I have a big 'beast' for motorway journeys and a slim but punchy supermoto for weaving through London traffic. Now, when I arrive at venues, I do so with a smile on my lips and a glow in my cheeks!

I'm not proposing that you all become riders but I strongly suggest that if you're going to become a pro, give thought to your means of transport. If you're lucky enough to have an event in your city, that might only mean a one-way commute of 30-40 minutes. But what if you have to attend gigs in different cities or poorly serviced parts of the country? The hours soon build up! You need to find a means of transport that will get you reliably from A to B quickly, comfortably and carry your Speaker's kit without making you sweat.

There are pros and cons for both the car and train, however, there is a silver lining and that is that you can bill all costs of travel directly to your

client. If you have niche information, a strong following or good corporate sponsors, you can even bump yourself up a grade and travel business or First Class!

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – I had a six-day tour that spanned from London to Manchester and ended in a flight to the Isle of Mann. Unwilling to leave my motorcycle for three days in airport parking (which are known hotspots for bike thieves) I instead chose to travel by train. Unfortunately, a particularly large individual, who had trouble squeezing through the carriage, managed to knock my laptop from its perch and then stepped on it too! Needless to say, my laptop didn't survive its interaction with this human juggernaut. Although I had backed up my presentation on an external hard drive, the ensuing performances were marred by cross-compatibility issues with the venue's software and the painfully long time needed to copy my presentation to the venue's obsolete hardware.*

Moral: Shit happens. If you travel frequently, consider getting a rugged laptop or an armoured laptop case to reduce risk. It's worthwhile checking out Panasonic's 'toughbooks' and Urban Armour Gear's military tested laptop cases (or other similar products with good reviews).

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Travelling overseas and adding to your country list is hugely exciting! However, travelling internationally can deliver some unusual curveballs for public speakers.

Unexpected visas

Visa requirements to certain countries can change at the drop of the hat. In addition, some countries that don't need entrance visas sometimes require specific *industry* visas. I often work with the education industry and in recent years a new requirement for visas to visit universities and schools in certain countries has cropped up, even though a travel visa wasn't needed. Check travel requirements to countries yourself but ask your client if additional paperwork is required for your specific industry as they will have a better idea and be more informed than travel websites.

Local transport

Always research local transport in advance of your visit. When possible, request that the client book you a taxi or send a driver to take you from the hotel to the venue. This removes chances of getting cheated, dealing with taxis drivers taking you to the wrong location or misjudging the time needed to navigate local traffic and arriving late.

A large part of travel is getting to know the ins and outs of local transport but save the adventures for your time off, not when you need to perform.

**TOP TIP – Google Maps now offer an offline mode that works with GPS. Download and save the map, then feel free to tour the city without having to worry about extortionate overseas browsing fees from your mobile provider.*

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – When my diary allows it I always try to stay in a country for an extra couple of days for travel and adventure. To aid this I try to hire the venue's drivers; I know they're vetted, that their day rate will be mutually amenable and that they'll double up as minders, not only taking me where I want but also helping with haggling and local knowledge. During my last trip to Egypt I asked my driver to take me anywhere that tourists weren't! In two days I got to visit six pyramids that were off the beaten path (and got inside two of them), I went sandboarding down the dunes of Fayoum and rubbed shoulders with the Zabbaleen in Garbage City.*

Wining, dining and entertainment

When performing overseas, you can almost always expect that the client will have arranged entertainment for you and other speakers. This is great and offers opportunities to see parts of the environment that perhaps other tourists wouldn't. Don't be afraid to ask for guides, advice or arrange trips for specific sights or adventures; most clients will be only too happy to arrange these and if they aren't complimentary, will arrange a discounted local price for you. Just as importantly don't be afraid to ask for a night off! Some events can be more demanding than normal and a night off to catch up on some rest and recuperation is essential to stay on top of your game.

Ensure you try local delicacies! Not only is this enriching and adds to your overall life experience, but it also gives you additional content to use during talks. I've had buffalo, bison, kudu, springbok, antelope, alligator, crocodile, grasshopper, maggot, cockroach, kangaroo, monkey brain, horse and dog ¹ all of which makes for a great lead-in on specific points during my events.

¹ Some of these were local delicacies and offered by the host with great ceremony – it would have been rude to decline.

**TOP TIP – Asking the hotel concierge, taxi driver or tour operator for advice on places to visit or things to do will inevitably result in you paying tourist rates or worse, getting ripped off. Reach out to local experts within your industry for genuine advice that won't come with a hidden price tag! Reaching out to local experts also helps build an international network that will benefit your future events. Don't forget to check these forums for advice from other travellers:*

*lonelyplanet.com/thorntree
tripadvisor.com/ForumHome*

Travel insurance

Always, always, always travel with insurance. Get a yearly insurance premium that will cover your domestic and international trips for complete peace of mind.

International power outlets and travel batteries

Invest in a couple of compact world travel adapters. I've used and recommend world travel adapters (with additional USB ports) by these brands:

- BEZ
- Syncwire
- Waneway

In addition to travel adapters, a portable USB travel battery to power your devices can be a godsend while flying and/or on the move. Again, I've used and would recommend travel battery packs by these brands:

- EasyAcc
- Anker

PACKING

Good packing will remove a large burden of stress from your day. If you can pack swiftly, travel comfortably with your bag and locate what you need as and when you need it, you will be able to concentrate fully on your performance.

The luggage or travel bag

Invest in luggage that you can carry easily, secure in (or on) your mode of transport and that will allow you easy access to rummage through when looking for vital parts of your Speaker's kit. A good bag should be easy to carry on your back, across one shoulder and in your hand. If you start to travel frequently for events, your luggage should be tough, durable and secure as there are always opportunities for sneaky fingers to dip into your bag; the last thing you want to do is turn up to an event only to find your laptop or other essential pieces have gone walkabout.

**TOP TIP – People will notice what you carry: consider a bag that matches your personality; the content of your talk and which has space for logos, social media or website details.*

Compartmentalise

Pack your Speaker's kit in multiple bags that in turn can be placed inside your travelling luggage. This makes locating the thing you need swift, simple and allows better organisation when packing after a performance. You can find compartmentalising bags easily on Amazon, eBay or other websites by searching the term 'packing cubes', 'packing organisers' or 'travel pouches'.

Lost and found

It doesn't happen often but once or twice a year I will misplace an item at an event. This can be frustrating if I've left a favoured clicker, essential prop or USB storage device behind. Labelling your travel pouches and kit

bags with your contact details (name and mobile number) allows event organisers to trace them back to you quickly, giving you the chance to arrange for them to be forwarded to you or the venue of your next performance.

**OLD SCHOOL TRAVELLER'S TIP – I used to travel hard and fast in my youth, sometimes covering 300-400km a day across pockmarked roads on buses with wooden seats, chicken, goats and local contraband on board too. Now that I'm older, I prefer to travel with a bit more comfort and style but there's still one tip I hold onto from those days; hide 3 x \$100 dollar notes in your bag for emergencies. A razor and some discrete sewing should allow you to stash some carefully folded notes into a strap or other easily overlooked part of your luggage so that even if your wallet and phone are stolen, you still have a safety line to get you out of trouble. (Clearly getting into difficulty is the last thing you'd expect on a business trip but c'mon now, insurance is insurance...)*

SPEAKER'S KIT

Even if you're a complete minimalist, there's still a list of kit and equipment you need to carry for an event. After spending years on the road, I've compiled the following list of essential items that I know will get me through any given event:

- Laptop and power adapter.
- Backup files and presentation on a USB drive.
- Clicker and batteries.
- Mobile/sat nav.
- Spare batteries for clicker and USB battery pack for my devices.
- Sharpies, fountain pen and spare ink cartridges for signings.
- A3 posters as prizes for Q&A sessions.
- Bookmarks for gifts and signings.
- Business cards.

- Paracetamol, sore throat lozenges and flu sachets.

Clicker and batteries

Never rely upon a venue having all the ancillary hardware you'll need. As a speaker, you need to invest in a clicker that is easy to use, has a powerful laser point and a broad range of broadcast. (An increased range of broadcast allows you to pace around the auditorium instead of being tied to a short radius from your laptop).

I have used and feel comfortable with the following clicker brands:

- Amerteer
- Logitech
- Breet
- Doosl

**TOP TIP – clickers are small and easily lost! It's worth purchasing two and keeping one as a backup for when things go south.*

Spare batteries for clicker and USB battery pack for mobile/sat nav/devices

Power is always an issue. Ensure you've got spare batteries and a USB battery pack to keep your devices alive while on the road. (Seriously there's nothing worse than trying to get to, or from a venue when your sat-nav is dying)!

Sharpies, fountain pen and spare ink cartridges for signings

I'm an author so I'm expected to sign things. However, whatever your industry, expect ludicrous requests! I've been asked to sign shoes, clothing, phones, tablets, body parts, money and even vehicles. If in doubt, pack multiple sharpies.

**TOP TIP – for those not in the know, 'Sharpies' are a branded marker pen and the tool of choice for anyone who regularly gets mobbed by requests for signing. They're indelible, they'll manage to put your mark on almost any surface and will bring a smile of recognition to the faces of younger fans.*

A3 posters as prizes for Q&A sessions

Q&As are always a little slow to start. Prizes (bribery!) is a great way to kick start the session; I offer a pimped-out A3 poster in exchange for any question from a member of the audience. This is a win-win as I ensure that the poster has all the relevant advertising and information for my product and services.

Bookmarks for gifts and signings

People always ask for freebies! Bookmarks are great for this; as an author they tick the requirements for my industry but in addition, I've ensured that they're printed with all my social media and website addresses too. Think of a suitable freebie relevant to your industry that will satisfy the needs of the audience and double up as a marketing tool for your services.

Business cards

There's always going to be an opportunity to dispense business cards and you'll always have the feeling of an opportunity lost if you don't have enough to satisfy demand. Think other speakers, potential clients, event organisers, festival managers, industry professionals etc, all rubbing shoulders with you at events. Get those business cards printed and keep a stash with you at all times!

Paracetamol, sore throat lozenges and flu sachets

You won't always be on top form. Keep your preferred medical solutions in your Speaker's kit to help you get through those rough days.

As you get familiar with your particular hub of the Speaker's circuit, you'll get a better idea of what is essential and what you can live without. Giving some forethought at the start of your speaker's career to equipment, marketing tools, navigation and maintaining your health will alleviate stress, create opportunities and increase your enjoyment for the job.

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE IV

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: VANESSA SASSON

I met Vanessa in a tiny restaurant in Varanasi in 1996. After striking up a rapport, I impulsively accepted her invitation to visit Nepal to trek to base camp Mt Everest. (At nineteen years of age I couldn't afford the extortionate fees for climbing the mountain; instead I settled for the more humble \$50 permit that would allow us access to the Sagarmatha National Park and base camp. We were on the Khumbu glacier when the snowstorm hit the peak, causing the death of 11 climbers). I've always been struck by Vanessa's intelligence, her adventurous spirit and her sheer tough-as-nails grit. Vanessa is a doctorate lecturer, an author, a polyglot, an adventurer and before snapping her collar bone in an unfortunate incident, was training to be an Olympic boxer. To say that Vanessa is one of my heroes would be an understatement. These are her words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

Public speaking is a professional act (even though it can be deeply personal). The tip I would share is this: always prepare.

As a scholar, preparation is an obvious requirement. But if I think back to the worst speaking engagement in my career, I realize the root of the problem was precisely that. I did not prepare the way I should have.

I was invited by a colleague to speak about my research at her university. She told me that I need not prepare more than what I had already offered to do at a recent meeting. I took her at her word and brought the research paper I had previously delivered. I was new to the circus of academic talks and did not know what to expect. I had a gnawing suspicion that I should have prepared more, despite her dismissive advice, but I was not brave enough to ask questions. She seemed to live in a state of perpetual chaos and it was impossible to get a straight answer out of her. I could have asked

someone else, but I didn't think to. I just went with my older material and hoped the students would be engaged.

When I walked into the room where I was to give my talk, I realized what a mistake I had made. Instead of students, I was met with rows of well-seasoned scholars. I remember one in particular who was tapping his knee impatiently with his pen. I felt like I had annoyed him already, and I hadn't even said hello.

I became flustered and tried desperately to extend my limited material, but there was no way. I was not prepared for the level I was being met with. My talk ended way too quickly and the only question I was asked had to do with the minutia of translation. After that, there was nothing. It was a disaster. I felt like I had wasted everyone's time and I was convinced I had just put a sizeable dent in my fledgeling career.

So my first rule is this: always prepare. Even more: always prepare more than you think you need to. And ask questions, even if you think you know the answers. Ask about the audience, the context, the expectations, the amount of time you are being allotted. If you can't ask the person who invited you, ask someone else, but ask.

My other tip, related to the first, is this: forgive yourself. Everyone screws up, makes wrong assumptions, miscalculates. The result is rarely as devastating as we imagine it to be. The academic community is a tight network with a long memory, but even in that context, mistakes get made and life goes on. Twenty years later, I am friends with some of the scholars who were in the room that day. It was a blip, even if it felt like an earthquake at the time.

You can get past blips.

VANESSA SASSON,
Lecturer, adventurer, educator, author, hero.

WORKING WITH CLIENTS.

WITH ALL THE EFFORT involved in performance, it's easy to think only of the need to interact with the audience. However, if you're hoping for a repeat booking, it's essential that you invest in building a working relationship with the client. A little forethought on your behalf can make this process easier, reduce the potential for mishaps and minimise the headache of event planning.

'The greatest ability in business is to get along with others and to influence their actions.'

JOHN HANCOCK

In this chapter: Behind the Scenes, Forethought, Communication, Less is More, Diplomacy, Chasing Late Invoices, Social Platforms, the Follow Up and Troubleshooting.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Don't make the mistake of thinking you're the hardest working person at a performance. Festivals and large events can take up to a year to arrange. Clients can get bogged down with a thousand details: venue and stage hire, publicity and marketing, printed and digital media, health and safety protocols, sales and ticketing, lighting and audio equipment, hiring of additional staff from security through to ushers and more. Smaller, less prestigious events clearly require less work but paradoxically, often involve far more angst as the event manager, without a large budget, has to shoulder all the work by themselves with little or no support from a team.

With this in mind, don't be surprised to arrive at an event and find the client, or their representative, stressed and flustered. While it's clearly not your job to alleviate their workload, you should do your utmost to ensure

you deliver your part of the bargain as smoothly as possible. You can do this through forethought, communication and good diplomacy.

FORETHOUGHT

Before you attend the event, give some thought to the client. Think about what they represent, their branding and their reasons for inviting you to perform at their venue. Once you've done this, spend a few minutes considering how you can make small but personal changes to your performance to ensure your delivery is inclusive.

This can be achieved by:

- Changing existing examples in your talk to examples that the client and their audience can relate to. i.e if you're talking to a predominantly female audience, ensure your anecdotes are largely about women instead of male counterparts.
- Changing one or two images to reflect the audience's cultural background. i.e. if you're a Canadian delivering a talk in South-East Asia, the audience won't want to see images that are exclusively North American. Add South-East Asian images into the mix.
- Altering the definition of success to the audience's circumstances. i.e. If you're a memory expert and you've been invited to talk to a group of inmates, change the slant of your talk from job opportunities to empowerment/self-improvement.

Do note that you're *not supposed to adapt your content or your performance in any major way* . All that's needed to meet the client's expectations are one or two subtle changes that reflect their expectations.

COMMUNICATION

The client will have booked you for your expertise in your given field. They'll be excited to have you and are very much hoping you'll be a perfect match for the audience that they've lined up. In order for them to do their job, they'll need to know a) what you offer and b) what you need in order to perform. You need to provide all this information in an easy-to-understand

format and as swiftly as possible. The earlier you can provide this, the better.

You should provide all this information in a cover email:

- A brief description of your talk, its content and your preferred talk time.
- A description of workshops (if you offer them), their content and optimal length.
- Any additional elements you're willing to offer during the event: signings, interviews, photo-ops etc.
- Your requirements for all of the above: technical requirements, preferred space, props etc.

In addition to the above, you should also attach to your email:

- A checklist form (see the Checklist Chapter),
- An FAQ sheet,
- A selection of photos that the client can give to their design team for media purposes.

**TOP TIP – compose all your talk descriptions in the third person. This allows the client to cut and paste your description into event media; a time saver that they'll be grateful for.*

FAQ Sheet – you probably won't have an FAQ sheet for the first 3-4 events of your career due to lack of accumulated experience. But as your time on the road, on stage and interacting with clients builds you'll be able to populate your FAQ sheet with answers to the queries that your clients start to raise. Six months into your career and your FAQ sheet should be on point and something that you should underline in your initial cover email to the client as a resource they should refer to.

If a client has asked a specific question, chances are someone else will ask the same question. No question is too stupid to include in your FAQ!

Edit and repopulate your FAQ sheet every 2 years.

Phone or email? – in all likelihood, there'll be no need for you to verbally communicate with the client prior to your attendance, particularly when working at large events; the events team will simply be too seasoned (or too busy!) to talk over the phone. Email will do. However, some less-experienced clients or those that are starting new festivals/events will require verbal encouragement. In which case do pick up the phone and have a quick chat to settle their nerves. Once you've reassured them that you're both competent and professional, return to email as a preferred means of communication.

Your requirements – while you can certainly expect clients to provide standard requirements: projectors, speakers, whiteboards, specific audience seating etc you cannot ask them to provide exotic items or equipment. This means that if you have any specific props relevant to your talk, you must ensure you provide these yourself *and that you notify the client in advance as to what these props are and how you intend to use them* . For example, children's author Chris Bradford (Speaker's Experience III) performs shows with Japanese swords (awesome)! Because he notifies the client of his props and how he intends to use them, he ensures that any health and safety and security concerns can be tackled in advance of his arrival.

This is a drama-free approach and one that you should emulate.

LESS IS MORE

Avoid the temptation to offer clients multiple options in the content of your speech and resist handing over free reign to dictate how the day should go. This rarely works and often causes stress and additional work for both parties.

This can all be avoided simply by knowing what works well for you and what you're comfortable performing. Reduce options, stick to proven components and provide the client with sample timetables from past events which they can refer to when planning their day.

Play to your strengths and remember that 'less is more'.

DIPLOMACY

This isn't rocket science; all you have to do is behave like a decent human being. You'd assume this was an unneeded warning, however, I'm astounded, absolutely astounded by the number of new speakers who get this wrong! I've seen self-centred speakers, grumpy speakers, rude speakers, condescending speakers and tight-lipped speakers that can talk 'the talk' on stage yet can't manage a conversation with their hosts between performances. All of whom have damaged their prospects due to their behaviour.

It doesn't matter if you're having a bad day, if the journey to the venue was apocalyptic or if your personal life is lying in tatters around your feet, you must put on a personable front. Smile, engage in conversation with your client, compliment them on their hard work and at the end of the day, thank them for being wonderful hosts.

'Flattery sits in the parlour, when plain-dealing is kicked out of doors'.

ANON

CHASING LATE INVOICES

In an ideal world clients should pay invoices within a 14 day period. Unfortunately, this doesn't always happen, but before you deliver an abrupt email demanding payment, be aware that Event managers work in different departments from the Finance team, so slow payment might not be the event manager's fault. A brief, yet diplomatic email like the one below can speed up payment without damaging any business relationships:

Hi,

I hope you're well and you've recovered from all the hard work in setting up Example Event?

Could I ask that you chase up your finance team regarding my invoice? I sent it to you on 17/03/20XX and it has yet to be processed. (I've attached a copy of the invoice below).

My best and many thanks for a wonderful event,

Your Name.

SOCIAL PLATFORMS

Regardless of whether you're very active or only partially involved on social media; the client will expect you to do your part to help publicise the event. The most basic of expectations is that you post something that a) affirms you're attending an event and b) promotes the event in such a way that the client can re-post it to their following and other interested parties.

Your post should include:

- Notification that you're attending the event.
- The venue location (and if possible the date).
- An appropriate hashtag (festivals will generate a hashtag that you should use for this purpose).
- An appropriate media image (a headshot, an action shot or a photo of you on stage).

An example tweet for an architect could be:

I'm super excited to be talking at next week's London's DesignFest. If you've got questions regarding Function vs Style come & hear me & other leading speakers on stage next Tuesday ExampleHashtag

An example Instagram post for an ex-Olympic speaker might look like this:

*I've spent the last two months touring the country and in each state that I've visited I've had the privilege to work with some of the greatest endurance athletes in the US. But now I'm returning home to Chicago where I'll be speaking and offering workshops at the renowned Track & Gym Expo. I'll be working alongside 4 of the world's greatest ultra-athletes. If you want to up your game in your sports field, then come on down to see us on the 31st of November; we'd be thrilled to see you! ExampleHashtag1
ExampleHashtag2*

**TOP TIP – A follow up post after the event isn't necessary but it's always appreciated. If you can compose a post, thanking the client or the venue, chances are the client will repost it to their associates with an additional line or two of their own. If you can, include a photo from the event where you're actively engaging the audience; this is a winning formula that can increase additional bookings from third parties.*

THE FOLLOW UP

After an event, do take the time to email the client.

Be sure to thank them.

- Ask if there was anything that they think could be improved in your performance (constructive criticism will always make you better).
- Request reciprocal sharing of any photos taken during the event (you can use these for your website/social etc).
- Ask for a one or two-line quote on your performance (great for your portfolio and pitching to new clients).
- Ask if they have any contacts or associates that might be interested in booking you for an event.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: A particular client is being difficult.

Solution: Be honest and direct in your communication. Explain that you're keen to deliver a great performance but raise your specific concern (i.e. you don't like the way you're being talked to, the client is asking for too much etc) then ask if there's any way to tackle the problem in an amicable way. If diplomacy and a cheerful demeanour doesn't work then threaten to walk. (One of the wonderful things about being self-employed is that you can pick and choose where you work and when you walk)!

Problem: I rarely get on well with clients.

Solution: Check yourself. If you're naturally socially awkward, this will be a weakness in your career. Fake it if you have to but learn to wear a diplomatic façade while working with clients and their representatives.

Problem: I often ask for X, Y or Z but the clients consistently get it wrong.

Solution: Be more specific in the description of your request and attach example photos to ensure there is no misunderstanding.

Problem: Clients keep asking questions that I've already answered on my FAQ sheet.

Solution:

- Ensure that your FAQ sheet is concise and easy to understand (ask a third party to read/edit it).
- Ensure that your FAQ sheet has been attached in an easy to open format: PDF or Word file.
- Mention your FAQ sheet within the first 8-10 lines in your cover email and underline it so that the client is aware of its importance.

PART II

MECHANICS.

THE ‘NO-MIC’ METHOD.

WHAT’S THE LONGEST YOU can scream and shout for before going hoarse? Two minutes? Three? Clearly shouting is never going to be the way forward for a public speaker. It’s physically fatiguing and damages the vocal cords. The no-mic method is a technique that provides great volume without strain, can be maintained for hours and gives the speaker what every performer wants...a powerful voice.

A powerful voice gives the speaker:

- Confidence.
- Greater perceived authority.
- Better crowd control.
- Freedom from microphones.
- The ability to compete against background noise or work in locations with poor acoustics.

In this chapter: the Mechanics of the Voice, Voice Influencers, the ‘No-Mic’ Method, Projection and Troubleshooting.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHOUTING AND PROJECTING

Take a look at the rather scary image of me shouting.

On the image on the left you’ll note the tendons on my neck standing up, my jaw cranked to the fullest and my cheeks stretched. In addition to my unfortunate ability to look like an ogre, it should be obvious that shouting is *stressful* . It requires an increased expenditure of energy, puts my face and neck muscles under duress and puts unnecessary wear and tear on my vocal folds. The alternate image of me talking shows the projection of my voice

using the no-mic method. You'll see that my neck is relaxed and, although my mouth is open, my jaw and cheeks aren't under duress. Speaking like this does require an effort but in comparison to shouting it's minimal. (I frequently project my voice for five one-hour sessions a day, up to five days a week)!



FIGURE 1 *Forced projecting (shouting) vs effortless projection.*

THE MECHANICS OF THE VOICE

In simple mechanical terms, the voice is made by the following process: air is trapped by a set of bellows, forced along a pipe and squeezed through a vibrating aperture to produce noise. Clearly, there's a bit more to it than that...but not much.

The bellows – The bellows in your body are the lungs and diaphragm working together as a team. Your diaphragm is the engine, your lungs nothing more than big bags of air. Your diaphragm has a remarkable ability

to go from being a big shape to a really thin shape. As it changes shape, the lungs move in tandem, contracting and expanding. When the diaphragm is relaxed it expands and the lungs shrink to make room for it; this is when air is forced *out* of the body. When the diaphragm tenses it contracts tight and thin and the lungs expand, this is when air is pulled *into* your body.

The pipe – the pipe from our lungs to our lips is composed of the trachea and larynx. The vocal folds (or for you and I, the *vocal cords*) are in the larynx. These two folds vibrate at high speed causing the production of noise as air travels past. This noise is manipulated further by our tongue, cheeks and lips to produce what we know as the voice: words, language or song.

VOICE INFLUENCERS

These are the factors that we can control to increase the power of our voice.

- Volume of air.
- The use of assisting muscles to expel air.
- Neck position.
- Proper opening of the mouth.

Volume of air – Unfortunately, while most speakers appreciate the need for air, they still fail to use their lungs to full capacity. You *must* get in the habit of drawing as much air into your lungs as possible. Shallow breathing tends to see just the chest moving; a deep breath should result in an expansion of both the chest and upper stomach. Deep inhalation is what we want.

Assisting muscles – The lungs are nothing more than big gas bags and while the diaphragm is impressively strong, it only tenses in order to get air *into* the body. In order to improve the force of the air being squeezed *out* of the body, we need to look to other muscles for help; our core muscles. You don't need to worry about building a six-pack, nor do you have to worry about building the strength of a powerlifter. What we're looking for is the ability to maintain a long and gentle squeeze around the mid-section. It's this squeeze that gives added power to our voice.

To get a feel of what core muscles should be activated, try this simple exercise. Stand in front of a full-length mirror and lift your shirt up to expose your stomach. Try to relax and ‘slouch’ your stomach so that it bulges forwards. Relax for a couple of seconds and see how far your stomach can go. What you should be seeing now is your stomach muscles in a deactivated state, relaxed and elongated to their fullest. Now try to get your stomach to go from this ‘slouched’ position to an ‘at attention’ position by contracting your stomach inwards. (Note that this should be a gentle contraction). Activate the contraction by inhaling slightly, pulling your stomach in and applying a squeeze to your core muscles. Your stomach should go from convex to concave, or in other words, go from a slight outward bulge to a slight inward curve. This is the gentle squeeze you should be maintaining with your core muscles while talking.

If you’re uncertain of the correct muscles to be using, try a plank position. You don’t have to adopt the tough-as-nails military plank, try this version instead. Stand at the foot of a set of stairs. Keeping your feet where they are and lean forward until your hands touch the stair in line with your chest. You should now be in a push-up position. Bend your arms at the elbow and adopt a plank position. Ensure that your butt is neither raised, nor dipped. You should feel your stomach tense to take the strain. This tensing is not as intense as a full plank but it’s certainly there. This is the contraction that you should be using when exhaling air during a speech.



FIGURE 2 *plank variations on a stool (super similar to doing it on the stairs)!*

Neck position – It's important to ensure there's a clear passage from our lungs to our mouths. Tilting our necks too far forward adds a constrictive bend to our throat and while we can still speak with our chins resting on our chests, our ability to project with force is greatly reduced. When you're on stage always aim to keep your chin in a neutral position or for power moments, lifted slightly.

Ever notice how kids are so good at shouting? It's so effortless and so painfully loud it's almost annoying. But watch how they do it. They hinge forwards a little at the waist for added core tension, they thrust their heads forward and elongate their necks, their chin is up and of course their jaws are as wide apart as possible. Kids instinctively know how to make best use of biomechanics, it's only as we age that we 'unlearn' this ability.

To get an idea of chin position, try this simple exercise. Place the bottom of your fist upon your suprasternal notch (this is that dip where throat, clavicle and sternum meet) then gently rest your chin on the top part of your fist. This will result in a chin-down position, not best for stage work as it constricts your trachea and larynx. In addition, the body language conveyed in this position is aggressive which your listeners will subconsciously respond negatively too. (Chin-down, head-forward is an aggressive stance – see the Body Language Chapter). Now try tweaking your fist position so that your little finger is outstretched and your thumb raised. Place the point of your little finger against your suprasternal notch then rest your chin on the tip of your raised thumb. This is an ideal speaking position. The airflow from lungs to mouth is unrestricted and with your neck raised and chin forward, you will have adopted a confident, self-assured pose; strong body language that your listeners will respect.



FIGURE 3 *using the suprasternal notch.*

Opening the mouth – We've looked at using our lungs to full capacity, squeezing our core muscles and keeping our chin neutral. All of this ensures a good flow of air and voice. To take full advantage of this we need to enunciate with an exaggerated opening of the mouth. Really concentrate on opening the corner of your lips and flexing your cheeks as this can make a big difference.

The pencil exercise – This is a great way to improve enunciation! Take a clean pencil and press it horizontally between your lips. Push it as far back as possible and hold it in place with your teeth. Now start to speak. It will be uncomfortable, no doubt you will feel weird but most importantly you will struggle to enunciate. In order to be heard you will be forced to open your lips and strain your cheek muscles more than normal. This will feel uncomfortable but try talking like this for 2 minutes. Once finished remove the pencil and talk again. The increased clarity in your enunciation will be

remarkable. When you adopt the no-mic method you will want to emulate this additional opening of lips and flexing of the cheeks to aid voice projection.



FIGURE 4 *the pencil exercise.*

*Please note you are at risk of looking incredibly foolish while you do this pencil exercise. The risk of dribbling is also high. For those of you who are brash enough to do this exercise in public, I salute you!

Lombard effect and exercise – In order to be heard in noisy environments, people will exaggerate their normal speech patterns. They will increase their volume, increase lung usage, change their pitch and even the mannerisms of their enunciation in order to compete with background noise. All of this is done subconsciously and is known as the Lombard effect. This subconscious adaption of speech can be harnessed and turned into a great speaker's exercise. I have several recordings of ambient noise that I use during class: hubbub in a crowded bar, the growl of traffic in central London, the clang of weights in a busy gym (all recorded on my phone). I request students practice their speeches while I playback these

recordings. The effect is immediate and is a great educator. Students get a rapid taste of how they should be adapting their speech to talk to a large crowd. If you want to practice this at home you can make your own ambient noise recordings or for an easier option, simply practice talking while the radio is playing.

THE NO-MIC METHOD

Enough of the preamble, let's do this!

Step 1: Adopt a shoulder-wide foot stance, pull your shoulders back and adopt a slight chin-up position. This is a confident stance, so try to feel it. Or if you can't, fake it!

Step 2: Inhale fully and begin to speak with your mouth opened in a slightly wider-than-usual way.

Step 3: As you speak, apply a firm, constant squeeze of the abdominal muscles. Feel the increased power as air is exhaled from your lungs, up your throat and past your lips.

Step 4: Concentrate on enunciating clearly by pulling the corners of your mouth wider than normal and flexing your cheeks (remember that sensation from the pencil exercise)!

Step 5: Project your voice as far as possible.

Step 6: When you breathe in, don't forget to relax the squeeze of your core muscles (this should occur naturally).

That's it. If you're doing all of the above, you should be able to hear an instant increase in volume. If you can't hear a noticeable jump in volume, take a look at the troubleshooting section later in this chapter but before you do so, let's take a moment to consider projecting.

PROJECTION

Projecting is an odd thing. You hear singers and speech coaches talking about it all the time but how on earth do you *project your voice*, something

that you can't see? To overcome the constraints of dealing with something invisible, try the following visualisation and measuring method.

Voice visualisation – You can't see it, you can't touch it but you can envisage it. Allow me to take you through the exercise I give to my students. This exercise allows students to visualise their voice in action by giving them a *tangible* target to aim at.

Step 1: Find or produce a ring, 30-40 cm/12-15 inches in diameter. You can raid your kitchen for a cake tin, a flan ring or alternatively you can cut several strips of A4 paper and staple the ends together to form a circle (just when you thought you'd outgrown arts 'n crafts)! This circle will be the target which you will *aim* your voice at.

Step 2: Fix your ring to the top of a chair or get a training partner to hold it.

Step 3: Stand 3 metres away from the chair and start to talk. Aim to throw your voice *through* the ring. Visualise projecting your voice from your mouth, powering it across the room and through the ring. Additionally, try imagining your voice as an arrow that you must aim through the ring to strike a target on the far wall.

Step 4: Once you feel comfortable increase the projection distance by placing the chair 5 then 8 metres away.

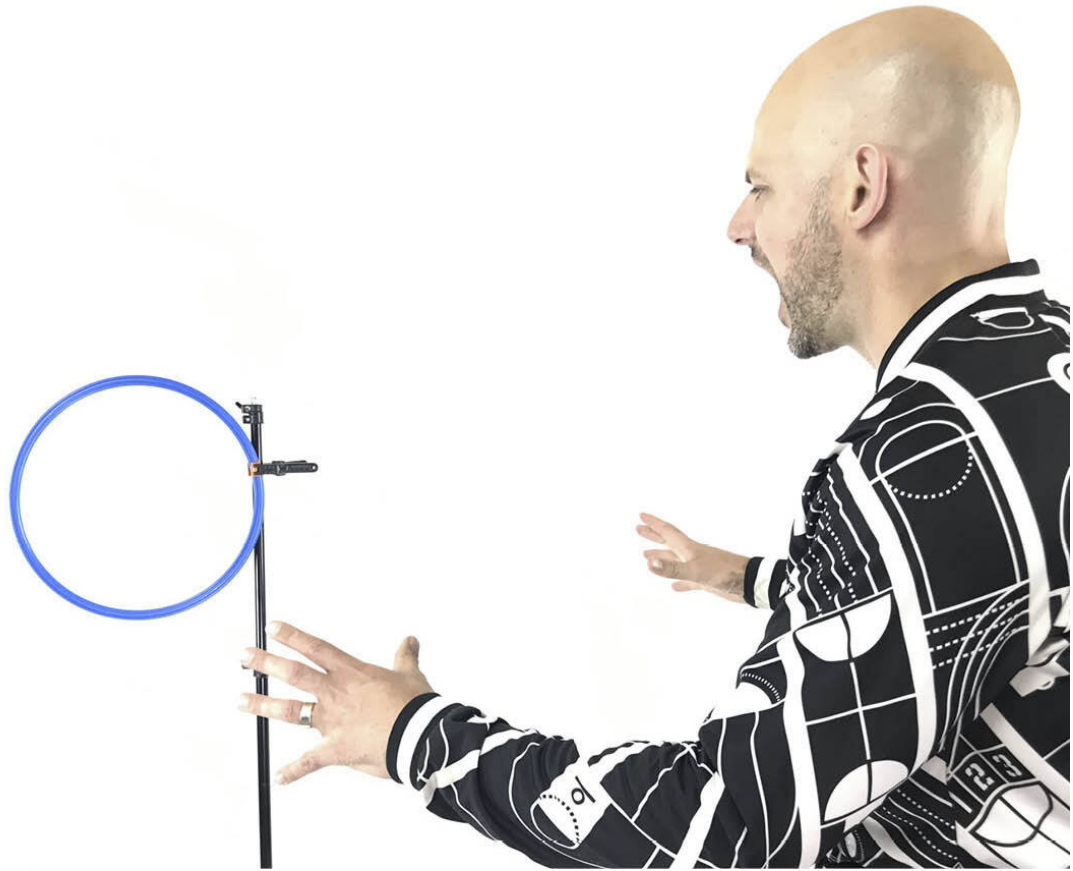


FIGURE 5 *using a target as an aid to visualise voice projection.*

Measuring your voice – While visualisation is great, nothing beats being able to measure the strength of your voice. Audio recording apps for smartphones are perfect for this.

Suitable apps are:

- Decibel X
- iPhone's Voice Memo
- Android's Audio Recorder
- Adobe Clip
- Rode Rec (requires a plug in microphone).

Repeat the visualisation process but with your smartphone placed on the chair/near your target ring. Checking the app decibel level during playback

will show you how you're doing. Again, I suggest recording your voice from distances of 3, 5 and 8 metres. Do note that unless you're using a specialised microphone, do not expect your smartphone to pick up a true representation of your voice. In addition, as you move the phone further away (to the 5 and 8 metre mark), expect the microphone to struggle to pick up your voice with clarity and for the recorded decibel level to drop off. As remarkable as modern smartphones are, don't mistake them for top-end recording devices. Instead, use the decibel playback levels as a rudimentary gauge for voice power. Don't worry about specific numbers, simply aim to see an overall improvement as you continue to practice.

**TOP TIP – the human ear is a sensitive and remarkable piece of kit! Where possible, do the above exercise with a partner. Their ear will be better equipped than a mobile phone and will give a truer indication of improvement.*

For a greater understanding of sound and decibel reduction, check out the Sound Chapter later in this bible.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem : Your voice is growing hoarse. You feel tension around your neck. Your throat is beginning to hurt.

Solution: You're straining too much. Instead of trying to shout relax your throat, open your mouth wider and focus on your core muscles.

Problem: You can feel your core muscles tensing but your voice doesn't sound that much louder.

Solution: Open the corners of your mouth wider. Practice the pencil exercise.

Problem: Your stomach aches.

Solution: You're squeezing too hard. Additionally, you could be holding the squeeze all the time which is incorrect and places too much strain on the abdomen. Relax the squeeze each time you breathe in, then re-engage as you breathe out.

Problem: You've tried all the steps in the no-mic method but you still haven't increased your speaking volume.

Solution: Improve your core strength. Check out the exercises in the Exercises for Public Speakers Chapter or book some sessions with a personal trainer. Alternatively, ask someone to go through the steps with you. An extra set of eyes and ears can help pinpoint errors you might be missing.

Problem: You made rapid progress but now your power is trailing off.

Solution: You've reached the limit of your vocal abilities (we've all got natural limits). Or your vocal abilities are limited by your core strength. This takes time to build. Check out the core exercises in the Exercises for Public Speakers Chapter.

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE V

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: JOEY ANSAH

Joey is one of those guys you simply can't help but admire; he's hugely talented yet wonderfully humble. I first saw him pulling off a ridiculous power move at gymnastics that appeared to defy the laws of physics. In addition to his acrobatic abilities, he's a creative powerhouse in cinematography: stunts, acting, choreography, directing and producing. These are his words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

As an actor, director and producer, I find myself public speaking in different forums regularly, whether it's pitching an idea to a boardroom of production execs, auditioning in front of a room of people or commanding a film unit. Confidence, composure and social-self-awareness are all important skills to have in order to be successful. Most people suffer from stage fright and low confidence. Speaking on a stage in front of a large audience can make you feel very small and vulnerable indeed. One piece of advice I'd give to combat this, is to imagine the spotlight is on the audience and not you. They are the ones feeling nervous and apprehensive and it is your job to make them feel comfortable, engaged and entertained. I use this a lot when I pitch to a room full of people. I'm confident in what I'm selling and enthusiastic about getting my audience engaged, energised and inquisitive. I welcome questions. Someone seeking greater insight about you or your ideas is one of the best human experiences you can have. Using audience participation can help with this. Direct a question at the audience as a whole or to an individual to temporarily take the heat/focus off you and onto another individual.

Enjoy yourself! It is both the speaker and the audience's primary objective to enjoy the occasion. Be aware of your own physicality, ticks and habits. Over gesticulating can be distracting and a sign of nervousness. You learn this as an actor. A nervous actor fidgets, shifts their weight from foot to

foot, cocks their head constantly to channel nervous energy. A confident actor can stand statue still, stare you in the eye and deliver his or her dialogue. You want to appear calm, composed and stoic if need be to deliver important, serious or sombre information, and you need to be able to be physical to invoke excitement and humour. It is a fine balance to master and requires self-examination and feedback from trusted aides as you improve your public speaking over time. Naturally, having a good vocal projection helps.

I've never had a really bad public speaking episode that I can think of, although during one particularly tense and unfriendly audition in LA in front of about 8 people I had repeated mental blanks and kept forgetting my dialogue. Nerves got to me. That was an episode I'd like to forget!

JOEY ANSAH,

Actor, choreographer, filmographer, dude.

MEMORISING A SPEECH.

MEMORY CAN BE AN odd thing, no more evident than among public speakers. If you attend enough events, you'll soon be aware that speakers seem to come in three kinds: those that fumble through written notes, those that try to make do without, only to falter and those that excel in recalling all points of their talk without apparent trouble.

Before you begin to wonder what kind of speaker you will be, allow me to reassure you that *memory is not reliant upon IQ but upon technique*. If you so choose, you can learn to build a remarkable memory! In this chapter you'll find a range of memory techniques. Some of these are elementary, almost cheat methods while others are more involved and require study to develop. The simplest and easiest to grasp are at the start of the chapter while the most interesting but perhaps most difficult to teach, the Method of Loci, is towards the end of the chapter.

Being able to memorise a speech is a key tool for public speakers. For those suffering from glossophobia (*the fear of public speaking*), being able to remember your content means one less thing to worry about. For more advanced speakers, having the freedom to step away from written notes gives you more opportunity to focus on your voice, more mobility to explore body language and frees you to take advantage of the stage in its entirety.

'All great speakers were bad speakers at first.'

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

In this chapter: Prompts and Repetition, Prayer Beads, Linking, the Method of Loci and Other Historical Methods for Memory.

PROMPTS AND REPETITION

Repetition

There's nothing like simple practice and repetition as an aid to memory. To increase your memorisation:

- Practice your speech at least 3 times.
- Repeat sticking points or parts of the speech where you falter.
- Take a twenty-minute break to allow your mind to relax, then repeat your speech one final time.
- *Don't attempt to remember a speech word for word. Instead, aim to remember key elements only.* (If you're a master in your field, you'll be able to talk details all day long. Focus on remembering the key elements and the details will take care of themselves).

While you don't want to be the speaker who has to constantly look at his or her slideshow in order to remember what you were talking about, there are still cheeky prompts that you can use to get you by.

Presenter View

Both PowerPoint and Prezi have a presenter view option which will allow you to run your slideshow on the main screen whilst allowing you to see prompts on a smaller screen. Professional venues will have a hidden screen at the front of the stage that can be seen by the performer, yet will be hidden from the audience's line of sight. For smaller venues, you'll have to make do with your laptop or tablet.

Print outs

You don't want multiple pieces of paper scattered across the floor but there's nothing wrong with having one piece of paper with written prompts or symbols that you can glance at from time to time.

Specific images

Use specific images on a slide that you can use as a *link* to your memory. When you glance at the slide from the corner of your eye, the image will start a memory cascade.

**TOP TIP – Most of my slides have a white background. However, every now and then I insert a black background; as a result the room visibly darkens (albeit slightly). This is a great prompt that allows me to gauge where I am without having to look at the projector screen.*

Clicker

Tactile memory is surprisingly strong. I insert animations on each slide that are initiated by pressing a button on my clicker. Some slides might require just one or two clicks, others more. The motion of my finger and the tactile sense of pressing the button in specific rhythms works remarkably well as an aid to memory. Having my hand and fingers act first forces my brain to play catch up. There have been times where my mind has wandered during a speech but oddly my fingers knew what to do. Over the years this odd trick has saved me during bad days and rough mornings.

PRAYER BEADS

Many religions developed the use of beads as a means to track chants, mantras and prayers. Muslims use Misbaha, both Buddhists and Hindus use Japa Mala and Christians use Rosary beads and prayer ropes.

I was blown away when I saw a fifteen-year-old girl take the concept of prayer beads and adapt it as a tactile and visual aid for her speech. She had, on her wrist a funky and colourful bracelet that she had made herself. Each bead was of a different colour size and shape and it was this string of beads that she used as a *link* to each segment of her speech. As I watched her give her speech, I noticed that she glanced at her wrist from time to time, stroked certain beads and rotated the entire bracelet on her wrist. I had assumed this was nothing more than nerves or a subconscious twitch; it was only after I talked to her at the end of her speech that I learned the truth.

I don't think I could get away with wearing such a bracelet; it was kitsch and very much a loud teenage thing. However, it worked for that young student; perhaps with some thought and adaption other speakers could tweak the concept into a working aid for adults.

LINKING

A simple yet remarkably efficient method of memory recall is *linking* . Linking is the tying of two or more things together to form a memory chain. These things are linked together by imaginary interaction, the interaction from one link to another builds a complete chain. Each thing in this chain can then be remembered by running through the imagined interactions.

This concept of linking relies upon your mental ability to animate. *The more vivid and powerful your imagination, the stronger your ability to link and the better your ability at memory recall.*

Let me demonstrate how linking works. Let's pretend someone has gone through your family home and ransacked five very random items from different rooms. These items are:

1. A vegetable peeler.
2. A toy soldier.
3. A calculator.
4. A hairdryer.
5. A leather belt.

We're going to use our imagination to animate each item on this list. More than that, we're going to use our imagination to cause each animated object to interact with the item next to it in the list. To make this linking as successful as possible, we're going to use wild, loud, colourful, extreme and wacky animation. The more unusual our animation is, the greater our chances for recall.

Let's do this! Let us pretend that:

1. The vegetable peeler is made from gold and sparkles brightly in the light.
2. The soldier is completely green in colour. Eager to head into action, it bounces excitedly from foot to foot.
3. The calculator is pink and very kitsch. Each of its buttons has been painted, not with numbers but with popular kid's cartoon characters.
4. The hairdryer thinks it's a gun! Clearly, the thing is crazy as it keeps shouting 'bang-bang' in an annoying voice.

5. The leather belt moves like a snake but is very tired. It keeps yawning and tries to curl into a ball.

These odd animations makes each object more vivid and easy to recollect. Let's take this further and add interaction to *link* one object to the other.

1. The vegetable peeler floats into the air and begins to peel green shavings from the plastic soldier.

2. The soldier bellows in anger! It slaps the peeler away and runs for its life. In its haste for safety, the soldier runs full tilt into the calculator.

3. The calculator falls from its resting place. As it tumbles through the air all the cartoon characters painted on its buttons shout in surprise! With a 'thud' and a 'whumpf', the calculator falls onto the hairdryer.

4. The sudden impact of the calculator falling onto the hairdryer disrupts it so that instead of blowing warm air it starts blowing *extremely hot* air. And now, instead of simply shouting 'bang-bang' the hairdryer starts making machine gun noises.

5. The extremely hot air propelled further than normal disturbs the sleepy leather belt. Further annoyed by the hair dryer's idiotic machine gun noises, the leather belt slinks off to find a better place to sleep.

These interactions combined with the original animation are the cement that links each item together. In order for this to succeed you must put your imagination to work. You must *see* each item moving and interacting with the next. Spend a further twenty to thirty seconds envisaging the interaction between the peeler, the soldier, the calculator, the dryer and the belt, then put this book aside. Fill your time for an hour or two, then try to recollect the linked objects and the animations that combine them. I'm willing to bet that the objects spring to mind. More than that, I'll bet that if you start with the leather belt animation you'll find it just as easy to go through the linked objects in reverse.

To commit this or any other memorised list to long-term memory you should repeat your visualisation:

- One hour later.
- Once again before going to sleep.

- Once the next day.
- Once the following week.
- And once more the next month.

Follow this protocol and the memory should stick with you and be easy to recall even up to a year later.

This method of linking is a powerful memory tool and a huge aid for speakers. A little practice and adaption can have speakers using this process to memorise speech components with minimal effort.

Linking exercises

Using objects – I frequently turn up to classes with a bag of toys and small miscellaneous objects. These include plastic dinosaurs, coloured dice, pieces of Lego and other goodies. (These objects are intentionally childish making it easier for senior students to draw upon formerly forgotten imagination patterns). I'll ask students to take between 8-12 objects then place them in a line and use their imagination to link them together. Students are limited to two minutes to complete their linking. Newbies will only manage to link 4-6 objects but with a little home practise they're able to link 9-12 objects by their third class.

Using themes – Once students are adept at linking objects, the exercise can be made harder by asking them to link concepts or ideas. Clearly, this is more difficult than memorising objects but with a little work students can adapt their technique so that they are able to link topics that might occur in a speech. These topics or themes are written upon flashcards or A5 pieces of paper. These could be 'rainfall', 'adversity', 'quarterly sales', 'travel', 'advances in Science' etc. Students are then asked to take 4-5 topics and link these. Again there will be a time limit of two minutes. Initially, students struggle but practice soon brings rapid memory gains.

THE METHOD OF LOCI

The Greeks and Romans considered rhetoric and oratory as an art form and a requisite for civilisation. To further their talent, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Simonides and Cicero developed techniques that would aid their memory

and give them perfect recall for their speeches. The most well-known of these is the Method of Loci, where visualisations are tied to locations to form mnemonics that aid memory recall.

‘Loci’, in Latin, means ‘place’ or ‘location’. It’s pronounced not as ‘lo-key’ but as ‘lo-sy’ (the ‘sy’ rhyming with pie and sky).

The Method of Loci is a mnemonic device that works by tying a visual image to a geographical location.

As humans, we have good memory recall for specific physical locations. If you shut your eyes you’ll find that you can easily recall the layout of your childhood home, the layout of your grandparents home, that of your best friend’s and of your primary school. In addition to remembering the layout, you should be able to remember pieces of furniture, items or cutlery in drawers and more. The Greeks tapped into this attribute to increase the power of mnemonics. What makes the Method of Loci so remarkable is that the Greeks would use their imagination to replace the existing items, furniture and other objects in these locations with the things that they wanted to remember!

For example, if a Greek, skilled in the Method of Loci, wanted to remember to buy his wife flowers, pick up new cutlery from the ironmonger and replace a worn carpet, he would use his imagination to insert these items into his house. Perhaps he would picture an image of his wife in the living room being showered by an endless waterfall of roses falling from the ceiling. In the kitchen he could perhaps remove all furniture and items apart from a table set with bent and twisted cutlery and beneath the table, spread across the floor was a patchwork carpet that was burning with green and purple flames. These images are ludicrous, imaginative and very much over the top! But because they were so exaggerated, it would make recalling these things that much easier for the Greek. When he reached the market later that day, all he would have to do would be to walk through the memory of his house and see each of these exaggerated visualisations to know what he had to do. The image of his wife being showered with roses would remind him to stop at the florist, the twisted cutlery would make sure he dropped off a new order at the ironmonger and the image of the burning carpet would ensure he asked the weaver to design a new rug.

The Method of Loci was used successfully by the Greeks and Romans and it was taught all the way up to the Renaissance period before falling from favour as written materials became more readily available. A recent

resurgence has seen memory champions using it and similar mnemonic devices to massively improve their information recall.

Feats of 21st Century Memory Giants:

- Rajveer Meena memorised 70,000 digits of Pi.
- John Basinger has memorised all 12 books of Milton's Paradise Lost.
- Alex Mullen memorised 3,029 digits in order in one hour.
- Yanjaa Wintersoul was able to memorise all 328 pages of Ikea's catalogue word-for-word for a marketing campaign.
- Nelson Dellis memorised 469 cards in thirty minutes.

We've already covered the concept of 'linking' earlier in this chapter. To make the Method of Loci work all we have to do is connect *linking* to a *familiar physical location*. I'll walk you through this process step-by-step with the following ground-work and examples:

Rudimentary basics

Split your speech into three parts – a start, middle and end. Now think of a building that you are familiar with (preferably a house). Connect the start of your speech to the entranceway of the house, the middle of the speech to the living room and the end of your speech to the kitchen. To activate the Method of Loci you take an imagined walk through the building, as you enter each specific room you should *see* each part of your speech.

Visualisation basics

We already know from linking that memory works better when using exaggerated, wacky and ridiculous visual imagery. As an example, let's look at the start of a speech; we'll pretend we're giving a fifteen-minute business speech promoting a new type of hire van. Let's assume the first five minutes will focus on a) the low environmental impact of the van and b) the efficient running cost of the vehicle. To apply a visualisation we would think of our loci or location. Let's go with the house we mentioned previously. In the entranceway to this house you could place (*or anchor*) the following exaggerated visualisations:

- A small model version of your new hire van driving in slow motion across a table. The tabletop is made out of purple and yellow flowers, as the van drives across the tabletop, it leaves the flowers untouched. This would be a simple visualisation for the low environmental impact.
- On the other side of the entranceway is a large, bright red piggy bank. Falling into the slot on top of the piggy bank are a mix of gold coins and tiny hire vans. As the coins and vans fall, you hear a pleasing tinkling noise and every once in a while, as the piggy bank fills up, it chuckles with enjoyment. This is a visualisation representing the efficient running cost.

Both visualisations are animated and unusual. The bright colours and imagined sound makes the memory recall even easier. Let's move on to the middle of the speech. This time we'll pretend we're going to talk about the van's competition and your forthcoming marketing strategy. For this part of the speech we'll move to a different part of the loci, the living room. This time we'll use the following visualisations:

- A creaky 1970s van spewing black clouds of smoke from its exhaust. The van repeatedly smacks into a wall, reverses a bit, then repeats the motion. Beneath the creaky van are newspapers full of critical articles. You can smell the acrid stink of exhaust fumes and you can hear the squeal of tires. This visualisation represents the outdated service of your competition, its tendency to malfunction and the newspapers tie into bad press headlines that you can quote.
- On the other side of the room is a beautiful woman exuding sex appeal and eroticism ². On the palm of her outstretched hand is a model of your van. Camera flashes and the sound of paparazzi shouting questions surround the woman. This image represents the popular A-list celebrity that has agreed to endorse the business in her forthcoming movie.

² this might seem crass but sexual imagery is a great memory aid. Please change the image/sex of the A-list celebrity to whatever your orientation or preference.

Once again, the visualisations are colourful and exaggerated. We've also incorporated smells and eroticism as part of the imagery. Note that we've limited two visualisations to each part of the loci (or in this case two images to one room). This keeps things simple and reduces the chances of your memory becoming overwhelmed.

This application of anchoring visualisations to physical locations is the Method of Loci in its simplest form. However, to truly fix the mnemonics in place, we need to return to *linking*.

Let's attempt the following interactions *or links* between our existing visualisations:

- The small van driving across the flowers builds up speed, races off the tabletop and shoots through the air. As it travels across the room it shrinks in size and joins the other tiny vans and gold coins falling into the slot on the piggy bank.
- The piggy bank, now swollen and full, waddles across the entranceway and tries to enter the living room but it's too fat and simply can't fit through the doorway. Annoyed, it opens its mouth and spits all the micro vans stored in its stomach, like a cartoon machine gun, at the creaky 1970s van. Startled, the creaky van starts its endless cycle of driving into the wall.
- The creaky van begins to break down. One of its tires comes off and rolls across the room towards the beautiful lady. The lady, unfazed and secure in her grace, simply puts out a foot and stops the tire in its tracks. She takes the opportunity to turn the motion into a winning pose that the invisible paparazzi love as their questions grow louder and the cameras flash faster.

To complete the linking the beautiful lady, perhaps bored with all the attention, could saunter into the kitchen where she would then interact with whatever visualisations you have in there to signify the end of your speech. This is the Method of Loci applied to the art of oratory.

**TOP TIP – familiarise yourself with 5-8 buildings (loci!) giving you more options to apply the Method of Loci to different speeches; using the same loci over and over again can cause confusion.*

Memory training is a powerful yet sadly seldom taught skill. Do take time to research the following systems:

- Major System
- Mnemonic Peg System
- Dominic System

For further reading I strongly recommend:

- *Ageless Memory: The Memory Expert's Prescription for a Razor-Sharp Mind* by Harry Lorayne.
- *The Memory Book: How to Remember Anything You Want* by Tony Buzan.
- *How to Develop a Perfect Memory* by Dominic O'Brien.

OTHER HISTORICAL METHODS FOR MEMORY

Ancient Greece and Rome weren't the only cultures to develop memory techniques.

Skalds – Skalds were the Viking storytellers of old and were charged with recording heroic deeds and the recounting of legends. The Skalds were reputed to use a system of oral repetition and specific rhythms to aid the memorisation of epic sagas.

Aboriginals – the indigenous peoples of Australia have a remarkable heritage of oral histories that are thought to be so exact and precise that they contain accurate historical knowledge dating back thousands of years. More fascinating are 'songlines', songs that are tied with rhythm to lines and contours of the landscape that allowed people to travel for hundreds of miles using these as a means of navigation. The aboriginal system of linking stories to mental images of physical location is a mnemonic system not dissimilar to the Greek Method of Loci.

Inka – The Inka and other First Nations of the Andes used Khipu or '*Talking Knots*', a system of strings that were coloured and tied into a

series of knots to record information. Deciphering the content of these 'letters' required a combination of sight and touch.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: I'm struggling with imagination when it comes to linking.

Solution: Some adults struggle with imagination for the simple reason that they've failed to exercise it over the years. If this is the case, return to your roots. Search YouTube for whatever cartoons you watched in your childhood and use some of the imagery from these to kick start your linking.

Problem: I'm still struggling with linking. What else can I use to ensure that images stick in my memory?

Solution: Try eroticism or, as shocking as it might seem, pornographic images. Sex is a huge stimulator and (let's be honest) most minds are good at fantasizing. Whatever your sexual preference consider applying erotic images to your linking.

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE VI

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: JADE NAIRN

Jade is the embodiment of a bundle of energy. You always know when she's entered the room and she certainly brightens up any occasion. With both a background in theatre and education, she excels in expressing confidence and delivering messages with succinct communication. And if you want to learn how to project, not just your voice but your personality, then Jade is the person to learn from. These are her words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

If you feel like you're rambling on, take a breath, compose yourself and think about what you're going to say. Always think about the first five words you're going to say and that sets the tone for the whole performance.

Be aware of saying 'ums' and 'uhs' (I used to do this a lot)! Be aware of how you fill gaps.

When you speak 'naturally' with friends, you natter on at a fast pace but if you were to do this in front of an unfamiliar audience, they wouldn't be able to mentally keep up with your speech. Slow it down so that it feels almost uncomfortable. If the pace that you're speaking at feels uncomfortable to you, then you're speaking at the right pace for the audience.

Jade was also awesome enough to share one of her more awkward experiences to show that these things can and do happen to us all:

This happened when I was working on 'Blood Brothers'. One of the other actors got their lines completely wrong and skipped to the second Act. And this happened just as I had walked out on stage. Realising what had occurred, I had no choice but to do a brisk one-eighty and walk right off again! (God knows what it must have looked like to the audience lol).

Another embarrassing occasion arose when I had just finished touring the Edinburgh Fringe and had moved on to perform at Camden Fringe where

my entire family were due to come and watch me act at a 'black box theatre'. They turned up late, however, I'd given them specific instructions in preparation for this: to stay in the Green room then come out in the second Act where there's a natural break. So, there I am performing when my parents abruptly decide to walk out onto the stage straight from the Green room! What made it worse was they were walking around, having a conversation, eating McDonald's while looking for a place to sit (while I'm still trying to perform) and my father looks me straight in the eye and says "eh, are you alright?"

JADE NAIRN,

Singer, performer, educator and awesomesaurus.

COMMUNICATION & TEACHING POINTS.

ONE OF THE EARLIEST lessons I learned as a speaker is that not everyone will be on the same page. It doesn't matter how concise or clear you think your message is, you should always assume that there will be people in the audience who are unable to grasp what you're saying.

This isn't to say that your audience members are stupid, nor does it mean that the words coming out of your mouth are poorly composed; they're probably not. However, you must be aware that your audience is comprised of *unique individuals who act, think and comprehend in different ways and at different speeds.*

As a public speaker, it's your job to adapt your words so that as many people as possible in your audience can digest the message that you are trying to deliver.

In this chapter: Types of Intelligence, Teaching Points, CFUs, Communication Exercises, Q&As and Troubleshooting.

TYPES OF INTELLIGENCE

Psychologist Howard Gardner developed the theory of Multiple Intelligences. He argues that while all individuals can be competent in the range of his nine listed intelligences, most people will tend to lean toward a specific intelligence.

His list of nine intelligences are:

- Naturalistic
- Musical
- Logical/Mathematical
- Existential (life smart)

- Interpersonal (the socialiser)
- Intra-personal (inward looking/reflective)
- Bodily-kinesthetic (the mover)
- Linguistic
- Spatial

There's no better place to see this fluctuation of ability than inside the education industry. Talk to any teacher and they will acknowledge that their students display strengths in certain fields and weaknesses in others. (If in doubt, consider your own education. Would it be fair to say that you leapt ahead in certain fields yet struggled in others)?

To further muddy the waters, there are other factors to consider when it comes to teaching, namely learning differences.

DYSCALCULIA AND DYSLEXIA

Learning differences pretty much do what they say on the box, they cause challenges in processing information and slow rates of learning.

Dyscalculia, for example, is a learning difference that causes people to struggle with symbols and calculus while dyslexia affects individuals' ability to decipher and comprehend language, grammar and words.

Dyslexia – Up to 10% of the UK population is thought to be affected to some degree (of which 4% suffer severely).

Dyscalculia – It's been suggested that between 3% and 6% of the population struggle with dyscalculia (and that a further 25% of the total population are thought to present with a mild form of this expression).

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – I was discussing the probability of success during a college workshop when I noted a student struggling to comprehend my quote. No matter how I tried to break it down, she simply couldn't grasp the statistic. It was only after I grabbed a marker and drew a pie chart on the whiteboard that she reached an understanding. Turns out she was a bright student but only excelled when she could draw conclusions from visual learning. The experience has since led to me to use multiple infographics to display the same statistic on one slide:*

numbers, pie charts, shaded figures and coloured bars. The range of display increases the rate of learning uptake among different audience members and reduces the amount of time I have to spend explaining the subject.

There are other learning differences that will affect your audience too: dyspraxia, autism and ADHD to name but a few.

It's important to note that while parts of the population do present with specific learning differences they are still more than capable of excelling in other areas of study and performance.

Visual and hearing impairments

It is thought that up to 19% of the UK suffer from some form of hearing loss. Currently, 1 in 1000 children is born with severe hearing loss. Two million British people are visually impaired of which 360,000 are registered as legally blind.

As a public speaker you should always expect to have members of your audience who are visually or hearing impaired. Expect the event organiser to place those with visual difficulties in an appropriate seat to accommodate their sight and they will warn you of any guests that have specific hearing requirements. As a speaker you can help by:

- Wearing a specialised mic to connect with user's Bluetooth hearing aids. (These will be supplied by the user and can be worn around your neck).
- Always face the audience so members can see your lips and facial expression.
- Enunciate clearly and project your voice.
- Avoid slides that use small red text on a white background.
- Where possible strive to use clean fonts and large text. The best fonts that provide easy recognition for readers are: Arial, Verdana, Tahoma and Sans Serif versions.
- Use strong contrasting colours when displaying images and infographics.

When addressing an audience, it's important for public speakers to consider their listeners *not as a homogenised mass but as a collection of individuals* . In order for your message to carry clearly across excellent communication skills must be employed. This is where the magic of teaching points becomes a welcome helping hand.

'In making a speech one must study three points: first, the means of producing persuasion; second, the language, third, the proper arrangement of the various parts of the speech.'

ARISTOTLE

TEACHING POINTS

A good teacher will pass knowledge to students in simple yet easy to digest packages. These can be envisaged as a series of well-delivered statements known as teaching points.

To utilise teaching points in a speech:

- Strip the information you wish to impart down to its most rudimentary components.
- Keep things simple and avoid over-elaboration.
- Don't beat around the bush. Deliver knowledge swiftly and concisely.
- Use language that your audience can understand (consider regional, social and cultural differences in speech).
- Where possible use an analogy or example that your audience will be familiar with.
- Use appropriate body language and gestures as a visual aid.
- Don't look away from the audience during key moments of delivery.
- Don't use new terminology to impart new ideas. Package fresh ideas in well-used and familiar language.

- In addition to pointing out keys for success, give examples of failures or things to avoid too.
- If you have a projector, utilise it to display visual imagery that complements your verbal delivery.

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – if you're British, you'll be familiar with the terms 'old dear' and 'old man' as references for mother and father. Normally when travelling overseas I'll normally curtail my colloquialisms and use a more precise form of international English but when I'm tired I tend to relax and revert to my natural patterns of speech. During a hectic tour in the Middle East I grew fatigued and while regaling an audience with a tale of my youth found myself reverting to slang. Of course, when mentioning my parents I used 'old dear' and 'old man'. It was only afterwards that I found out that students thought that 'my old dear' referred to some kind of pet bird and that several teachers thought that 'my old man' was a reference to an older gay partner! To say that I was blushing while staff looked embarrassed and students appeared confused would be an understatement. Check your terminology before talking at any event.*

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

There are two other very reliable methods for teaching that are worth utilising. The first comes from the education sector and is known as ESA. The second is IDEA and hails from the sports world.

ESA

ESA is an acronym for **engage, study and activate**. ESA is used as an aid to deliver lessons and is deployed a little like this:

Engage

The teacher finds a means to engage students (perhaps through the use of an anecdote, a quote, an interesting fact or a startling revelation). Teachers aim to raise students' interest and create an emotional investment in the subject by getting them excited.

Study

With the students' interest piqued, the teacher provides a direct explanation of how the theory works and will model this by showing how it can be put into practice.

Activate

Now that the students have a basic understanding of the information, the teacher will set a task so they can put their knowledge to the test.

ESA can be adapted to the public speaking world by replacing the word 'student' with 'audience' and altering 'engage, study and activate' to **excite, elaborate and take away**.

Excite

Engage the audience with a tale, revelation, quote or fact.

Elaborate

Explain how the tale, anecdote or fact connects to the audience.

Take away

Ask the audience to take the lesson learned from the tale, anecdote or fact and *act upon it*.

Example – applying **excite, elaborate and take away** to a motivational speaker talking about how to overcome fear.

- *Engage* the audience with your experience of overcoming fear.
- *Explain* how this specific experience taught you how to overcome fear.
- Ask the audience to go home and to make *a start on overcoming their own fear*.

Example – applying **excite, elaborate and take away** to a salesperson looking to introduce new techniques to the office.

1. *Engage* the audience with a new sales technique.
2. *Explain* how this technique can increase profit.

3. Ask the audience to return to the office and *put this new method into action.*

'The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding.'

LEONARDO DA VINCI

IDEA

Personal trainers use the IDEA acronym to teach new movements to clients. IDEA stands for 'Introduce' 'Demonstrate' 'Explain' and 'Activate'. IDEA works a little like this:

Introduce

The personal trainer introduces the client to the exercise by telling them:

- What the exercise is.
- What muscle groups are utilised during the exercise.
- What the benefits of the exercise are.

Demonstrate

The personal trainer performs an example of the exercise as a demonstration.

Explain

The personal trainer explains how the exercise works. He or she will go on to give points on what is good form, what is bad form and what might cause a risk of injury. Good personal trainers will use analogies to suggest how the client should feel as they utilise the exercise or equipment.

Activate

The personal trainer invites the client to do the exercise and makes corrections as and when required.

The physical-exercise exercise (Yes, that's a mouthful)!

There's no quicker way to see if someone understands communication than through physical movement. If you've ever been to a gym, dance or aerobics class, you can immediately see who is and who isn't getting it. The person who hasn't understood the teaching points will be moving out of sync from everyone else or has stopped in order to work out how to make their body move in the requested way. This makes for a great opportunity to test your communication and the following is always a popular exercise at any of my classes.

The exercise – Partner up. One person will be the Speaker, the other, the Listener. The Listener turns their back to the speaker. The exercise is simple, the Speaker will request the Listener to perform a popular or well-known exercise for example a sit-up, a push-up, a squat etc. The Speaker however, is not allowed to say 'do a sit-up or 'do a push-up', instead, the Speaker must coach the Listener through the exercise by giving a series of concise verbal instructions. In affect the Listener must do this 'blind' and without asking questions.

For example, if the movement chosen by the Speaker is a squat, the exercise would go a little like this:

Speaker: 'Please adopt a slightly wider than shoulder-width stance with your feet and turn your toes slightly outward. Throughout this exercise please keep both your head and your chest as upright as possible. I'd like you to lift your arms not to the side but straight in front of you. Keep lifting your arms until your hands are level with your shoulders. Great, stop there. When I say 'start' I'd like you to maintain this body shape to the best of your ability, the only movement that I'd like to see will come from your legs. I'd like you to bend your knees and drop your hips until you've got a ninety-degree angle behind your knees. If this doesn't make sense, pretend that you're going to sit on a really, really low chair! If you're ready? In three, two, one start...good keep going and now...stop! Hold that pose for a second, then slowly push your legs upright until you're standing tall.'

And that would be it. One simple repetition of a squat.

The beauty of this exercise is that it forces the Speaker to think from the Listener's point of view. The Speaker must deliver clear, easy to follow instructions all the while emphasizing these instructions with easy to visualise imagery. From a communication standpoint, this is an almost perfect exercise and can reap wonders in novice speakers.

Do it!

CFU

CFU is a teaching acronym for ‘Check For Understanding’. Teachers will use a CFU after they have delivered their teaching points to ensure their students are clear about what they are supposed to do. This final check for understanding gives teachers an opportunity to gauge the strength of their communication. If most or all of the class have understood, then clearly the teacher has communicated well. However, if the reverse is true and many of the students request clarification, then the teacher has to work upon his or her communication style.

Teachers may use a variety of the following in order to check for understanding in students:

Fist to Five!

This is an instant feedback mechanism where students raise a number of fingers to indicate their level of understanding. A thumb and four fingers indicate students totally understand, a fist is no clue whatsoever and then there’s the range in between, displaying partial levels of understanding.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down

Another instant feedback mechanism not dissimilar to the ‘Fist to Five’. Clearly, this offers less precision for gauging understanding but makes up for this shortfall by allowing the teacher to swiftly gauge the overall understanding of the classroom with a glance.

Student Repetition

Teachers often request a student to explain, in their own words the task at hand as they understand it. This tool offers value by allowing the classroom to hear the same instructions delivered in a ‘student-friendly’ way. This repetition allows for an increased understanding of the task.

CFUs are excellent tools that benefit teachers and the classroom. The difficulty in transferring these tools to the public speaking auditorium is that many adults will recognise these as school room tactics and may begrudge being treated like children. If you want to sidestep potentially patronizing

your audience, there's a CFU tool that works just as well for public speakers: the Q&A session.

Q&As

Typically a questions and answers session occurs at the end of a speech. Not all speeches will be appropriate for a Q&A session; there might not be time or perhaps the event organiser would prefer not to have them. However, if you can, I strongly encourage that you factor time to allow for these. A Q&A session can create laughs, insights and generally ensures that your performance ends on a good note. Most importantly, it allows audience members the opportunity to request clarification. If there were any parts of your speech that they didn't understand, this is their opportunity to raise a query and your opportunity to correct yourself if errors or misunderstandings have occurred.

You don't have to stick to tradition either. If you wish, you can have several Q&A sessions throughout a performance. If you're giving a technical speech or discussing experimental concepts, this model can work to your advantage.

**TOP TIP – some audiences can be shy so it will fall to you to find a way to get the ball rolling. I use bribery! I offer pimped-out posters and bookmarks as prizes for questions and it doesn't take long for there to be a sea of hands in the air.*

FINAL WORDS

Even if you consider teachers and personal trainers to be worlds away from your industry or profession, you've got to acknowledge that they spend their day instructing large groups of people. If the opportunity arises, study their teaching methods and pinch what you can! You'll be a better speaker for it.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: My audience members don't understand what I'm saying. My audience only heard part of my speech; they ignored the most important part.

Solution: Your communication is either not yet clear enough, stilted or overly complicated. Request feedback from audience members. Practice the CFU exercise and physical-exercise exercise within a group setting and request feedback or pointers until you improve.

Problem: My communication has worked well before but for some reason, it's not going down so well with this audience.

Solution: Expect regional, social and cultural differences that will affect levels of understanding within specific groups. Ask for feedback from this specific community and adjust your language accordingly.

Problem: I'm confident that the majority of the audience understood me but I can see that there's still a small minority that didn't grasp the finer points of my speech.

Solution: Consider using two analogies in quick succession to increase the crowd digestion of a specific point. Offer an impromptu Q&A session.

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE VII

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: DAN EDWARDES

I don't want to big up Dan too much in case his head swells but the man's literally a legend. Athlete, CEO, entrepreneur, global adventurer, philosopher, author...the list is ridiculous and it just goes on and on. Vitally, for us, Dan has a wealth of experience in public speaking: he delivers seminars, teaches parkour globally, responds smoothly to cross-media interviews and fields business-related questions with confidence. What makes Dan stand out from others isn't his accomplishments but rather his humility and willingness to listen to opposing points of view. These are his words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

*The biggest sticking point that I always face is technology. You just can't rely upon it. Do not rely upon PowerPoint, videos or slides! I'm not saying don't use them; what I am saying is you can't expect them to be there when you need them. **You must be able to do your talk without these as 80% of the time when you turn up to a venue the tech will not work.** I've talked at some top-level companies and to some government entities (that specifically rely upon tech to do what they do) and they couldn't get the presentation to play. Their IT people spent two hours trying to get it to work and they failed! Use tech, but don't rely upon it. If it works, great but you should always be able to do your presentation without it.*

Make your audience laugh. Humour will always help people engage and to remember you. It doesn't even matter if your jokes are cheesy; use them. Engagement is everything.

Below is one of Dan's active engagements that he uses during talks. I've seen it in action and I love it; it always generates a laugh and I'm always supremely impressed as to how the audience will uncross their arms and spread them wide.

I ask the audience a question based upon the theme of my talk. For example, if I'm talking about the lack of freedom in urban spaces I'll ask the audience to: stand up and to spread their arms to indicate how free they feel in their urban environment so that everyone can gain a strong visual gauge of how others in the crowd feels. So, if they don't feel very free, they should hold their hands close together alternatively if they feel very free, they should spread their arms far apart (and anywhere in between). Once everyone has adopted a pose I'll whip out my phone and take a photo of the crowd. I'll then instruct everyone to sit down. While pretending to compose a text I'll speak out loud 'Hi Mom, all going well. Got a standing ovation right at the start...' Once the crowd realises they've been had, there's always that 'whaaaaaat' moment and a round of laughs. However, once the audience settles down you can return to the initial question. 'Jokes aside this was a real exercise to get you to think about how you feel in an urban environment'. Allowing me to segue into the next part of the speech. In other words, it's a joke but a relevant joke allowing me to lead to where I want to go next.

DAN EDWARDES.

Master of Mind and Movement. Humble Polymath. Icon.

CADENCE, CROWD CONTROL AND BODY MOVEMENT.

DO YOU REMEMBER WATCHING cartoons as a kid? And how you'd always shake your head in disbelief as one character would continuously stumble into poorly concealed traps that prior experience should have taught him or her to avoid? For public speakers that poorly concealed trap is the lectern.

Lecterns are a throwback to Abrahamic religions. Historically they gave preachers a place to stand, a convenient spot to rest their book and, if the lectern was on a raised platform, it gave a perceived aura of power. Many countries have centuries if not millennia of lectern use giving cause for most of us to consider them as the ideal starting place for a speaker.

But they're not. They're perhaps the worst place for a speaker to stand.

An audience doesn't just rely upon their ears, they use their eyes too. And they need both of these inputs, visual and auditory, to be constantly varied to maintain interest and prevent the onset of boredom. But lecterns don't offer much in the way of diversity. They anchor the speaker to the spot, obscuring a good two-thirds of the speaker's body and prevents strong use of body language. Lecterns are a key ingredient for a lacklustre speech.

It doesn't matter if you've been lumbered with the most boring of speech topics, if you're willing to step away from convention, there are sneaky ways to add hype to your subject matter and turn your performance into a memorable one.

'People only understand what they can feel. The only orators that affect them are those who move them.'

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE

In this chapter: Cadence, Pitch, Body Movement, Crowd Control and Troubleshooting.

CADENCE

Have you ever seen an old black and white film where a psychologist hypnotizes a patient with a metronome? Or have you ever been lulled to sleep by the sound of waves breaking along the seashore? Unbroken rhythm can act as a sedative; it's calming and reassuring.

Now think of the unprepared speaker who's been charged with talking at a christening or reciting monthly figures at a business meeting. With their head stuck in their written notes and a slight blush on their cheek, they begin a monotonous recital and send the entire room to sleep. *The speaker has become the sedative!*

To keep your audience captivated alter the pace of your words; maintain a steady rhythm for several sentences then break your cadence. Go slower or faster. Take a pause here and there. Be unexpected.

Passionate conclusions

When running through a list of examples in order to validate a point, increase your tempo as you progress, then slow it considerably when you come to deliver your conclusion. The reduction in speed, combined with an increase in volume, is an invitation for an audience to listen with greater focus.

The abrupt pause

When delivering anecdotes or reaching a twist in a story, consider a sudden pause for added tension. The change in tempo is a cheat for getting an audience to sit on the edge of their seats; it invites them to lean closer in order to catch the rest of your words.

'Brevity is the best recommendation of speech, whether in a senator or an orator.'

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

Pitch and volume

Much like cadence a change in both pitch and volume goes a long way towards maintaining your listener's attention span.

Downward inflexion – An upward inflexion at the end of a sentence signifies a question. A downward inflexion is the opposite, it signifies certainty and confidence. The use of downward inflexions encourages a listener's conviction in your words.

Building suspense – A reduction in volume or a near whisper creates suspense. And just like the *abrupt pause* it invites your audience to lean closer.

Underlining your conclusion – An increase in volume, even a subtle increase, adds potency and strength to words. If you want an audience to give added consideration to your conclusions, deliver them with an increase in volume.

Test yourself:

Compose a sixty-second speech but choose the most mundane of subjects; either describe how you wake up, shower and get dressed in the morning or talk about how you wash dishes in the sink. The goal for this exercise is to add elements of variety and the unexpected and to use the tools of cadence, pitch and volume to change a truly dull topic into something invigorating.

MASTERS OF CADENCE, PITCH AND VOLUME

Regardless of subject matter, do take the time to research the following speakers (some of these were monsters, other heroes). They were all masters in their craft and used pitch, volume and cadence to mesmerise crowds. Their greatest speeches can easily be found on YouTube and Vimeo and are well worth studying:

- Martin Luther King
- Fidel Castro
- Adolf Hitler
- Shirley Chisholm
- Winston Churchill
- Mao Zedong

- Charlie Chaplin
- Barbara Jordan

BODY MOVEMENT

Auditory variance isn't enough to captivate an audience, visual variance is needed too.

Walking and pacing

Humans feel uncomfortable if their object of attention moves to their visual periphery. We prefer to keep our object of attention front and centre. You can use this trait to your advantage by walking from stage left to right and back again forcing your audience to turn their heads to keep you in focus. This produces renewed interest from the crowd and an increased uptake in their neural pathways.

**TOP TIP – the dynamic of an entire audience shifting their heads is something that organizers look for. It indicates interest in a speaker. If you can produce this effect when a festival organiser happens to drop in to listen, it raises the probability of future sales or return bookings!*

Hand and arm gestures

The flicker of hand motion is a cue the human mind reacts to. It encourages alertness. Animate your talk with expansive gestures. If you're recalling a song that you once heard, point to your ear. If you're recollecting a memorable sight, shield your eyes like you're gazing into the distance and point towards the back of the room. When talking about something big, make an expanding hand gesture to accompany your words. If you talk about something fast, quicken your body movements. If discussing fears, pull your hands in to show how small and afraid you felt.

Height changes

If you're into choreography or enjoy dance you'll be aware that good dancers frequently change the height of their stances. Sometimes they'll stand tall, sometimes they'll crouch over or sink all the way to the ground. Changes in height adds variety. Clearly, public speakers aren't dancers but

there are ways to incorporate height changes, depending on your location. Looking for sincerity in a business meeting? Try losing the height to momentarily crouch by the table so you can gaze up at your work colleagues. On a raised stage but want to engage with a younger audience? Try sitting on the stage floor and allow your legs to dangle off the edge to show an erosion of barriers.



FIGURE 6 *staggered changes in height.*

CROWD CONTROL

The human mind is a remarkable thing. It's capable of abstract thought, advance Mathematics, philosophical debate and yet it's still hackable. We react to loud noises, sudden silences and flickers of movement crossing our peripheral vision. These stimuli cause us to sit up and take notice. As public speakers we can take advantage of this to increase audience participation.

'Rhetoric is the art of ruling the minds of men.'

PLATO

Forced tracking

Get off the stage and walk around the audience, through the aisles (if your venue has aisles) and behind the audience in order to force engagement. Akin to the *walking and pacing* tactic, people will twist around in their seats in order to track you rather than letting you slip out of sight. This is a great gambit for focusing attention (best saved for the slower parts of your speech).

**TOP TIP – not all venues offer theatre or auditorium seating. There will be locations and events where audience members have to either stand or make do with sitting on the floor. Inform the ushers or event assistants of your preference for aisles in advance and they will take control and arrange coherent placing of the audience as they enter the venue.*

The smile

Such a simple thing but most speakers, caught up in either the content of their speech or suffering from nerves, forget to smile. Laughter and smiles are infectious and have a dynamic effect upon an audience. Smiles are a natural invitation and will cause people to be more receptive to your message. A deadpan face creates social barriers, resulting in a less receptive audience. Do note that people can detect the difference between a polite smile (mouth movement only) and a genuine smile (upper cheek movement and contraction of the tiny muscles around the eye). Polite smiles will not generate a strong effect and, if your audience is discerning, it can even come across as patronising or insincere.

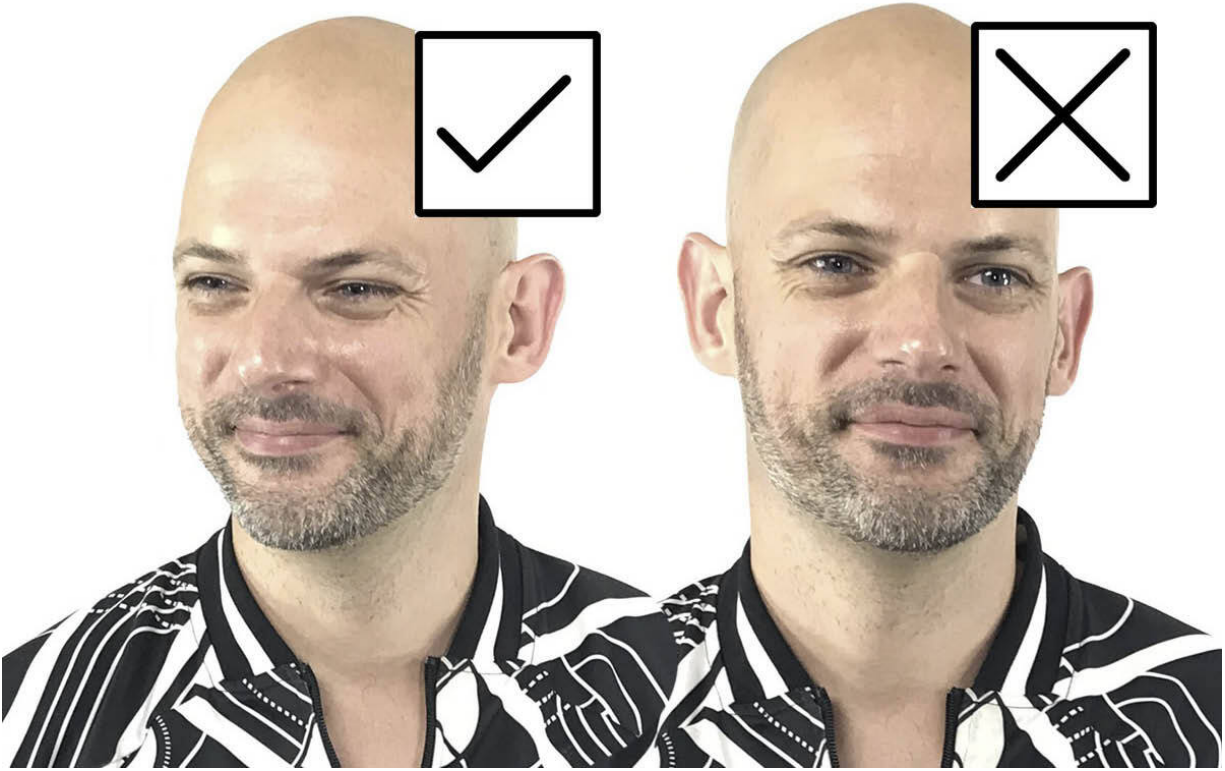


FIGURE 7 *the additional wrinkling around the eyes on the image on the left are an indicator of genuine emotion. In comparison the smile on the right appears more tired, more forced.*

Eye contact

Don't follow the well-worn advice of picking a single member of the crowd to stare at (this is a terrible way to build a connection with the remainder of your audience). Instead, avoid making direct eye contact with any one person and look slightly above the crowd. People will still feel as though you are looking at them directly and this avoids the trap of getting lost in someone's eyes. If you're working with a very large crowd, pick sections to look towards to create a feeling of inclusion. Be sure to look at different sections of the crowd throughout the duration of your speech. If you want, you can, with an open-splayed hand, point loosely at one person. Individuals in a 3-4 person radius around your target will be convinced you're pointing directly at them.

The bid for silence

If you need silence or are dealing with a fidgety audience, stop talking, crouch down and make yourself small. Your change in position will invite

the audience to lean forward as their visual target is decreased. In addition, your sudden silence will be mirrored as the audience members hush each other as they instinctively expect you to whisper and wish to hear what you say.

**TOP TIP – If you are invited to talk at schools and you need silence, simply raise one arm high then gaze expectantly at the crowd. Students are trained from a young age to mimic this gesture, other teachers will join in too, resulting in a rapid silence.*

The unexpected shout

Need to inject some excitement? Abrupt crescendos, unexpected shouts or an impromptu clap of your hands will wake lagging crowds and cause a stir (and most likely a round of titters or nervous laughter which, depending on your venue/subject can play to your advantage).

Dealing with a difficult or intentionally disruptive member of the crowd

Walk towards the individual and stare at their forehead. As you pass this difficult individual smile ruefully. Do not make eye contact, do not change your speech, simply continue to look at the individual's forehead for a few seconds before passing on. The individual will know he or she has been picked out of the crowd but without your direct eye contact will feel both uncomfortable and unable to respond directly. Embarrassed, the individual will settle down. (While we don't want to belittle individual members of the audience this is a low-level and non-confrontational way of de-escalating disruption that otherwise would impact the wider group).

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES TO KEEP YOUR AUDIENCE FOCUSED:

Jump off the stage

While the stage gives you presence and authority, it separates you from your audience, it is in effect a barrier. Jumping down (or, for the less spry, walking down stage steps) to join the audience at their physical level, is unexpected and exciting for the crowd, encouraging a sense of inclusion.

Rapid change in direction

A swift change of direction or a rapid one-eighty to walk back the way you came is again unexpected and will add energy to your performance.

'We cannot teach people anything, we can only help them discover it within themselves.'

GALILEO

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: You feel stupid altering your rhythm, pitch or volume.

Solution: Don't over exaggerate these auditory variations. Keep things simple. If in doubt practice, practice and practice some more in order to build confidence.

Problem: You're not addressing your audience from a stage.

Solution: Forget the limitation of having, or not having a physical stage and instead concentrate on how to interact with your audience. Most of the skills in this chapter will work to your advantage, no matter the location.

Problem: The suggested body movements aren't suitable for your workplace environment.

Solution: Boardrooms and office floors can be cut-throat environments, so be subtle. Use precise hand gestures and less expansive arm motions. Do make full use of the room you're in but use unhurried movements to orbit your audience.

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE VIII

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: STUART BOOTHER

When it comes to stage work, Stuart is a man of many talents. He's a tenor, an actor, a choreographer and has worked on a multitude of performances including operas, musicals, theatre productions, audio recordings, concerts and more. All of which ensures that he has a great wealth of experience to draw upon when it comes to performances. These are his words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

The Jesus Christ Superstar concoction – I learned this cheat during the production; if your voice isn't operating at a hundred percent, drink the standard hot water, honey and lemon mix but add chilli powder, ginger juice, whisky and a soluble aspirin. This opened everything up and worked really well! ³

³ **author's delightful health and safety note** : while the author cannot recommend mixing alcohol and painkillers the NHS states 'It is usually safe to drink a moderate amount of alcohol (no more than the daily guideline) if you are taking a painkiller that can be bought over the counter such as paracetamol or ibuprofen; providing you get relevant advice. It is not recommended to drink alcohol if you are taking a prescription-only painkiller such as tramadol or codeine. Doing so could trigger unpleasant and potentially serious side effects such as drowsiness.'

If there is any doubt about mixing painkillers and alcohol seek medical advice from your doctor.

Preparation and rehearsal is the key to avoid stuttering and waffling.

Filming yourself is a great way to study what you're doing and will give you an opportunity to see the expressions you're making. When I teach people to sing, I ask that they do it in front of a mirror. This isn't a narcissistic thing; it showcases how their face changes with their pitch. (As people rise up the scale towards higher notes their eyebrows, comically, tend to rise too)! People just aren't aware they're making these weird facial expressions until they can see it for themselves. So I ask that when learning to sing, you maintain a blank face. Once you're comfortable with this, you can then learn to put on whatever expression you need without the worry of

an untrained expression coming through. In addition, filming allows you to hear yourself in playback. You can study when you're being boring (with a monotone voice and lack of cadence) giving you an opportunity to amend this.

Start very clearly, loud and strong at the start and at the end of a sentence. The audience is likely to understand the message in its entirety, whereas some people concentrate on the middle of the sentence (with a weak start and finish) during which your audience is likely to get lost or lose interest.

Final thought: My hardest lesson came during a wedding speech. In preparation, I'd taken too much advice from too many people and of course I'd had a couple of drinks to bolster my courage. Unfortunately, everyone else was of an older generation and very much sober. My catchphrase didn't go over well and no-one got my jokes. In short, it was the worst speech of my life! Since then I've learned to consider appropriate advice, to walk my own path and speak from the heart. Now, when I give speeches, I've learned not to memorise them but instead to memorise a couple of bullet points and go from there.

STUART BOOTHER,

Tenor, actor, choreographer, super-cool dude.

BODY LANGUAGE.

SPEECH, OR RATHER HUMAN spoken language is a new concept *compared to our understanding of body language* . Our ‘recent’ biological evolution started with Homo Erectus, 1.8 million years ago through to Neanderthals, 400,000 years ago and on to modern humans or Homo Sapiens, 200,000 years ago (all approximate dates). Without clear data to draw upon, it’s hard to precisely define when human speech started and is an ongoing matter for debate between anthropologists, but ballpark figures suggest that spoken language developed somewhere between 350,000 to 150,000 years ago.

This isn’t to say there wasn’t communication prior to this. We can see from the study of apes that there is a broad range of non-verbal communication used more frequently than oral and is prevalent in chimpanzees, orangutans, gorillas and other monkey species. This ability to communicate through body language is inherent in humans too. Over the past couple of hundred thousand years we have built a reliance upon speech but from an evolutionary point of view it would be plausible to say that we’re *hardwired* to understand body language.

In fact, we can recognise the intent in body language faster than we can relay the same information verbally. If someone was to point at an object and shrug we would intuitively understand their meaning. Having to communicate this orally by saying ‘I have no idea what that thing over there is’ takes longer. If a person, rudely awakened in the night covers their eyes with one hand and irritably waves at you with the other, we know what they’re demanding of us. There’s no need for them to grumble ‘you better have a good reason for waking me at this time of night...go away and get that damned light out of my face!’

There are more than forty muscles in the human face, a combination of thirty-plus muscles control your hands and an impressive six hundred and fifty muscles in the entire body ⁴ . Together these muscles can form a staggering variety of facial expressions, hand gestures and body positions to

deliver an array of obvious, subtle and subliminal messages. As a public speaker you'd be crazy not to take advantage of this remarkable ability.

⁴ Depending on research groups there are between 640 – 800 plus muscles in the human body. This discrepancy of figures isn't due to poor counting but down to a difference in opinion as to whether some muscles are in fact groups of muscles and whether parts of organs can be declared as muscles or not.

In this chapter: Confidence, Arm Positions, Hand Gestures, Hand-to-Face, Flirtatious Body Language and troubleshooting.

CONFIDENCE

It doesn't matter if you're feeling nervous or unprepared for an event because *your audience expects and deserves to see a confident speaker on top of their game* ! If you look confident they'll have confidence in your message. If you're a new speaker and haven't yet had the opportunity to build enough experience then you must fake it!

Vulnerable points – the throat, the abdomen and the groin are the most immediately vulnerable points in our bodies (which is why we instinctively curl up into a ball when attacked). A confident individual will expose these by raising their chin high, pulling their shoulders back, keeping arms away from the stomach and maintaining a wider than normal gap between knees and ankles. An insecure individual will keep their chin down, hunch forward, cross arms or hold one arm across the body. In addition, their knees and ankles will be close together or their legs crossed.



FIGURE 8 *confident vs insecure body language.*

Variations – An individual doesn't need to adopt all of these physical markers to express confidence or lack of it. Furthermore, there will be incidences where you see a cluster of mixed signals with both confident and insecure body positions, in which case don't make an assumption after looking at one body part. Rather look at the entirety of the body instead. Remember the whole is greater than the parts.

Stagecraft – the basic stance

- Maintain a shoulder-width stance. A touch wider if comfortable is better.
- Keep your shoulders back and chest up.
- Maintain a neutral, or slight chin-up position.
- Keep in mind that a confident stance should also mirror your stance for the no-mic method! (See the No-Mic Chapter).

NOTE – if you're addressing the front rows from stage, your chin will naturally drop in order for you to look down. While there's nothing wrong with this, do make continued efforts to address the mid and back of the crowd to ensure you present confidently to the audience in its entirety.

ARM POSITIONING AND GESTURES

Your arms can exude confidence, defensiveness, aggression or inclusiveness depending on their positioning. In addition, arm gestures allow you to pepper your talk with extra layers of communication to add nuances to your speech.

Crossed arms can be famously tricky to decipher correctly and is often a source of constant debate between experts! Depending on the situation the person crossing their arms could be angry, deep in thought, cold, 'self-comforting'...the list goes on. Fortunately, as speakers we need only consider the body language of our audience and importantly how our own might be perceived through the eyes of our listeners.

Classically, crossed arms in a speaker can be perceived as defensiveness, that the speaker is intimidated by the crowd or that they are under the assumption that the audience hasn't engaged with his or her message. Crossed arms in audience members might indicate an unhappiness with the speaker's message or that the speaker's views directly challenge their own.

**TOP TIP – if an audience member has their arms crossed with their head tilted back and eyes shut (or staring toward the ceiling) and/or nodding occasionally, don't panic – more than likely this is an indication that they're concentrating or giving extra consideration to your speech!*



FIGURE 9 various crossed arms often adopted by the audience.

Spread arms, where the elbow is lower than the shoulder joint, is a welcoming gesture and acts as an invitation for the audience to share the speaker's feelings or accomplishments.

Spread arms, where the *elbow is higher* than the shoulder joint, is a sign of victory, of absolute confidence and triumph. This is an almost universally recognised gesture; keep your eyes open at the next Olympics and you'll see this posture repeated many times by winners, no matter which country they come from. Do note that you are a speaker and not an athlete so watch your head position if you adopt this pose. Head back, chin up might be the ultimate sign of winning but this means losing eye contact with your audience. Head down, eyes up is intimidating (think creepy comic-book dictator)! A neutral head and chin position with a big smile on your face, while your arms are up, is best.

Power gestures – the mechanics of a powerful arm gesture is simple; no matter in which direction your arm is lifted, *the further away your elbow is from your torso*, the stronger the appearance of the gesture. Any arm gestures that are made where the elbow maintains contact with the torso will appear weak and listless. Research Theresa May and Donald Trump's first meeting at the White House. During their Q&A session with journalists, you'll note that May often kept her elbow at her side (even

while pointing), whereas Trump abducts and flexes his shoulders further so that his elbow moves further from his torso. Disregarding politics and concentrating purely on body language, Trump's gestures are stronger and express more confidence than May's.

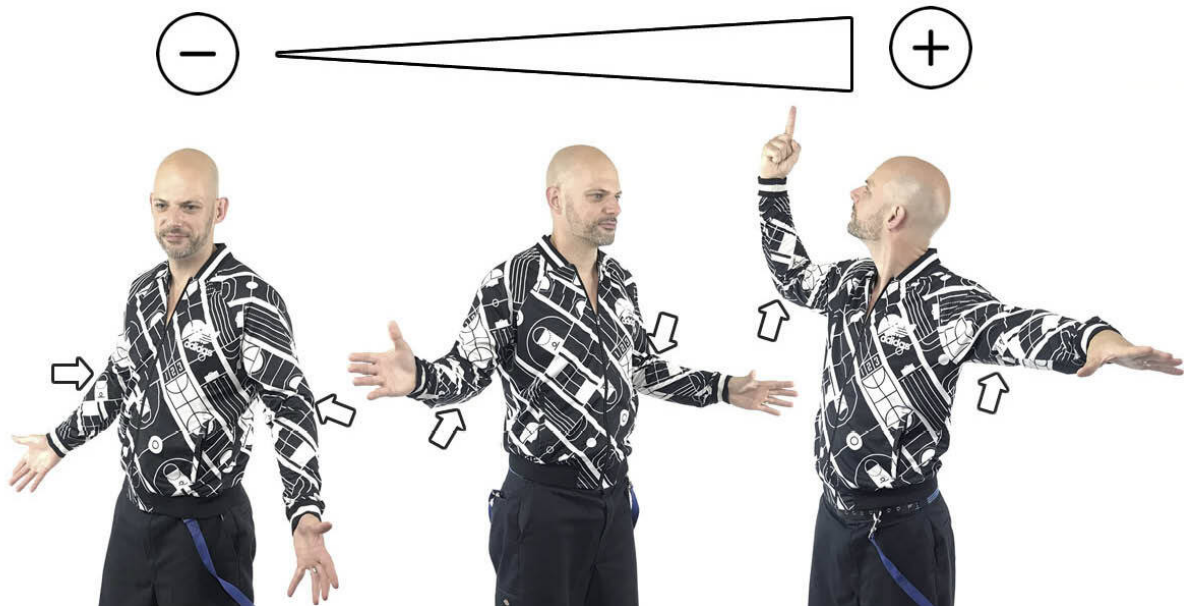


FIGURE 10 Check the elbows for confident postures. The further from the torso, the stronger the pose.

**TOP TIP – while teaching my students power gestures, I get them to pretend that their elbow has been encased by a football. Throughout the duration of the five-minute exercise, they aren't allowed to let any part of this imaginary ball touch their torso. While this certainly makes for an interesting spectacle and guarantees sore shoulders among the students, it quickly builds muscle memory for powerful arm gestures. Give it a go and see if this exercise works for you!*

Stagecraft – arm positioning

- Avoid crossing your arms or partial crosses where one elbow is resting in the hand of the other.

- If too many audience members start crossing their arms, change tack or move on to a different part of your speech.
- Do spread your arms in a welcoming gesture at key points throughout your speech to build rapport and encourage a feeling of inclusiveness with the crowd.
- Consider raising your arms overhead when receiving a big welcome, when your audience cheers or during clapping at the end of an event.
- To maintain confident arm gestures, move your elbows away from your torso.

HAND GESTURES AND FINGERS

While arm positioning gives presence and an appearance of confidence, hand gestures offer nuances that can completely change the meaning of a gesture.

The open palm – open palm facing the audience clearly means ‘hold up’ or ‘stop’ however palm-up gestures are a subliminal sign of honesty. When you’re trying to convey honesty, display both your inner elbow and palms towards your listeners.



FIGURE 11 *The palm: authoritarian vs honesty.*

The fist – can come across as either aggressive or determined. A knuckles-to-the-floor-fist is aggressive, a fist-raised-overhead comes across as militant but a pinkie-to-the-floor-thumb-to-the-ceiling-fist expresses determination. Try pounding the air or the palm of your other hand with the ‘determined’ fist in time with your words to communicate extra emphasis during your speech.



FIGURE 12 *The fist: aggression vs determination.*

The finger point – depending on where you jab the solitary index finger, ‘the point’ can mean different things. When pointed away from the crowd, say the side of the room, it comes across as an indication of a direction. When the index finger is pointed upwards to the ceiling or sky, it’s a reinforcement of a point. But when you point towards the crowd, it’s just that: a point at a person or persons. This is great when you’re trying to pick an individual out of the crowd during question and answer time or when you’re looking for a volunteer. But it’s not so great if you’re repeatedly stabbing your finger at the crowd while talking. Pointing, particularly when giving commands, advising or instructing can come across as dominating and offensive to many members of the crowd. (Don’t forget, the point is only one finger away from being a clenched fist)! Political advisors instruct their clients to avoid using the finger point in front of a crowd or camera and instead advise ‘*the pinch*’ where index finger meets thumb. This is

deemed as less dominating. Perhaps this is a good move for politicians, however, I prefer the splayed hand gesture as a public speaker. It removes the clenched fist element, is less authoritative and with all five digits spread means that up to five times more of the crowd will think you're pointing directly at them; the splayed hand is inclusive.



FIGURE 13 *pointing variations.*

A note on clickers – modern speakers can find that both hands are full with a clicker in one hand and microphone in the other. This might be convenient but it destroys your ability to use hand and finger gestures! If you can build a powerful voice and master the no-mic method you can forgo the microphone freeing up a hand for essential gestures. Alternatively, if you are in an environment where a microphone is truly needed, make sure you can get your hands on a headset or lapel mic so that you'll have at least one hand free.

Stagecraft hand gestures

- Display your palms and inner elbow to express honesty.
- Pound the pinkie-side of your fist against the palm of the other hand to convey determination or express the importance of specific points in your speech.
- Limit the use of finger-pointing towards the crowd.
- For a less authoritarian/more inclusive gesture, try pointing with an open-splayed hand.

HAND TO FACE GESTURES (APPLICABLE TO BOTH SPEAKERS AND THEIR AUDIENCE)

More often than not hand-to-face (or hand-to-hair) gestures are unconscious movements. We'll rub the back of our head if we're bewildered and massage our temples during stress-induced thought. People will draw attention to erogenous zones when they meet someone they're attracted to by touching their lips or fussing with their hair without realising it. As a speaker, maintain a watchful eye on your audience: their hand to face gestures will allow you to gauge how well you're doing.

The slanted-finger-across-lips – a sign that the audience member doesn't like what you're saying or they're subconsciously trying to hold back a retort or counterargument.

The ear-hold or rub – if an audience member uses this gesture in combination with an expressionless face, it indicates they're getting no enjoyment from listening to you. However, watch out as a slight variation of this gesture means something very different! Rubbing an earlobe (self-stimulating) while smiling softly is an indication of attraction or courtship.

Fingers-to-chin – any combination of finger, fingers or knuckle to chin is an expression of consideration. Unfortunately, it's very hard to decipher if someone is considering your words in a positive or negative way with this expression; a furrowed brow can indicate dislike or simply a deeper thought process. If you see an increased number of your crowd using this gesture, consider asking for feedback after your event. If they were simply mulling your words over then great, that's a win! But if the audience actually

disliked your message then perhaps it's time to tweak your content before your next performance.

Politicians use the fingers-to-chin gesture as an indication that they're listening to an interviewee's question. While this gesture is fine for the audience, it's difficult to pull off as a speaker and still come across as welcoming or 'open'. Most people will cross one arm across the body to support the elbow of the hand that is touching the chin. You can tweak the fingers-to-chin gesture to deliver a more positive communication by placing the unused hand on the hip, leaning towards the interviewee and smiling. This removes the arm as a defensive barrier and by leaning in and smiling, you're expressing interest.

The fingers-to-chin expression can also be tweaked by steeping the fingertips and resting them against the chin or lips. Unfortunately, steeping can come across as condescending or may be interpreted as aloofness.

I would advise not using any form of the fingers-to-chin gesture as a speaker. There are simply too many opportunities for it to cause negative interpretations among audience members. Instead, during interviews/ Q&A sessions, I recommend standing still with hands cupped at the waist or behind the back with a welcoming expression on your face. This is a patient and positive piece of body language that sends the message that you're keen to give the audience your time, your consideration and that you won't belittle their questions.



FIGURE 14 *avoid all hands to face gestures.*

SEXUAL AND FLIRTATIOUS GESTURES

Lips, throat, inner wrists, groin (and the chest for women) are all parts of the body that can be exposed, positioned or lifted to express sensuality. There's always a time and a place for flirting but a speech definitely isn't the right moment. No matter the subject, do not incorporate flirtatious gestures or try to use sexuality to influence your listeners. No matter how sexually active you are in your personal life, don't make the mistake of thinking that flirtatiousness will aid your speech; it won't. If you give obvious flirty gestures, subliminal sexual body language or dress provocatively, your audience may become distracted, stop listening to your message and instead gravitate their attention towards the points of sexual interest. This is the last thing a speaker needs; you want to build and maintain interest in your speech, not fritter it away with distractions.

Mouth touching – any solitary finger stroking, touching or pulling a lip is an age-old signal of invitation. It's used unconsciously when someone is attracted to a potential partner or used very consciously by individuals looking to parody or stimulate faux interest.

Wrist exposure – the outward rotation of the hand to expose the inner wrist is a subtle indication of attraction.

Exposure of the groin – Drawing attention to your groin, subliminally or with conscious intent, is a sexual come-on. An individual looking for sex will increase the exposure of the groin by standing in a wide stance, or when sitting open their legs wider. If a person is not interested or actively wishes to send clear signals that sex is not an option, they will minimise groin exposure by crossing the legs, keeping the thighs and knees close together or keeping the thighs open but pointed in a different direction from the person seeking their attention. If you watch an interaction between two potential partners meeting for the first time, the interested dominant individual will expose their groin to signal intent. As the flirtation continues and if the submissive individual is interested, they will respond in kind.

Exposure of the groin is a noteworthy issue for speakers as a broad stance is also confident body language. Clearly, there's some overlap, however, I wouldn't worry about an audience misinterpreting a wide stance as long as you back it up with strong arm gestures. Do give consideration to seated talks and interviews; a sprawled seated position indicates relaxed confidence but spreading those thighs too far will draw attention away from your words!



FIGURE 15 *avoid gestures and body postures that can be misinterpreted as sexually suggestive.*

Stagecraft – flirtatious body language

- To maintain audience concentration, avoid sexual or flirtatious body language.
- Where possible avoid touching your lips or mouth. If you must make contact, ensure that it is a clear *thinking/considering* gesture and not sexual.
- When seated, don't part your legs too far (use your judgement).
- Don't hang your hands on your beltline or rest them 'thumbs-in-fingers-out' in a pocket.
- Don't overexpose your inner wrist through frequent hair stroking or ear rubbing.
- Do dress to suit your vocation, location and audience but avoid clothing that invites attention to your chest or groin.

WHOLE-BODY POSITION

Deflection – if you're on the Speaker's Circuit long enough I can guarantee that you'll meet some argumentative individuals. It doesn't matter whether you're pro or anti-something, liberal or conservative, it's only natural that there will be views counter to your own. Expect debate. Unfortunately, you should also expect the occasional heated exchange. Out of every two or three thousand people you address, it's likely there'll be an individual burdened with stress and given the opportunity, they'll choose to vent it in front of a crowd. As a public speaker, it's your job to expend your energy on your performance and travelling to and from venues. So when it comes to dealing with an argumentative individual, offer your expertise as gently as possible and without exacerbating any negative emotion. Use an honest smile, a display of your palms and inner elbow and angle your entire body so that you face forty-five degrees away from the individual spoiling for a fight. Squaring up to someone head-on is confrontational and makes you a large target. By angling your body away, you've reduced the target and adopted a neutral position.



FIGURE 16 *stand offish vs engaging body language.*

Engaging – You can build rapport with an audience by leaning towards them. Place one foot slightly in front of the other. Rock onto the ball of your front foot and lift the heel of your rear foot, then gently lean forward. I also use a hunkered-down version of this where I simply adopt the same foot position but bend my legs into a squat. This informal pose works well with timid audiences and promotes transparency.

LAST WORDS ON BODY LANGUAGE

As individuals, we all have physical quirks, unique body postures and unconscious reactions to different stimuli. This is normal and to be expected. Adopting specific body language to use on stage is not normal, it's a conscious attempt to deliver additional layers of communication to our audience in a controlled way. This is in part, I think, why politicians look so contrived and can feel very fake. They've gone out of their way to adopt postures and gestures that they hope will imbue them with perceived power and garner more respect but these gestures don't always suit and often look uncomfortable.

My advice to new speakers is *do* consider body language, *do* practice in front of a mirror and record yourself while on stage. Study how you move and how you interact with the crowd. Feel free to make changes and take on new gestures if you think these will help your career but never become *too practised* or become *too polished*. Your audience members won't be stupid; they'll be alert, astute and will be able to sniff a fake. Honesty and integrity are winning ingredients for speakers so hold onto them by only adopting gestures that fit your personality.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: the audience is showing signs of hostility.

Solution: stop using authoritative body language and/or pointing your finger towards the crowd. Be approachable by adopting a smile, using open palm gestures and angling your body slightly away from crowd-centre. Consider changing height, if standing take a seat or squat. Alternatively, if on stage climb down to walk among your audience.

Problem: after watching a video of yourself talking, you notice you frequently hold your arms in front of your body.

Solution: if your confidence isn't there yet and you like the comfort of an arm in front of body, change it to your advantage by holding clasped-hands-in-front-of-groin or steepled-hands-in-front-of-groin.

Problem: audience members are arm crossing, fidgeting and displaying other signs of boredom.

Solution: do not mirror the audience; instead, take control. Try broad animated gestures to see if that energises audience members and encourages them to uncross their arms. Alternatively, force audience members to uncross their arms by giving them something to hold (a study object, books, passing out pencils or posters) or ask them to assist or take part in a group exercise (clapping, pointing or any quirky exercise suitable to your content that requires the use of their hands).

**TOP TIP – If you're looking for a fun way to get your audience to uncross their arms and engage in a group exercise check out guest speaker Dan Edwardes' cheeky yet innovative method in Speaker's Experience VII.*

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE IX

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: VICTORIA HEAVYSIDE

Victoria is a phenomenal doctor that specialises in consultant anaesthetics and intensive care medicine. She's one of my personal role models (she's saved and improved the quality of countless lives and, delightfully, she's also bit of joker!) and importantly for us she's also a successful lecturer with a wealth of global oratory experience beneath her belt. These are her top speaking tips from within her field:

At the start of each talk I like to present who I am, my background, my expertise etc. I also like to display photos of my working location: for me this is my hospital but for others this could be their city, their workplace etc. This creates an instant connection that the audience can relate to.

Always declare sponsorship/drug companies/other contributors etc. This allows you to establish honesty and transparency from the get-go.

Inform your audience how long your talk will be. (And where possible, finish early to allow time for Q&As).

Use the 'rule of 3'. Use three specific examples to make a point or to answer a question. (I think two points is too short, four, perhaps too long but three really seems to create something memorable. Think 'the good, the bad and the ugly' or 'liberty, equality, fraternity').

Practice, practice, practice! Rehearse your speech in front of the mirror or with friends. This will give you the opportunity to check your verbal ticks/ to regulate your breathing/ maintain proper use of your diaphragm etc.

Great examples of presenters that have mastered verbal ticks are BBC editors Laura Kuenssberg and Katya Adler. Laura in particular uses specific words to avoid stumbling blocks, something that I personally found fascinating and in turn learned from.

If you've been invited to be a guest speaker always take time to thank the host during your speech.

VICTORIA HEAVYSIDE.

Consultant Anaesthetic and Intensive Care Doctor. Role Model.

Awesomesaurus.

QUARRELSOME AUDIENCE MEMBERS AND TROUBLEMAKERS.

IF YOU THINK DISRUPTIVE behaviour is nothing more than the rustle of cookie wrappers, whispered conversations between audience members or the occasional ringtone going off then you're in for a shock. Expect the unexpected at every event! I've been interrupted by screaming babies, lovers' tiffs, security looking for a bag-snatcher, a panicked teenager who had lost his insulin shot, fire alarms and several fistfights. Actual fistfights! While such interruptions are very unusual and only happen once or twice a year, having a strategy in place for disruptions certainly helps.

**SPEAKER EXPERIENCE – I was still relatively new to events when I encountered my first angry outburst. It was in a children's bookstore and I'd been asked to give a short talk before a book signing. I was nearing the end of my speech when a smartly attired middle-aged lady began to frequently interrupt me with questions regarding my brand of shirt with which she took offence stating that it wasn't eco-friendly. The lady's outburst continued and I remember being shocked by the intensity of her emotion on the matter. I stumbled through the remainder of my talk and completed the signing. At the end of the event, the manager took me aside to inform me that the lady was known for her unusual behaviour and had earned a reputation for very public outbursts at retail outlets in the local community. I remember thinking I wish I had been forewarned or that since the manager knew of the lady's temperament, she might have stepped up to help calm the situation. Like all experiences, this was a great lesson and propelled me to learn about crowd management and diplomatic solutions to swiftly end any interruptions that could derail an event.*

In this chapter: Crowd Psychology, Disarming Techniques, Dealing with Angry Individuals and a Piece of Advice.

CROWD PSYCHOLOGY

A crowd is made up of a group of individuals. In this mix, you'll find people who are either leaders or followers. In addition, individuals will either be naturally aggressive or passive. Depending on the dynamics of a crowd, these aspects will either be heightened or diminished. For those interested in Social Sciences or Law:

- An active (or dynamic) crowd is a mob. Mobs are motivated by internal influences.
- A passive (or static) crowd is an audience. Audiences are motivated via external influences.

Gustave Le Bon, polymath and author of 'The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind' published in 1895 was one of the forerunners to dissect the psychology of a crowd and a proponent for the concept of 'group mind'.

Le Bon put forth, that while inside a crowd most people are happy to put aside their individuality and become part of a mass, acting, behaving and moving as others do in a herd-like manner. Le Bon attributed this to three factors: that people enjoy the anonymity, they are prone to suggestibility and they are at risk of 'contagion' (contagion, would, for example, be the quickness with which panic can spread through a crowd, evident in stampedes at large football events or concerts). Interestingly, Le Bon points out that strong-minded individuals within a crowd can take advantage of its suggestibility to become a temporary leader (for example looting during riots only commences when one person of action takes the first step, shatters the window of a storefront and helps themselves to the goods within. Suddenly, everyone emulates this leader's actions and looting is in full swing).

A lot of Le Bon's study can be said to focus on society, law and crowd enforcement but there are still nuggets of gold, transferable to the art of Public Speaking. As professionals, we'll likely never have to deal with mobs but there will be times when we have to deal with aggressive audience members who if left unchecked could sway the crowd's opinion in a negative way. To avoid any potentially damaging confrontations, using some well-placed and well-timed tactics to defuse situations during your performance can be career-saving.

It's also worth noting that while most people are happy to be an anonymous part of the crowd some individuals will feel the need to act differently or out of character should they become the centre of attention. You will see this from time to time when asking an audience member to join you on stage for a demonstration or, if during Q&A sessions you ask someone to stand up so that their question can be heard clearly. The sudden weight of everyone's gaze can be an unexpected pressure that causes people to act uncharacteristically but in ways that they *think people in the crowd would want them to behave* . While you can expect most people to be shy, don't be surprised if someone starts acting out or a little oddly. You can see similar reactions when TV crews do live interviews on the street; interviewees can freeze, joke around, spout nonsense, go off track and in some famous incidences flash!

As a public speaker, always hope for a smooth performance but don't be surprised by odd behaviour from one or two members of the audience.

'Even the finest speaker finds intrusions hard.'

HOMER

DISARMING TECHNIQUES

As you gain experience, you'll no doubt get a feel for how you should respond in any given situation but for the time being, try these ploys for maintaining control.

Asking for help – you might occasionally be confronted with an individual or small group that are actively seeking attention. Either they're chatting in staged-whispers or acting with increasingly more expansive gestures in the hopes of being noticed. Confronting these individuals directly would be counterintuitive as you'll be giving them exactly what they want; attention. Instead, turn to others to confront these individuals. You can do this by:

- Asking ushers or event managers to shush the troublemakers.
- Request security (if available) to talk quietly to the individuals.
- Ask the rest of the crowd to assist by saying something along the lines of 'There's a growing amount of noise coming from certain

parts of the audience. Could you guys help me to keep the noise down as I know the guys in the back two rows are struggling to hear?’

Sidestepping confrontation and getting peer pressure to do the work is quick, avoids direct confrontation and generates a watchful mood amongst other members of the crowd that can last for the duration of the event.

Deputising

I’m frequently asked to address difficult-to-deal-with audiences. I’ve had to talk to previously convicted fathers on the importance of reading to their children and I’ve been tasked with motivating tough inner-city and disenfranchised youth. If I know that I’m likely to have a difficult audience, I’ll find one or two individuals and deputise them! I’ll ask the event organiser to point out the worst troublemakers as they come into the venue. Before these individuals have a chance to be seated, I’ll move over and introduce myself. I’ll smile, thank them for coming to hear me talk then compliment them in front of their peers. Once this is done I’ll pull them to the side and say something along the lines of:

‘I won’t lie, I’m a little bit nervous! I’ve heard that there’s some hard-to-please people here today and I’m concerned that they might cause a ruckus. I’ve heard you’re the man/woman to talk to. Is there any chance you could help me keep the room quiet so I can get my message across?’

Taking the time to build a little rapport with these troublemakers returns dividends! Most times these individuals will not only listen raptly to your performance, but they’ll police the rest of the crowd and quickly silence any noise from other members of the audience.

Sidestepping

If you offer Q&A sessions or give opportunities for the audience to speak out, expect to field the occasional inappropriate question! This can be sexual, religious or political. If you feel that this question is inappropriate or answering it would place you in a precarious position, simply sidestep it by saying:

- ‘That’s a good question but not one that I feel I could answer right here and now. If there’s time at the end of the show you and I could

go over it then?’

- ‘Ha! Good question but not one that I feel is appropriate for this event, particularly as there’s some kids in the audience. Why don’t you ask me something a bit more ‘vanilla’?’
- ‘Wow, that’s a tough question. I really like it but there’s no way I’m going to have time to answer that in the short amount of time we have left! Why don’t you ping it to me in an email so I can give it my full attention and give you a proper response?’

DEALING WITH ANGRY OR QUARRELSOME INDIVIDUALS

Of all the people you know, including family members, work colleagues, acquaintances and contemporaries, how many of these do you disagree with, dislike or find that you’re prone to argue with? Chances are out of every hundred people you know, there’ll be one or two people that you have a personality clash with.

Now consider the number of people you’ll interact with as a public speaker. With all the thousands of people you’ll talk to during a season, the laws of probability dictate that you will run into some argumentative, angry or even incoherent members of the audience who at best will be a mild irritant or at worst a disruptive nightmare. While you have no control over unexpected disruptions from the audience, you can still choose how to respond. *The best responses should always be a rapid de-escalation of tension with a minimum amount of energy expended, allowing you to get back to the task at hand, public speaking.* I deploy the following tactics and responses for individuals who seek to argue instead of debate:

The polite shutdown

Some people will actively try to hijack a talk and use it as a stage to voice their own agenda or opinion. Getting them to quieten down is a nuanced skill, you need to a) avoid inflaming them to the point that they simply reenergize their efforts and b) point out that the crowd is not on their side. Try using the following:

- ‘Sir/Madam, I really appreciate your energy but this isn’t the time or place to be arguing your points. We’ve been talking about *A, B and*

C but you're talking about *X, Y and Z* and I feel that continuing would be wasting the time of other audience members who would rather stay on track. Maybe we could shelve your points for later? Thank you.'

- 'Sir/Madam, I'm a big believer in passion and I commend your drive but you're starting to come across as very aggressive. Is there a chance you could refrain from using that language? If you'd be willing to talk later, you and I could debate quietly over a coffee in the café outside.'

Do be polite (almost excessively polite), use honest and non-confrontational body language (arms uncrossed, palms tilted towards the individual and shoulders angled slightly away). Point out that the individual is wasting audience time but that you're happy to contribute your own later. In other words, de-escalate the tension without offering opportunities for confrontation.

'Orators are most vehement when their cause is weak.'

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

The intellectual slap-down!

Not all public speakers demand or need a well-mannered crowd. Sometimes debate is part of the performance and some speakers actively make a name for themselves through sharp retorts. By and large public speakers are experts in their field, so if you are confronted by a rude or angry member of the crowd who disparages your views, by all means, feel free to crush them with intellect. To do this effectively, list as many statistics, facts and historical quotes to validate your argument. You should aim to impress the audience and overwhelm the opposing individual with a tide of points that will establish your dominance. You can jest as you do this or you can act with a confident demeanour but at all costs you should avoid responding in kind to the individual. The rest of the audience will be impressed and even amused if you respond correctly but they will be less enamoured with you if you resort to using an angry tone or vicious language.

EXERCISES

As odd as it sounds, you can practice dealing with interruptions and difficult members of the audience. During public speaking lessons, one of the exercises I set students is to get them in small groups of 8-10. I'll set one student the role of the speaker, one as a heckler and the others as listeners. The heckler is tasked with giving various levels of noise or protest while the speaker is mid-flow. The speaker has to deal with the heckler swiftly and diplomatically. At the end of the session those tasked with being listeners give feedback.

It's a simple exercise; the feedback from the listeners ensures good teaching points and as students progress, the exercise can be made harder by:

- Requesting the heckler takes the role of an angry debater.
- Two members of the group adopt roles of hecklers.
- The heckler not only attempts to throw a spanner in the speaker's speech but actively attempts to enlist the audience to join with their point of view.

I'm a fan of this exercise, it gives students opportunities to take on quality experience and builds confidence. Try it!

A PIECE OF ADVICE

We all have hardships in our lives. We all have to pay our bills, struggle to maintain relationships, juggle with the intimacy of personal lives and manage the grind of professional roles. Of course, everyone has to deal with this, it's part of life, right? But some people have additional burdens to carry; emotional physical or sexual abuse, the death of loved ones, rejection, depression, crushing financial loss, physical or mental trauma and more. What's hard is we can't see it, we won't even know what's bubbling behind someone's mask until it erupts. But it's certainly there in some people and all it takes to spill over is a trigger.

As a public speaker, you or your topic can be the trigger that causes all this pent up emotion to vent. It can be ugly when this happens, it can be surprising and it can seem very much out of proportion. Don't take it personally! At the end of the day, you and the audience member are

strangers and neither of you has invested enough time in the other to cause an outpouring of anger (you might be the trigger but you're not the cause of their anger). All you are is an unfortunate target. When this happens, be forgiving, deal with it quickly, politely and professionally, then return to the task at hand: public speaking.

'Where there is shouting, there is no true knowledge.'

LEONARDO DA VINCI

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: You're having a heated argument with a member of the audience.

Solution: De-escalate as rapidly as possible by shutting down the argument and changing tack by a) switching to a different segment of your talk or b) offering a different member of the audience a chance to speak.

Problem: My talks attract regular arguments.

Solution: Get an impartial individual to watch and critique your talk. This third party can gauge whether your content is offensive or not. If it is offensive, consider changing both the content and the delivery.

Check and adjust your body language (avoid controlling, aggressive or dominant body language. Adopt open and deflective body poses. Smile more and your audience will smile back)!

Remove opportunities for discussion (cut out Q&A sessions).

Consider working with a different audience base or marketing your talk to an alternative client base.

Problem: It upsets me when people become argumentative.

Solution: Interacting with people is part of the job. Expect for arguments to occasionally happen (but hopefully just once in a blue moon)!

Appreciate that you're not a target but the trigger.

Do not become emotionally involved.

Reach out to speakers with more experience and ask for their advice or find a mentor.

PART III

MAINTENANCE.

GLOSSOPHOBIA – THE FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING.

FEAR CAN BE CRIPPLING. I remember my first taste of public speaking at age twelve. I struggled so much with the pressure of it that I burst into tears in front of all my classmates (a cringe-worthy moment that makes me squirm in embarrassment whenever I think about it)! At age sixteen I was tasked with passing on a short message to the entire school. Once again, I was overcome by nerves and my performance was more mumbling, blushing and fidgeting than a cohesive delivery of information. Yet over the years, I've managed to outgrow my childhood anxiety to the point I'm now comfortable addressing huge crowds. This isn't to say that I don't occasionally feel the odd pang of nerves, I do. New subject matter or working in some locations overseas can cause a rumbling of anxiety, but this sensation never lasts more than a few minutes and swiftly subsides once I'm in the swing of things. Fear, like all obstacles in life, can be overcome. If in doubt, consider the hundreds of thousands of professional speakers working across the globe. I promise you, the vast majority of them were exceptionally nervous the first time they had to speak to a crowd. If they managed to overcome their fears, clearly you can too! I'm confident that you're every bit as capable as they are, *all you need in order to succeed is to invest time and effort*. The only thing separating you and professional speakers is *experience* and that is easily gained.

'Nothing ventured, nothing gained.'

CHAUCER

In this chapter: the Biology of Fear, Real versus Unrealistic Fear Stimuli, the Only Way to Build Lasting Confidence and the 'Fear Checklist'.

THE BIOLOGY OF FEAR

Your mind responds to certain stimuli (or perceived threats). Once your mind determines that you are in potential danger, it nudges the hypothalamus, the portion of your brain that controls hormonal response, into motion. The hypothalamus, in turn, prepares your body for physical action by activating the sympathetic nervous system and the pituitary gland.

Your pituitary gland, located in the brain, controls the adrenal glands which sit just above the kidneys. The sympathetic nervous system is a series of ganglia (think bundle of nerves) that conveys commands from your brain, down your spine and from there to various organs. Together your pituitary gland and sympathetic nervous system drops an impressive cocktail of hormones directly into your blood system: epinephrine, norepinephrine, cortisol and others. The consequence of these hormones rampaging through your body results in a long list of physical responses:

- An increased heart rate
- Tunnel vision and dilated pupils
- Dry mouth
- Relaxed bladder
- Shaking or trembling
- Constriction of blood vessels
- The swift conversion of fat to energy (in preparation for rapid movement)
- Blushing
- Slowed digestion
- Impaired hearing

In other words, all of the above is what causes you to feel so *damned uncomfortable* whenever you're scared. The jitters or the heebie-jeebies isn't just mental, it's very much physical too. The study of the above, caused twentieth-century physiologist, Walter Bradford Cannon to coin the well-known phrase 'fight or flight.' That the human body evolved to

respond to fear so that we could fight predators or if outmatched be able to run really, *really* fast into the distance. But the term fight or flight has become so well known that we forget that there's a third 'F' that occurs and that's to *freeze* .

We see this freezing frequently in the real world. Shout 'boo' at someone and most people will squeak '*meep*' , hunch over and freeze. We grow flustered when asked to dance by someone we find intensely attractive. Martial artists who train all their lives in the dojo get shocked into stillness when it comes to raw, gritty and all-too-real bar fights. And of course, a new speaker will often grow rooted to the spot and tongue-tied as the curtain draws up to reveal the previously hidden crowd.

REAL VS UNREALISTIC THREATS

The urge to fight, flight or freeze makes sense when considering human evolution. Who wouldn't want to run from a big sabre-toothed tiger? Freezing so as not to get bitten by a venomous snake seems pretty reasonable. And being able to fight tooth and nail against predators or competitors with renewed ferocity is certainly preferable to death. But while evolution might have provided us with the necessary reactions to survive against natural threats, it doesn't necessarily mean our brain is good at deciphering real threats from unrealistic ones.

'Courage is knowing what not to fear.'

PLATO

The brain has a long history of being fooled. Con artists, illusionists, cinematographers and artists have been taking advantage of this for generations. Take a quick look at these famous, yet simple optical illusions:

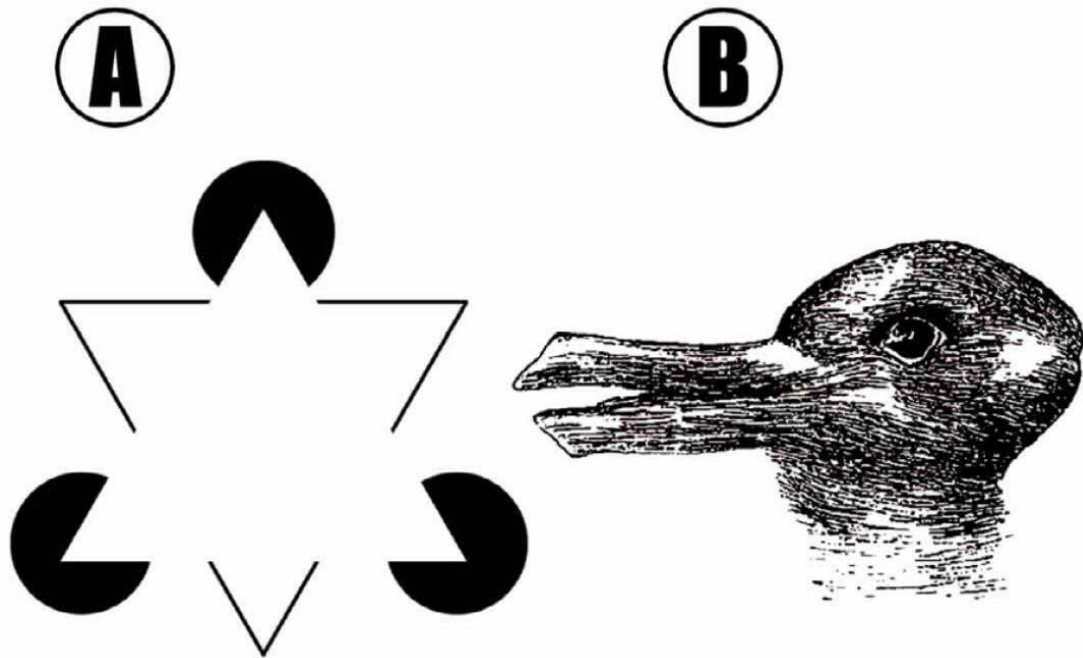


FIGURE 17 A) a white triangle or the absence of a triangle? B) rabbit or duck?

It's easy to fool our brains, right?

Now consider these unusual phobias:

- Coulrophobia, the fear of clowns.
- Trypophobia, the fear of clustered holes.
- Globophobia, the fear of balloons.
- Podophobia, the fear of feet.
- Pediophobia, the fear of dolls.

They're all pretty wacky and if we study them, it's probably fair to say that there is no true danger to those who suffer from these phobias, there is only a *supposed* danger. This doesn't mean that the person suffering from the phobia isn't fearful. They are. They continue to assume there's a threat even though we know there is none. And when faced with the object of their fear they will, just like anyone else when threatened, feel the full array of anxious sensations as their body reacts: increased heart rate, dilated pupils, trembling fingers etc.

I'd add glossophobia to the list of fears that arise from an unrealistic threat. While it might be uncomfortable to stand on a stage before the scrutiny of hundreds of people, there is very little physical risk. The fear of public speaking is another case of our brains misinterpreting the facts. This acknowledgement, (that there is *no real danger*) is key to retraining your mind's response to stimuli. But before we put this in motion there's some basic skills we need to address.

Prerequisites

I do amateur gymnastics. I was a real late starter but it was something that I'd always wanted to do. As I went through the basics, it swiftly became apparent that there would always be prerequisites to learning a new move. I'd never be able to do a back somersault if I didn't build up the strength in my legs to jump to a certain height. If I didn't practice handstands, my round-offs and handsprings would never be any good. Failure to learn the prerequisites would often result in a faceplant, or worse, a total wipeout (ouch)!

And just like any skill there are some prerequisites that you need before you can retrain your brain to overcome the fear of public speaking. These are:

- Confidence in your subject matter.
- The ability to convey your message in an easy-to-understand manner.
- The ability to speak clearly.

And that's it. Not too many skills to check off before overcoming your fear but these are prerequisites. You *must* be able to do these.

Subject matter – If you want to become a public speaker, get paid for your time and more importantly, get return bookings, you must be a master in your subject. If you're a dentist who's invited to talk at universities on new medical procedures, you need to really be clued up on relevant sciences. If you're a salesperson who's been invited to make a pitch, you must know your figures, your product and your competitors inside out and back to front. If you're an adventurer asked to give a keynote speech at a formal dinner, don't talk about ice climbing if your expertise has been earned

through jungle trekking or wilderness survival. Be authentic, be clued up and be confident in what you choose to talk about. If you're not a master in your subject, it's too easy to lose credibility or worse, risk being exposed as a fake. This is an unacceptable position to be in and if you're hoping to overcome glossophobia, having credibility issues is added stress that you don't need.

Conveying information – Being a master in your subject matter is one thing but if you can't deliver your message to your audience in a way they understand, you're in trouble. If you're a novice speaker, start simply and avoid over-elaboration. Remember, being a public speaker isn't about you, it's about your listener, your audience. So put your words in short, easy to digest packets. (Teaching, or the delivery of information is a skill touched upon in the Communication and Teaching Point Chapter.)

The ability to speak clearly – It doesn't matter if you're knowledgeable and can carry a message, if you can't be heard! Now, this might sound obvious but there are a multitude of hidden obstacles out there for you to stumble over. Give consideration to your voice – do you mumble or speak with a specific accent that not all people will be able to follow? If you're speaking overseas, have you checked what level of English your audience can comprehend? (Or if you're speaking their language, do you have a competent level of fluency)? Will you be talking in a hall with an echo or bad acoustics? If you don't have a strong voice, have you ascertained if there will be a microphone available? (If you don't have a powerful voice, do take a look at the No-Mic Method Chapter).

You need to be strong in: subject matter, conveying information and speaking clearly. These are the basic requirements to be a public speaker. If you haven't got these elements down you'll be left with key weaknesses that leave you vulnerable to fear.

THE MAGIC PILL, VISUALISATION AND MENTAL PLOYS

Unfortunately, there's no magic pill and no short cut to overcoming fear. If you meet anyone who suggests otherwise, they're lying out of their teeth. Confidence only comes through experience, hard work and learning from mistakes.

There's the old adage of 'imagine your audience is naked' or 'just pick one person out of the crowd to focus on' as ways to battle stage fright. These are weak and temporary measures that will only mask your fear for a few minutes and will do little for developing self-assurance. I'm not saying don't use these mental ploys, if they help you then go for it; just don't rely on these for a long term solution. The goal is to free yourself from emotional crutches and temporary stop-gaps. You must be free of anxiety so you can fully concentrate upon the art of public speaking. More importantly, audiences respond to self-assured speakers. If they can see that the speaker is confident, they'll have confidence in the message being delivered.

OVERCOMING FEAR: THE 'HOW-TO' MOMENT

The only way to develop confidence is to face your fear. Hiding from it won't fix anything. Instead, step-by-step and bit-by-bit, face up to your fear in order to conquer it. I'm not asking you to jump straight in and find the biggest hall with the largest audience to purge your fear in an explosion of oratory flame! What I am saying is dip your toe, get a taste of your fear then step back and relax. The next time you face your fear, increase the stakes and expose yourself to a slightly more intense experience.

What we're attempting to build is *an immune response to fear through steadily increased exposure*. Remember the concept of stimuli and the fear response we discussed earlier in the chapter? You need to reprogram your brain so that it no longer sees standing in front of a crowd as a threat. Each time you face your fear and you survive (well done you, you rugged survivor!) your brain will come to realise that there is no need to perceive a crowd as a threat-stimulus. Once your brain has been reprogrammed, it won't initiate the process that sees the hypothalamus, the sympathetic nervous system and the pituitary gland dumping hormones into your bloodstream. This will mean no more dry mouth, trembling fingers, upset stomachs or blushing. No more fear!

Allow me to use a climbing analogy as a quick demonstration on applying the above to those who suffer from fear of heights (acrophobia). Visualise yourself before a mountain. You know that as things stand there's no way you're currently capable of reaching its peak, your fear simply won't allow you, but you aim to do so! You strive to one day stand upon that mountain's

peak. So you start out on a journey. Not a journey measured by distance but one measured in months and small increments of success. The first day of the journey you climb as far as you dare. Once you reach the height that marks your limit, you feel that dreaded onset of fear. Your heart starts to pound, your hands grow sweaty and your knees tremble. But before backing down the mountain, you pause to look around. You see how high you've come, you look at the surrounding mountains and even manage, between juddering breaths, to enjoy the view. Most importantly, you accept that you are scared.

Then you descend and return to safety. Once your knees have stopped shaking and the blush has receded from your cheek, you acknowledge what you've done. You accept that even though the experience was frightening, you survived and your health didn't suffer from your climb up the mountain. You enjoy the after-glow of the adrenaline and take pleasure in the fact that you've challenged yourself.

The next day you return to the mountain and repeat the climb. This time you push yourself to go even further. It might not be much, perhaps just an additional metre or two. Safe in the knowledge that you survived yesterday's attempt, you do go further. Again, you repeat the momentary rest at the top of your climb. You accept your fear and even though you're scared, you do your best to enjoy that momentary slice of time and of life.

Then you descend. This time (and once you've recovered from your physical after-effects of fear) you pause to recall the new route you took and if you stepped off the beaten path and climbed the actual rock face, you do your utmost to recall the skills you put into practice and the lessons you learned.

That night you drink a well-deserved glass of wine and go to sleep with a smile on your face.

The day after, you can't return to the mountain because you have work commitments but the day after that you do return. At the base of the mountain you look up to where you climbed previously; you are determined to go higher than before. You do so and once you return to ground level, you're somewhat unsurprised to find that you're still alive. Facing fear is becoming a habit.

Over the next couple of months you return to the mountain. There are days when you are tired, days when the weather is horrible and the climb is cold and unpleasant. There are good days and sights worth remembering to

share with your friends over a drink in the pub. There are days when the fear grows in size and strength to the point you feel as though you're carrying an anvil with you up the mountain.

But through good days and bad, you continue climbing. Your fear doesn't go. It remains a true and steady companion, but its voice is quieter and you've made progress. Such progress! The culmination of each day's struggle begins to add up. You reach halfway up the mountain, then two thirds until finally that day arrives when you crest the summit of the mountain and you're there! At the very top!

You look around and admire the sheer blue of the sky, you inhale the crisp scent of the clean air and listen to the distant tweet and twitter of birds chasing each other across the lower slopes. You think of all that you've accomplished. Not just the climb but the skills you've learned along the way, the memories gathered and the experience earned.

As you descend, you suddenly notice the absence of your one-time companion. Your heart beats and pulsates but that is from the exercise. Your knees ache but that is from the physical exertion of climbing. Your cheeks still blush but that is from the thin mountain air. What's missing is your sense of fear.

You look around for a larger mountain to climb.

*'It does not matter how slowly you go,
so long as you do not stop.'*

CONFUCIUS

THE APPLICATION OF OVERCOMING FEAR FOR THE PUBLIC SPEAKER

Overcoming your fear as a public speaker isn't rocket science. It's nothing more than the simple and constant application of hard work. If you put in the time and don't shy away from challenges, you *will* conquer your fear. After reading the climbing analogy, I'm sure it's not a great leap of imagination to guess what is required of you. In order to reprogram your brain so that it isn't flustered by the thought of talking to a crowd, you must expose yourself to performing to increasingly larger numbers of people. The process should go a little like this:

Step 1: Acknowledge your intent to become a public speaker. Reach deep and find your hunger, your determination and don't let go.

Step 2: Prepare a speech. Keep it short, 2 minutes at most. Remember this is about overcoming fear; you can fine-tune longer speeches and skills once your fear has gone.

Step 3: Time for your first speech! Talk to one or two people. Don't ask for feedback or criticism, just experience the moment of speaking in front of others. Once you've done that, check to make sure you're still in one piece (which you will be) then go and relax.

Step 4: Give some thought to your previous experience. Was there anything you'd learned or would like to change or perhaps improve with your 2-minute speech? If so, make some small changes then go and talk in front of three or five people. No doubt this will be more intimidating than your first experience but you've got to keep upping the ante if you wish to improve. Suck up your guts and get it done! Once you've finished, check your limbs and your pulse and if you haven't succumbed to the perils of performing, go home and reward yourself with something naughty, or alcoholic, or both!

Step 5: You know what's coming next! Gather your friends, your associates or your troops and aim to speak to a group of seven to nine people. Repeat, relax and recuperate.

Step 6: Repeat all of the above to ever-increasing numbers of people until your fear diminishes further.

Of course, the above is overly simple but I'm hoping you get the gist. It really is that easy. There will, of course, come a point where it becomes a struggle to gather enough friends or associates in one place so you can continue to practice. When you reach this point, you need to create opportunities for yourself. Below is a list of places that you can go in order to talk to ever-increasing crowd sizes:

Speaker's groups

Most cities and towns will have a group. Take note that people in these groups are every bit as nervous as you, so please do not feel intimidated. These really are a great way to get experience. Be aware that most speaker's groups are businesses and will charge for the opportunity. If you've money

in your pockets then great, go for it, otherwise consider the options below before spending your capital.

Schools and colleges

Schools are always, *always* looking for free public speakers. Get in touch and they can arrange an opportunity to talk to:

- a class (normally 20-30 students)
- an assembly/year groups (100-300 students)
- or the entire school (450-2900 students in the UK).

**TOP TIP – For greater chances of success at your nearest school, request the contact details of the Head of Subject that best mirrors your speciality. If you're an astrologer, part of Big Pharma or a researcher in cutting-edge Biotech, get in touch with the Head of Science. If you're an explorer, sportsperson or chiropractor, get in touch with the Head of Sports. If you're a blacksmith, up and coming fashion artist or designer, get in touch with the Head of Design Technology, etc.*

Speaking agencies

Smaller public speaking agencies will, from time to time, turn down opportunities for their paid speakers, (this can be due to poor funding, local politics, small crowd sizes etc). You can turn this into a mutual win-win situation by offering your services on an unpaid basis. Reach out to these agencies, inform them of your expertise (your notable achievements, your qualifications, your experience in your field etc) and offer your time for small events or functions.

Local libraries and civic centres – Council establishments are frequent meeting points for groups and evening classes. Get in touch and see what's on offer.

Townhall – there are always opportunities to debate at town halls. The public are often invited to meetings that range from policing to planning proposals. Whatever the subject and whatever your social or political view, don't be shy, get cheeky, get in and speak up!

Social gatherings – weddings, birthdays, party nights, social gatherings and meetings are great opportunities for you to step up. Again, keep it short, keep it simple and don't fall into the trap of abusing these gatherings to the point that you become known as a bore (seriously, don't become that person)! Adapt your speech so it's relevant to the moment then reward yourself with quality socialising afterwards.

Speaker's Corner – for those of you who reside in London, pop down to Speaker's Corner and give it a shot! For those of you not based in the UK, Speaker's Corner is an area located within Hyde Park reserved for those wishing to speak to the general public. Traditionally speakers are allowed to speak their mind – on any topic or subject – without the fear of prosecution from authorities. If there's an equivalent in your city, try it out.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

How long is a piece of string?

We are all unique. You will have strengths that I cannot match, styles, tastes and ambitions that differ from mine and vice versa. Our brains are just as different. Expect to have differing neuroplasticity, differing rates for growth and differing abilities for overcoming mental barriers. Because of this, there's no time limit that can be put on conquering your fear. Some of you might crest the brunt of your fear in two days but struggle to overcome fainter pangs of anxiety for a month or two. Others might take longer to overcome their strong feelings of fear but when they do so, find it easy sailing from that point on. The important thing to remember is momentum. Once you've put your foot upon the path to building confidence, do not stop!

Rest and relaxation

Everyone knows you need rest and recuperation after a hard workout in the gym. Your body needs the opportunity to replenish energy stocks and rebuild the micro-damage to muscle fibres. Repetitive overloading of the same muscle group without suitable rest can cause negative effects. The same is true for retraining your brain. Facing fear is (obviously) stressful. If you don't give yourself a chance to relax after each event, you're denying your brain the time it needs to change its threat-stimuli-response. You *must*

recuperate and chillout after each performance. Rewarding yourself is part of the process so don't skip out on this and don't sandwich too many performances together.

Repetition

You must keep challenging yourself. Progress will only be made when you increase the stakes. However, facing too large a crowd too soon can be counterproductive. If you find your fear is overwhelming, repeat with lower crowd numbers several times in order to give your mind a chance to adjust before moving up a level.

Self-medicating

Save recreational mischief for after work. I've met too many newbies who thought a steady shot (or two!) of the hard stuff would help steady their nerves. This is counterintuitive. When you're trying to overcome fear, you need your brain working at normal capacity. Rewiring your response to fear is going to be that much harder if you're intoxicated. So save the party attitude as part of your post-performance relaxation ritual.

Momentum

Still fighting the tendency to freeze? Have the first three to four speaking points of your speech locked down and cemented in the forefront of your mind. When you get on stage don't think, don't worry about audience numbers or who's watching you, just work your way through this list. This list should be simple, basic and along the lines of:

1. "Hello, my name is First Name and Surname, I'm a specialist in Such-A-Field."
2. "My thanks for taking time out of your day to join me."
3. "I'll be talking about This Topic and by the end of this twenty-minute talk I'm hoping that I'll have changed the way you think, act and behave around This Statistic."
4. "So let's do this! Jumping straight in I want to..."

Whatever your talking style or subject matter aim to know exactly what you're going to say in the first 30-40 seconds of going on stage. This will

give you a buffer zone to get over any last-minute jitters and more importantly, it'll give you the momentum to get into the meat of your speech without having to worry about freezing.

'The journey is the thing.'

HOMER

THE 'FACE YOUR FEAR' CHECKLIST

That's it. You have all you need to know in order to conquer your fear. But to keep you on track and make things easier, I've compiled a checklist of things to do to aid your journey. You don't have to do all of them, but I'd certainly aim to complete 70% of the list. (I try and get my students to go through as many of these as possible during my public speaking classes).

'Face Your Fear' checklist:

1. Compose a short 2-minute speech
2. Practice your speech by yourself
3. Accept that you are going to make mistakes
4. Talk to 1 person
5. Relax
6. Talk to 2 people
7. Relax and consider if you want to make any changes to your speech
8. Talk to 3-5 people
9. Relax, review your mistakes and any new skills you've picked up
10. Talk to 3-5 people but use different hand gestures/body language
11. Talk to 6-9 people
12. Talk to 10-20 people
13. Talk to 20+ people
14. Tell a deliberate lie

15. Share an embarrassing story about yourself
16. Tell a deliberate *and* an embarrassing lie about yourself
17. Speak in an outside location
18. Speak on a stage or raised platform
19. Speak in a room with bad acoustics
20. Address a crowd in clothing you'd never normally wear

Harder challenges : the list below is only to be tackled *after* you've talked to 10-20 people.

21. Speak to a different social group/age group
22. Ask for 2 positive and 2 negative pieces of criticism after a speech
23. Deliberately stutter or mumble briefly mid-way through your speech
24. Create a list of obvious mistakes made in recent performances
25. Make a list of oratory skills acquired through your recent experiences
26. Talk to 30+ people
27. Talk to 60+ people
28. Compose a list of 3 ambitions to complete in your speaking career
29. Make a list of public speaking venues/research speaking opportunities
30. Book a holiday and consider where you want to take your career!

The checklist is composed with the idea that you continue to challenge yourself and to delve into fearful situations in increasing increments. Hopefully, you will note that there are some positive reinforcements and recuperation periods mixed in with the challenges. These are there to give your mind frequent opportunities to relax and to allow you the chance to look forwards towards a fear-free future.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem:

- You think you're making too many mistakes.
- You're too critical.
- You've videoed yourself talking and you hate what you see.

Solution: Do not be critical of yourself! You've intentionally set out on a road to make mistakes. This is part of the learning process. You're not supposed to look good, sound good or be even close to excellence at the beginning of the journey. Try to enjoy the mistakes as an opportunity to learn and instead of being self-conscious, focus on the path in front of you. Keep pushing forward.

Problem: You can't find the courage to talk to one person, let alone two.

Solution: Why go into a dark dungeon alone when you can have a strong companion by your side? Find a public speaking mentor or friend/companion to walk you through your first speech. A guiding hand is always there if you look.

Problem: Your fear isn't subsiding.

Solution: Repeat the last audience size you could cope with until your mind relaxes enough for you to take on larger challenges.

Increase the non-monetary value of your post-event reward, (more cake, more time in the bath, an extra drink with friends etc).

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE X

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: TOMMY GHANJANA

Tommy is an elusive design guru and although you might not have heard of him, his portfolio is vast. He's designed thousands of best-selling items and he's worked with many of the top UK furniture companies. In fact, chances are that you've sat, reclined, slept or stored items within one of his creations. In addition, Tommy is highly sought after by industry giants, often flown across the globe for his expertise in production processes, trading standards and quality control. These are his top tips for overseas consultancy:

Always research local customs before travelling. Learn the do's and do not's.

Be respectful of local courtesies and customs: stand silently for national anthems, if greeted with a Japanese bow, Thai Wai, Indian Namaste or other greeting return the gesture before offering a handshake. (I rarely encounter formal bowing in China but it happens once in a while).

Before you deliver a talk mentally go through it to ensure there's nothing in it that could be interpreted as religiously offensive or break lèse-majesté laws.

Always request the client to book you business-class flights. This ensures you have the space and resources to work on flight and can arrive fresh and ready to work as soon as you step off the plane.

It's a nice touch, if you have a local liaison that provides regular bookings within the South-East Asian circuit, to bring them a small gift-bag with each visit. This doesn't need to contain luxury items but rather home treats that are readily available within your country but are hard to source in theirs. It's a welcome gesture and ensures you'll always be fresh-in-mind when it comes to booking next season's consultant speakers.

TOMMY GHANJANA.

Designer. Traveller. Petrol Head and Adrenaline Junkie.

EXERCISES FOR PUBLIC SPEAKERS.

I KNOW IT'S AN unusual thing to consider but yes, public speakers really can benefit from physical exercise ⁵ . Before you freak out or groan at the idea of working out, relax. We're not looking at becoming super athletes, nor are we looking to reduce fat percentages or gain large amounts of muscular mass. What we are striving to do is increase our capabilities for prolonged speech by working on our core muscles for power, lips and cheeks for enunciation and breathing for verbal pacing.

⁵ Apologies, I've got to do the health and safety thing again: Seek guidance from your medical practitioner and personal trainer before attempting any of the following exercises.

NOTE – If you haven't read the No-Mic Chapter yet, consider flicking through it to gain a better idea of how the voice works and why the exercises in this chapter are relevant.

In this chapter: Core Exercises, Breathing, Enunciation and Troubleshooting.

CORE MUSCLES

These are the muscles that give power to your voice. The exercises below are aimed to give you increased core *strength* for a bigger voice and also to give you greater core *endurance* so you can maintain a near-constant squeeze to the midsection throughout your talk.

Relevancy is key to skill-related exercises! Dynamic exercises like sit-ups, v-ups or crunches, where we bend at the mid-section, are great for gymnastics as they replicate movements used in acrobatics but aren't relevant to speakers. You will see speakers stand, walk, sit and squat while talking but you'll never see them bend at the mid-section which would result in a loss of lung capacity. Consider how we use the core to project

our voice; it's nothing more than a constant contraction that we hold until we need to breathe in more air. We need to be looking at static exercises that reproduce the speaker's core contraction.

The plank – this should be the staple exercise practised by performers; it's simple, replicates the straight body posture of a speaker and is a great way to build endurance. We'll look at basic technique, then at ways to adapt this in order to build speaking endurance.

Basic plank:

Step 1: Get into a pushup position.

Step 2: Lower your arms to rest upon your forearms.

Step 3 : Check your hips. Your butt should not be pointing up, nor should your hips be pointing downward. You're aiming to be perfectly flat (yes, like a plank!) with your hips in line with your shoulders, knees and ankles.

Step 4: Hold the pose. Breathe normally.

That's it, the basic plank. Simple.

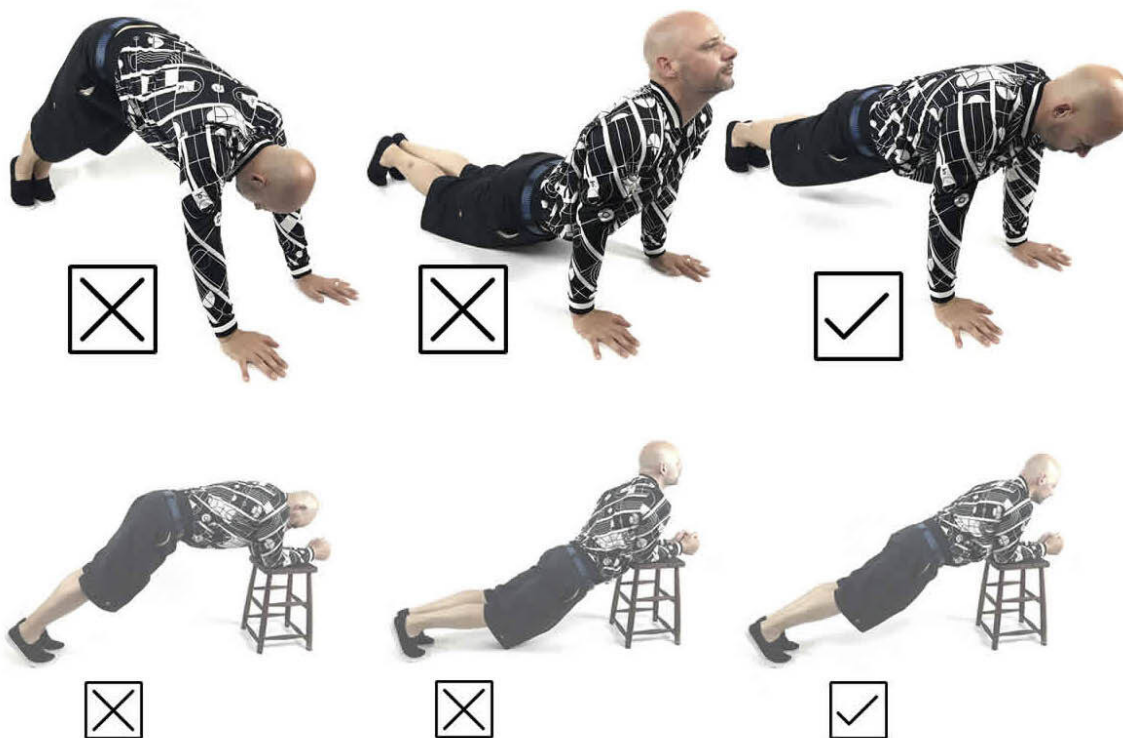


FIGURE 18 *Plank variations. Note the all too frequent mistakes of a bent or arched spine.*

Plank variations for speakers

The body shape of the plank is what applies stress to your core. The position of *the pull of gravity relative to your body* is what increases or decreases load and it's this concept that we, as speakers can take advantage of. To make planks easier, try resting your arms on a stable elevated surface: a seat, bench or step, while keeping your feet on the floor. You can make the exercise even easier by performing a plank leaning against a wall (the standing plank). The further you elevate your upper body from the ground, the easier the plank becomes. The standing plank should emulate the squeeze required for the no-mic method. If you find that you can't talk easily while doing the standing plank, assume an even more vertical stance by walking your feet closer to the wall. Or, if this is too easy, move your feet further away from the wall.

- The basic plank is a great builder of core strength. The stronger the core, the more powerful the voice.
- The standing plank emulates the gentle squeeze that you should use for the no-mic method and it's a great builder of endurance. The greater your core endurance, the longer you will be able to use a powerful voice while performing on stage.

As a speaker you should be aiming to build both strength and endurance.

Strength

Practice the basic plank until you can hold it for 3 sets of 60 seconds. (For those new to exercise, aim to increase time spent in the plank by increments. If you can only manage 3 sets of 20 seconds, then great, you've got a starting point! Repeat the exercise 3 times a week. The following week, strive to do 3 sets of 25 seconds etc).

Endurance

Practice the standing plank until you can hold it for 5-8 minutes. You will have achieved mastery of this move when you can *hold the standing plank while talking* for 8 minutes.

Advanced variations

These aren't a requirement for speakers but are interesting to know. Planks become harder depending on the position or number of anchors and the angle and length of your levers. Your anchors are the points of your body that you use to tether yourself to the ground. Your levers are your legs and arms.

Remove anchor points – the basic plank has six anchors; feet, hands and elbows/forearms. To make it harder, remove your forearms from the equation and do it in a pushup position. Want more? Try planks with one arm or one leg up in the air. Want it even harder? Try removing an opposing arm and leg at the same time (right leg and left arm or vice versa)!

Lengthen your levers – the basic plank and the pushup plank has your hands beneath the line of your shoulders. The further you move your hands away, the harder it becomes. Try a push-up plank with your hands in line with your forehead. Want more? Try an outstretched plank. Want to push it to an insane level? Try outstretched plank with your hands resting on a step or while holding onto a climbing rope!

Static dish

The static dish is a great builder of reliable strength.

Step 1: Lie on your back. Rest your hands on top of your thighs.

Step 2: Contract your stomach, raise your head, upper back and legs off the floor.

Step 3: Bend at your hips until your hands are nearly touching your knees. Your butt and part of your lower back should be the only parts of your body touching the floor.

Step 3: Hold the pose. Breathe normally. To avoid straining your neck, keep your chin close to your chest.

Practice the static dish until you can hold it for 3 sets of 40 seconds.

The rocking dish

The rocking dish is a moving version of the dish.

Step 1: Repeat the dish.

Step 2: Begin to rock forwards and backwards.

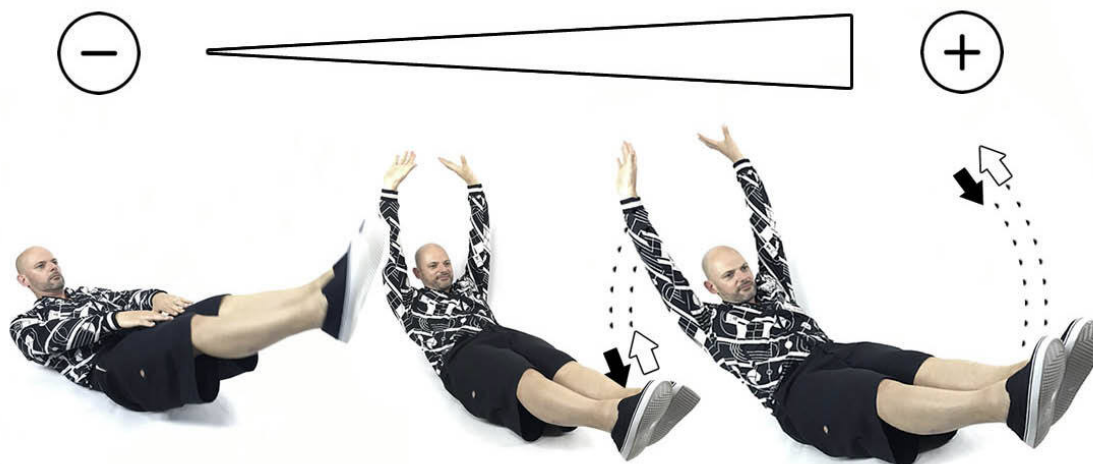


FIGURE 19 *Dish variations from easy to hard.*

Step 3: Maintain control of your shape. Do not rock so far that your heels or shoulders make contact with the floor. Keep your hands near your knees.

Step 4: Continue to rock. Breathe normally.

Practice the rocking dish until you can perform it for 1 set of 20 rocks.

Walking core engagement

This is one of my favourite all time tips! It came by way of Steve Russo, UK Gymnastics Coach of the Year. To maintain a constant core engagement, pull your stomach in when you're walking and maintain it. Each time you feel it relaxing, re-engage it. If you continue to do this while walking throughout the day, on the way to meetings, commuting to work, on the way to the gym, while going out to meet friends, etc. you will find that the body simply adopts this slight contraction. It becomes a subliminal part of your everyday pose. This, more than anything, gave me a huge uptake in the endurance of my transverse abdominis, part of the inner layer of stomach muscles and one of the key muscles for engaging the speaker's core squeeze!

Final notes on core strength – the core entails more than your stomach muscles; in its entirety your core includes your stomach muscles, obliques and lower back muscles. It is these muscles that support your torso, keeps

you stable and allows you to carry objects without strain. In this chapter we've clearly focused on just exercising the stomach muscles as they are the main movers and shakers for generating a powerful voice. It is, however, vital that you don't neglect the other muscles in your core. Do continue to work on these with your personal trainer or add them to your own exercise regime as a supplement to your speaker's exercises.

BREATHING

Having the strength to project a powerful voice is a great asset but it's of little help if you haven't mastered breathing. Breathing is the one thing we all do naturally and yet bizarrely becomes a sticking point that novice speakers seem to struggle with the most!

The no-mic method requires a deep intake of air and a constant squeeze of the core muscles. Simple enough, but new speakers tend to mentally trip over the timing. So much of their concentration goes on contracting their core muscles while speaking concisely, that they mistime the last exhale of remaining breath and rasp in a panicked inhalation of new air to the point that the inhalation is audible and their speech is marred by it.

If this is a problem that you suffer from then it's time to practice structured breathing.

Structured breathing

Step 1: Adopt a comfortable standing posture.

Step 2: Take a good deep breath and exhale to a slow count of ten before refilling your lungs.

Step 3: Repeat five times.

Step 4: Now make the exercise more demanding. When your lungs are empty wait for a slow two-count before inhaling.

Step 5: When comfortable, add the core muscle squeeze during each exhalation.

Focus points: Aim to relax when your lungs are empty. Wait for the full two-count before inhaling.

That's it! Nothing too complicated at all. The two-count pause allows you to become used to working with empty lungs, reducing the need to panic; panic being the main cause for rasping inhalations among new speakers.

ENUNCIATION

In order to be heard clearly across a crowded auditorium, you need to open your mouth more than required for everyday speech. Like all new body movements, this will feel odd at first.

'Great is our admiration of the orator who speaks with fluency and discretion.'

CICERO

**NOTE – if you haven't already, do try the pencil exercise in the No-Mic Method Chapter as it actively encourages the mouth to use good biomechanics for pronunciation.*

Tongue twisters – traditionally these are done at speed for entertainment, however, at slower speeds they make great exercises for speakers. Try the following tongue twisters. Aim to produce each word with precision, so slow the twister down to an appropriate rate. As you repeat the twisters you will feel traces of fatigue in parts of your mouth/cheek/lips. This ache signals a muscular weakness that you haven't had the opportunity to address. Practice will build muscular stamina and an increase in speech clarity.

- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
- Imagine an imaginary menagerie manager.
- She sells seashells by the seashore.
- If two witches were watching two watches, which witch would watch which watch?
- Greek grapes, Greek grapes, Greek grapes.
- If a dog chews shoes, whose shoes does he choose?

- Nine nice night nurses nursing nicely.
- Eleven benevolent elephants.
- Four furious friends fought for the phone.
- Round the rugged rocks, the ragged rascal ran.

Repeat each twister 10 – 12 times.

Tongue stroking – the tip of the tongue is used to pronounce the apical and dental consonants; t, d, n, th. To build up tongue dexterity, try using the tongue to explore the mouth in a circular manner:

Step 1: With your mouth closed, push your tongue forward so that the tip touches the middle two teeth of your upper jaw.

Step 2: Pull your tongue up your teeth to stroke the front of your palate/roof of the mouth.

Step 3: Trace the tip of your tongue as far along the palate/roof of your mouth as you can.

Step 4: Relax the tongue to a neutral position.

Step 5: Repeat for 60 – 90 seconds.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: I'm elderly and the basic plank is too hard.

Solution: Stick with the standing plank.

In addition, find a personal trainer that can work with you to reach new goals. It doesn't matter how old you are, there are always opportunities for improvement! (I've got an 81-year-old friend that climbs and a 68-year-old associate that does gymnastics)!

Problem: It's taking a long time to build up strength.

Solution: Strength takes longer to build than endurance. Stick at it and aim for small weekly improvements as a measure of success.

Problem: My stomach hurts while exercising.

Solution: A by-product of exercise while using the anaerobic energy system, is the build-up of lactate acid in the muscles. This causes that

horrible burning sensation associated with some exercises.

However, sharp-stabbing pains are an indication that you've pulled something or are exercising while injured. If you think this is the case, get yourself checked out by a medical professional.

Problem: I'm struggling with the tongue twisters. I have a slight speech impediment.

Solution: Invest in a couple of visits to a speech specialist for tailored advice on how to overcome your barriers then return to the exercises.

Try the tongue twisters while wearing a set of headphones with the music loud enough that it frees you from self-consciousness. (More on the Lombard effect in the No-Mic Method chapter). Record yourself during this process and play it back to hear if you've made vocal improvements.

'The tongue is but three inches long, yet it can kill a man six feet high.'

JAPANESE PROVERB

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE XI

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: THEODOROS KYRIAKIDES

Theo is an anthropologist, a university lecturer and with a black belt in Jiu Jitsu, is a dark horse in the world of research. In addition to his calm certainty and wealth of knowledge Theo has an adrenaline streak; his cliff-diving abilities are something to see (and something that I struggle to match)! These are his tips on giving lectures:

If you want to appear natural and fluid while talking, it helps if you're a) prepared and b) you talk about a topic that you enjoy.

Following on from the previous tip, should you ever have to 'wing' a speech choose a topic that you enjoy; you'll be visibly calmer while talking (even though you haven't had the chance to prepare).

Never stay still. Avoid sticking to a lectern, move, pace around and use arm gestures.

THEODOROS KYRIAKIDES,
Anthropologist, PhD Lecturer and Gnarly Cliff-Diver.

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: DANNY POTTS

I've known Danny for years as an instructor at gymnastics. What has always stood out in my mind's eye is his remarkable ability to coach – and coach well – both children and adults. His capability of transferring his lessons from one age group to another is seamless and, in my experience, a rare skill. Too often one finds that instructors teaching adults are incapable of teaching children and vice versa. Danny, never patronises his class, no matter their age group. His teaching points are succinct and easy to follow. I should also point out that Danny stands head and shoulders above the rest

due to his roaring voice that never seems to tire! These are his words of advice when it comes to coaching:

With adults confidence is key! You need to be able to show not just that you know what you're talking about but be able to explain it in a way that adults can understand. In all cases trust is very important, especially in gymnastics. Often you will need to support a student when they are learning a difficult skill. This can be a scary experience (more so for adults), so they need to know they won't hurt themselves when they follow your instructions.

As a gymnastics coach, I employ different techniques when working with children and adults. With younger children, it's all about finding a way to maintain their focus. So I like to keep things moving and not let them stop to ensure there's no loss of concentration. I also try to make the activity as fun as possible by making it a game or adding a competitive element.

DANNY POTTS,
Gymnastics Coach, Teacher and Patron Saint of Stuntmen and Stuntwomen.

HEALTH, FIGHTING SORE THROATS AND KEEPING YOUR VOICE.

THE UNIQUE STRESS OF multiple performances in a single day, combined with travel, can weaken your immune system. The population density of working with a crowd, signings and constant handshaking increases your risk of contagion. In short, the chances of you getting ill sometime throughout the speaker's season is high.

Unfortunately, a public speaker doesn't have the luxury of calling in sick. If an event organiser has sold tickets to a crowd of a thousand plus individuals, booked a venue, printed resources, paid for advertising and hired staff, you simply cannot cancel.

⁶ However, speakers can minimise risk, work to maintain health and use insider tips to power through performances even when under the weather.

⁶ Author's delightful health and safety note (because we all love these): before acting on any advice within this chapter seek counsel from a doctor or licenced medical professional.

In this chapter: Sore Throats, Laryngitis, Health and Troubleshooting.

FIGHTING SORE THROATS

Sore throats, the dreaded nemesis of all speakers!

A sore throat can be caused by:

- A virus.
- Bacteria.
- Allergies such as hayfever.
- Irritants such as dust or high levels of pollution.

Regardless of the cause, your body will respond by pumping more blood and white blood cells to your throat to fight the infection. This extra fluid (blood) causes the flesh to swell, putting pressure on nerve endings (which is the source of pain that you feel when swallowing with a sore throat).

Below are tips from myself and from other speakers for overcoming infection and irritation.

TCP

TCP is an old school British antiseptic medicine that gets its name from its original (but no longer used) ingredient trichlorophenylmethyliodosalicyl. TCP has a strong antiseptic smell, a terrible taste and an awful ability to destroy your taste buds for a couple of hours. But it cures sore throats in a heartbeat! As soon as I feel the onset of a sore throat, I'll commence gargling with a strong solution of TCP every couple of hours. I'll even set the alarm so I can wake up and gargle once or twice in the night. As horrible tasting and smelling as the process is, it'll cure a sore throat in under twenty-four hours, provided you catch it early enough.

Salt

Again, an old school but reliable solution! If you're not into TCP or can't get your hands on a suitable antiseptic liquid, then salt will kill off bacteria almost as quickly. Gargling with warm salty water (very salty water) every two hours will often do the trick.

Apple cider vinegar

I've never tried this but a popular (superstar) speaker you met earlier in this book, Dan Edwardes, swears by this remedy for curing a sore throat before his talks. Mix apple cider vinegar with an equal amount of water and gargle.

Face mask

Some of the cities that I've visited over the years are very polluted, to the point that buildings are obscured by haze and breathing is difficult. If I'm in a location where I can feel or taste the pollution in the back of my throat, I'll cover my nose and mouth with a face mask. This might sound extreme but if you are visiting a heavily polluted city, you'll find a large percentage of the local population cover up, many with face masks that have been

custom printed (watch out for the very awesome anime themed face masks in parts of South East Asia)!

Antihistamine

If you suffer from hayfever and you get a sore throat, you're at risk of irritating it further by speaking for prolonged periods. Taking antihistamine and a nasal spray will reduce both the particles reaching your throat and your reaction to it too.

Ibuprofen

New research indicates that ibuprofen can negatively impact the body's ability to fight viruses in the throat. However, if I have to speak (and even knowing I might have a longer recovery) I will take ibuprofen before getting on stage to help reduce swelling and pain during my performance.

Hydration and gumdrops

If you're speaking with a sore throat, you're actively increasing the irritation to your mucous membranes. While this can't be helped due to the nature of the job, you can calm your throat with plenty of water and sucking on iced-lollies, lozenges and gumdrops throughout the day.

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – I had been slogging through a particularly busy period in autumn. The weather had been frosty and that, combined with the workload, began to take its toll upon my voice. Fortunately, I had one last event to get through before a four-day break. The venue was an all-boys inner-city academy and I had been tasked with talking to 800 of their toughest 15 to 17 year old students. So there I was on stage and halfway through my talk when it happened. My voice went! All I could manage to produce from my mouth was a piping pre-pubescent squeak. Worse of all, my throat, suddenly desert dry, caused me to start a terrible hacking cough. A cough that was so forceful, that tears started leaking out of one eye. It was then that it dawned upon me that not only did I sound like a six year old but I was crying like one in front a room packed out with tough and clearly unimpressed teenagers. The memory still haunts me.
Moral: Your dignity is not a reliable friend. There will be times when it abandons you and leaves you to the sharks.*

LARYNGITIS

Laryngitis, also known as ‘losing your voice’, is when your vocal folds become swollen or irritated. This can come about due to viruses or acid reflux but most often, and certainly for speakers, it’s due to overuse, shouting or simply using the incorrect technique for projecting your voice.

Quite simply, if you do get laryngitis due to overuse, you’re in trouble. There’s no quick fix for wear and tear. If you do get it, the best you can hope for is the swift arrival of your next day off so you can rest and recuperate. However, if you must speak with laryngitis, try the following tips:

Microphone

Microphones can prevent certain vocal nuances and limit your capability for hand gestures, however, if your voice is at risk accept these limitations and use a microphone until you recuperate.

Hydrate

Keep your vocal folds moist. Drink sips of water as often as possible.

Use a different pitch

When I suffer from a lost voice, I find that the pitch range I’m most comfortable using is reduced. By pitching my voice higher I’m able to use parts of my vocal cords that aren’t yet damaged, giving me wriggle room to get through the remaining performances in the day.

**NOTE – this is a cheat method, not a cure! Prolonged use of different parts of already damaged vocal folds is a recipe for disaster. Rest your voice as soon as possible.*

Laryngeal massage

I hate the sensation of my throat being massaged but I have friends who are opera and Broadway singers who swear by laryngeal massage. Like all physiotherapy, it involves the manipulation of muscle fibres. If you have been suffering from prolonged laryngitis, consider giving laryngeal massage a shot. A quick google search will list all credible providers. (Do check accreditation and reviews before seeing any practitioners).

Rest

The longer you continue to speak while suffering from laryngitis, the greater the damage and more harm you're doing to your career. If you've ever wondered why pop singers cancel booked out stadiums to the cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds or more, they're doing it because they know it'll cost them more money, their health or their career if they continue to abuse their already damaged vocal folds. Rest up as soon as you can.

Root and honey tea

This is an old recipe I picked up from an Italian-Malay chef back in the day. There is no medical evidence to back up the benefits of this claim other than the mild antibacterial effect of honey and the antiseptic ability of turmeric. However, I love this recipe and turn to it when my voice is damaged. Brew green tea, sliced fresh ginger, sliced fresh turmeric and sweeten to taste with honey.

Hot Toddy

Again, there's no medical testing to back the use of a hot toddy but if you're a speaker, you like alcohol and you want to relax your weary voice, then mix warm spiced rum with honey to taste (don't boil the drink as you'll destroy the alcohol). Yum.

**TOP TIP – don't forget to check out Stuart Boother's Jesus Christ Superstar concoction in Speaker's Experience VIII*

HEALTH

Travelling to a venue and performing to a crowd multiple times throughout a day is bizarrely both physically and mentally draining and to this day I struggle to fathom how this can be. I've climbed across frozen waterfalls, scaled mountains, fought professionally, trekked through deserts and jungles and yet I'm more tired after a day of talks than I am after five hours of tough gymnastics training!

To maintain my energy levels, I use the following tips:

- Take breaks.
- Rehydrate.
- Consume good nutrition.
- Take micro supplements.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Exercise.

These fundamentals might appear rudimentary but they truly are key to maintaining energy and a strong immune system. If your energy does start to lag, chances are you've ignored one of these basics. *It is vital, even when your workload is high, to make time for these building blocks to health.*

Take breaks

If you've got a strong work ethic, the temptation not to stop is high. More than that, there are constant demands for speakers' time while at an event: performances, liaising with organisers, signings, Q&As, audience members seeking you out for clarity, business meetings with event managers and finance teams and more. If you're not careful, your working day will, quite literally, be non-stop. Making sure you have a couple of twenty-minute breaks to relax and completely switch off can make all the difference. Lock these small breaks into your schedule and guard them jealously.

Rehydrate

Drinking enough fluid should be a no-brainer but when you're performing several times a day and rushing between gigs, chances are you won't be consuming enough water. Lack of hydration doesn't just affect your physical performance, it affects your mental performance too. Your brain, no matter how complex an instrument it is, is still nothing more than meat and muscle; it needs water too. In addition, your throat needs constant hydrating to reduce damage to the tool of your trade; your vocal folds. Request a jug or several bottles of water be left on stage for your use and each time you go to the bathroom, check the colour of your urine. Brown, dark yellow through to golden yellow urine indicates dehydration, light yellow to clear liquid indicates good levels of hydration.

Good nutrition

The body needs a sufficient calorie intake with all your macros (fat, carbs and protein) and micros (minerals, vitamins) in order to perform, stay strong and maintain an efficient immune system. Going on tour or speaking at external venues can mess with your eating patterns and reduce opportunities to consume the foods that your body is used to. Choose what foods you eat wisely and consider packing supplements and other calorie sources to get you through the day. In addition to the above, remember to eat good quality proteins to keep you feeling full on stage for longer and to consume low G.I. carbohydrates to ensure a constant release of energy between meals and snacks.

Micro supplements

The physical stress of travelling and performing will affect your immune and energy systems. Investing in quality vitamin and mineral supplements particularly during busy tours is good practice.

Sleep

Aim to get a good night's sleep, even if that means cutting other activities out of your day. Sleep well and you'll have the energy to perform, connect with the audience and make sound business decisions when accepting future events.

Hygiene

If you're shaking the hands of hundreds of people, the chances of picking up harmful bacteria rises. There's no reason to turn into a hypochondriac but washing your hands after signings and before you eat reduces your chances of catching a cold or flu. (Don't forget if you get sick over a busy period this can impact your performance at multiple events or if it's really bad cause you to cancel one or two events which will damage your reputation as a reliable speaker).

Exercise

Exercising to build endurance, strength and flexibility is one of the bedrocks for longevity. For speakers, a quick (super-quick!) burn of 5-20 minutes in the morning will invigorate you and the post-high of endorphin

release will buoy you through your first talk of the day. Do note that while regular exercise is most definitely a good thing, *extreme* exercise can cause short-term negative repercussions for your immune system. If you do have a hectic week of tours and events, consider putting your heavy weights, sprints and endurance workouts on hold, forget about making gains or beating personal bests and go for maintenance workouts instead.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem:

- My voice isn't getting any better.
- I've taken a week off but my voice is still weak.

Solution: Your voice is your career. See a doctor or specialist for a diagnosis and treatment asap.

Problem: My throat only gets sore in certain geographical locations or at certain times of the year.

Solution: Check the pollution index (the BBC weather website has details on all locations).

Consider if you have any allergies that might arise due to the location (heavy metal industries, specific pollens etc).

Problem: My voice is almost gone but I can't afford to cancel my upcoming event.

Solution: Rest, hydrate, medicate, find a microphone to supplement your weak voice and apologise to your audience in advance; they'll be understanding.

PART IV

AGENCIES.

AGENCIES.

I HAVE MY OWN team that consists of a PR executive and a personal assistant who, in addition to aiding me with the day to day running of the business, also source new clients, arrange venues and deal with the bulk of client communication on my behalf. My team generates anywhere between 40% and 50% of my yearly income as a public speaker. The remainder of my bookings come from working with public speaking agencies.

In this chapter: What to Expect, How to Approach an Agency, How to Work with Agencies, Additional Pointers and the Most Complete List of Global Public Speaking Agencies.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Public speaking agencies are businesses. You can expect the smallest to have teams of just two to three people while some of the larger ones have fifteen plus working the office. Agencies will specialise and tailor their stable of speakers towards a niche market. Some will aim to provide after-dinner or keynote speakers, others deal in motivational gurus, business whizzes, educational figures...the list goes on. No matter the niche, you can rest assured that a successful agency will have a long list of clients and a strong network pulling in potential customers. If you have the pedigree that an agency is interested in, then they'll likely take you on and, if all goes well, arrange a constant stream of paid events for you to talk at.

This is of course business and you must expect an agency to take a slice of the pie in exchange for getting you gigs. What commission the agency takes, depends very much upon your calibre and experience versus the dominance of the agency. In my experience, agencies tend to take anywhere between a sixth and a third of what you could normally charge a client if they came to you direct.

A third can be an eye-watering sum but if you consider the sheer volume of events that a good agency can provide, it's potentially worth taking the hit (at least early on in your career).

For example, if you are starting out and you typically charge £600 for a day's event (direct booking) an agency might offer you £400 for the same. It might sound painful, but if the same agency provides you with 30 events per annum, that's £12,000 of income that you might not have earned otherwise. In addition, these 30 events provide you with experience, exposure, networking opportunities and media with which to feed your social networks. All of this goes towards pushing you up the ladder.

Like all things business, there will always be pros and cons. For new speakers I would suggest accepting whatever fee structure an agency demands, then renegotiating it six or twelve months down the line.

Before approaching an agency do your homework! Research their speakers, read client reviews of the agency, hunt through forums, look for pros, cons, costs and more. The more knowledge you have, the better prepared you'll be.

HOW TO APPROACH AN AGENCY

Getting an agency to accept you on their books is very much a matter of the sale. You need to be seen as an attractive acquisition who will either generate the agency money or act as a feather in their cap. In order to do this, I strongly suggest that you have:

- At least 8-10 successful talks under your belt before approaching an agency.
- A strong social media presence.
- Images or video of you talking or performing on stage.
- Quotes from previous clients.
- A list of credible accomplishments that qualify you for talking in your chosen field.
- An up-to-date professionally constructed website (that contains all your images, quotes and social media links).

Once you have these in place, email the agency with a cover letter introducing yourself. You should aim to:

- Inform the agency of your profession, unique selling point and recent outstanding accomplishments.
- Indicate that you've already given some talks and you have some measure of experience as a speaker.
- Provide links to your website and social media.
- Attach fresh, funky and exciting images that paint you in a positive light.
- Add a glowing review or two.
- Express an interest in joining the agency's stable of speakers.
- Request the opportunity for a phone call so you and a member of the agency can have a quick chat.

An example of this might be:

Hi,

I hope you're well and have had a good week? My name is Example Jane, I wanted to introduce myself and ask if there are any openings for new speakers in your agency?

I'm the first female climber to free-climb 'Example Mountain'. I've free-climbed eighteen other peaks, won the coveted 'Example Award' and I'm known for being one of the only climbers in the world that utilises 'Example Skill'.

In the past six months I've:

- *Abseiled down the X- cliff.*
- *Travelled to X-destination.*
- *Learned traditional rope-making skills from X-culture.*
- *Been granted permission to attempt X-mountain later this year.*

Since returning from my latest adventure, I've given eight successful talks at universities and climbing festivals. My talks typically cover the techniques I use to climb mountains as well as the countries and people I've visited. I also teach how to maintain the mindset necessary for tackling seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

'Example Jane bewitched and entertained both students and the faculty staff with her informative and witty performance'. University of 'Example'.

I've attached photos from my most recent speaker events and you can find quotes, video and further images on my website here: ExampleJane.co.uk

I've been approached by a new team interested in conquering X-gorge. Before I sit down with them to work out dates would it be possible to give you a quick phone call?

Very best,

Example Jane

Twitter: @ExampleJane

Instagram: Example_Jane

When you do talk with the agency, don't use your stage-persona (I've heard horror stories of people doing this over the phone), instead be polite, approachable and honest.

**TOP TIP – For new speakers (with little working experience) I suggest offering your first talk to an agency as a freebie to sweeten the deal.*

Things to ask an agency:

- What kind of clients, venues or festivals they cover.
- What locations they cover.
- What information they provide before each event.
- Their fee format.
- What reasonable costs they cover or allow as billable.
- Request a contact name within their finance department who you can talk to in order to set up invoicing.

HOW TO WORK WITH AN AGENCY

Once you've agreed to work with an agency, they will set you up across their network and websites. Ensure that you've provided their media department with suitable images, a punchy bio and a brief statement of what your talks consist of. On completion of this, the agency will commence selling you to interested parties.

Bookings normally go a little like this:

The agency informs you they have a potential booking. They'll give you a date and a location and request your availability.

Once you confirm, the agency will finalise the sale.

The agency will then send you client contact details and requirements for the event. (I often find these details are lacking, hence my reliance upon using checklists and FAQs that I can send to the client. See the Checklist Chapter).

After you have corresponded with the client and agreed on a final timetable, you're then ready to perform at the event.

Upon completion of the event, you send your invoice to the agency. (A good agency should pay you within 14 days of receipt of the invoice).

Follow up note: it's also good practice to post about the event on social media. If your agency is clued up on social media, they'll generate a certain number of retweets and postings on their network too (so be sure to tag them in).

Communication and correspondence: the majority of communication is likely to take place via email. Agencies rarely telephone but if they do, it's likely because they're looking to fill a late or last-minute request from a client. If you do find a missed call on your phone, call the agency back as soon as possible; if you're quick, you can snatch the booking before another speaker fills it.

ADDITIONAL POINTERS AND TIPS FOR WORKING WITH AN AGENCY

Public speaking agencies can generate a long-lasting stream of revenue. Like all relationships, work is needed to maintain them. Hopefully, these tips should help smooth the road for novice speakers:

- Bigger agencies will have larger stables of speakers. While this can mean more opportunities, it can also result in you being forgotten for periods until you're back in vogue. To avoid this touch base with your agency handler every six weeks and give them a gentle reminder that you're alive and kicking! Keep them posted with your recent accomplishments, email them video and photos of your latest events and express your continued interest in taking on any new work.
- Some agencies might attempt to lock you into an 'exclusive' contract where you work with their agency and their agency alone. Give this careful consideration before agreeing. If you think the numbers they can provide are worthwhile, accept or if you think working with two or three alternative agencies could make up the shortfall, then decline the offer. Alternatively, suggest trialling it for a three month period with a get-out clause.
- It doesn't hurt to butter up one or two contacts in larger agencies! After a successful season, consider sending your contact a bottle of their favourite tippie as a wee thank you. It's a nice gesture and it'll ensure they remember you with a smile.
- If you're ever late for a gig, have a disagreement with a client or make an error, inform your agency at the earliest opportunity. The better (and earlier!) that they are prepared, the easier it will be for them to step in and manage a situation. Agencies have little interest in playing the blame game; what matters most is maintaining their good reputation. Check your ego, un-ruffle your feathers and allow the agency to do what they do and keep your eyes on the next event.

Like all relationships, you must expect the occasional rut in the road. Do your best to make things work but if you find that the relationship is harming your business, you can either try to fix things by liaising with another staff member, or if your working relationship feels untenable, simply walk away and work with an alternative agency.

Some public speaking fields or agencies have busy (very busy!) times of the year. During these periods, the agency will have a lot of cash flow in from clients and out from speakers. This can cause logistical difficulty in small to medium-sized agencies in which case don't be surprised if they ask

that payment terms shift from 14 days to 30 days during this period. If you have any doubts or concerns, get in touch with their Finance department ahead of these seasonal highs and ask what their predictions are for paying promptly.

Do not attempt to poach clients from the agency. This is a huge no-no! If you get a reputation for going behind the back of an agency, you'll get blacklisted and more than likely other agencies will learn of this. You'll soon find yourself barred! Honesty pays more and longest when it comes to working with agencies.

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – I did well enough on my first year of public speaking that I could form my own team. I had them build a huge spreadsheet of every school in the UK, then tasked them with contacting clients on this list with the purpose of making sales and increasing my brand awareness. As my business and reputation grew, people began to frequently contact me or my team. Unfortunately, there was a crossover with clients and venues that once had ties with public speaking agencies but now wanted to approach me directly. Needless to say, this caused friction and I had to have an honest talk with several CEOs explaining that I wasn't poaching clients, merely that I had grown. (Contacts and new clients had come about because of my team's hard work). It made for a difficult transition; I had to part ways with one agency but the others were more understanding and I've come out the other side stronger for it.*

AN INTERNATIONAL LIST OF SPEAKER AGENCIES

(Correct at time of publication).

UNITED KINGDOM

Speakers Corner

speakerscorner.co.uk

Range of speakers: adventure, arts & culture, education and more.

The Speakers Agency

thespeakersagency.com

Range of speakers: keynote, entertainers, comedians and more.

Champions Motivational UK

motivationalspeakersagency.co.uk

Range of speakers: motivational, business, keynote and more.

Pro Motivate Speakers Agency

pro-motivate.com

Range of speakers: entrepreneur, comedians, athletes and more.

RM 54 (Room 54)

Motivational-speakers.co.uk

Range of speakers: celebrities, business, motivational and more.

Inspirational Speakers

Inspirationalspeakers.co.uk

Range of speakers: sport, education, business and more.

Specialist Speakers

specialistspeakers.com

Range of speakers: business, politics, media and more.

Gordon Poole Agency

gordonpoole.com

Range of speakers: after dinner, business, motivational and more.

Sternberg Clarke Entertainment

sternbergclarke.co.uk

Specialises in bespoke entertainment: motivational, inspirational, business and more.

The Right Address

therightaddress.co.uk

Range of speakers: celebrities, motivational, top comedians and more.

Speakers Associates

speakersassociates.com

Range of speakers: keynote, motivational, celebrities and more.

Comicus Keynote Speakers

comicus.co.uk

Range of speakers: comedians, keynote, celebrities and more.

Authors Abroad

authorsabroad.com

Arranges domestic and international author visits to schools.

Soccer Speaker

soccerspeaker.co.uk

Specialises in sports speakers: Football, rugby, boxing and more.

Laughter UK

laughteruk.co.uk

Range of speakers: comedians, sports, after dinner and more.

The events company

theeventscompany.co.uk

Range of speakers: adventurer, business, motivational and more.

Front row Speakers

frontrowspeakers.com

Range of speakers: business, leadership, sports and more.

Authors Aloud

authorsalouduk.co.uk

Specialises in arranging school speakers: authors, illustrators, poets and more.

School Speakers

schoolspeakers.co.uk

Range of educational speakers: sports figures, tech, careers advisors and more.

Prime Performers

primeperformersagency.co.uk

Range of speakers: keynote, presenters, motivational and more.

Welsh Stars

welshstars.co.uk

Range of speakers: business, hosts, entertainers and more.

JLA

jla.co.uk

Range of speakers: keynote, motivational, after dinner and more.

London Speaker Bureau

londonspeakerbureau.com

Range of speakers: government, creativity, technology and more.

Chartwell

chartwellspeakers.com

Range of speakers: scientists, politicians, historians and more.

Raise the bar

raisethebar.co.uk

Range of speakers: business, motivation, sports and more.

AUSTRALIA

Enhancemententertainment

enhancemententertainment.com.au

Range of speakers: keynote, finance, emcees and more.

Select Speakers

selectspeakers.com.au

Range of speakers: adventurer, celebrities, CEO and more.

Professional Speakers Bureau

prospeakersbureau.com.au

Range of speakers: keynote, after dinner, celebrities and more.

Speakers Solutions

speakersolutions.com.au

Range of speakers: health, inspirational, keynote and more.

Showcase Entertainment

showcaseentertainment.com.au

Range of speakers: motivational, sales, creativity and more.

The Children's Bookshop Speakers' Agency

thechildrensbookshopspeakersagency.com.au

Specialises in arranging school speakers: authors, illustrators, and poets.

Successful Speakers

successfultalkers.com.au

Range of speakers: MC, sales, creativity and more.

Anderson Communications

andersoncommunications.com.au

Range of speakers: authors, journalists, athletes and more.

Blinc International

blincinternational.com.au

Range of speakers: chefs, comedians, entrepreneurs and more.

International Speakers Group

internationalspeakers.com.au

Range of speakers: actors, authors, crime and more.

Instinct Events & Entertainment

instinctmusic.com.au

Range of speakers: finance, management, health and more.

Blue Planet Entertainment

blueplanetentertainment.net.au

Range of speakers: celebrities, sports, lifestyle and more.

Inspire Speakers

inspirespeakers.com.au

Range of speakers: leadership, business, sports and more.

Lateral Learning Speaking Agency

laterallearning.com.au

Range of speakers: authors, illustrator, poet and more.

SpeakersInk

speakers-ink.com.au

Range of speakers: authors, illustrators, poets and more.

Onstage Entertainment

onstage.com.au

Range of speakers: celebrities, motivational, business and more.

Claxton Speakers International

claxtonspeakers.com.au

Range of speakers: business, creativity, media and more.

Saxton

saxton.com.au

Range of speakers: education, military, social media and more.

ICMI Speakers & Entertainers

icmi.com.au

Range of speakers: business, celebrities, economy and more.

Australian Speakers Association

speakersassociation.org

Range of speakers: motivational, toastmasters, CEO and more.

Speaking Out

speakingout.com.au

Range of speakers: entertainers, consultants, keynote and more.

Celebrity Speakers

celebrityspeakers.com.au

Range of speakers: celebrities, comedians, entertainers and more.

Keynote Entertainment

keynoteentertainment.com.au

Range of speakers: after dinner, business, celebrities and more.

Great Expectation

greatexpectation.com.au

Range of speakers: authors, ethics, psychology and more.

Ovations

ovations.com.au

Range of speakers: leadership, communication, education and more.

Platinum Speakers

platinumspeakers.com.au

Range of speakers: celebrities, sports, business and more.

Australian Network Entertainment

australiannetworkentertainment.com

Range of speakers: politics, military, comedians and more.

Booked Out

bookedout.com.au

Range of speakers: authors, illustrator, journalist and more.

CANADA

Keynote Speakers Canada

keynotespeakerscanada.ca

Range of speakers: industry experts, Canadian entertainers, Canadian in Sports and more.

Speakers' Spotlight

speakers.ca

Range of speakers: bestselling authors, explorers, icons and more.

National Speakers Bureau

nsb.com

Range of speakers: keynote, leadership, motivational and more.

K+M Productions

motivational-speakers.ca

Range of speakers: business, motivational, productivity and more.

Speakers Bureau of Canada

speakerscanada.com

Range of speakers: adversity, disability, excellence and more.

CAPS Calgary

capscalgary.ca

Range of speakers: adventurers, actors, authors and more.

Global Speakers Agency

globalspeakers.com

Range of speakers: keynote, leadership, inspirational and more.

Jeff Jacobson Agency

jeffjacobsonagency.com

Range of speakers: authors, host, CEO and more.

Authors Booking Service

authorsbooking.com

Specialises in authors and illustrators.

Prospeakers.com

prospeakers.com

Range of speakers: comedy, business, innovation and more.

The Lavin Agency Speakers Bureau

thelavinagency.com

Range of speakers: authors, CEO, creative directors and more.

MCPSPEAKERS.COM

mcpspeakers.com

Range of speakers: attitude, communication, change and more.

Canadian Youth Speakers Bureau

youthspeakers.ca

Range of speakers: motivational, author, athlete and more.

INDIA

Celebrity Speakers India

csaspeakersindia.in

Range of speakers: novelists, astronauts, athletes and more.

India Speakers Bureau

indiaspeakersbureau.in

Range of speakers: authors, entrepreneurs, celebrities and more.

The Outstanding Speakers' Bureau

outstandingspeakersbureau.in

Range of speakers: management, social media, marketing and more.

Simply Life India Speakers Bureau

simplylifeindia.com

Range of speakers: technology, military, business and more.

Speaking Minds

speakingminds.com

Range of speakers: leadership, sports, adventure and more.

Indian Speakers Bureau

indianspeakerbureau.com

Range of speakers: academic, branding, chefs and more.

StarClinch

starclinch.com

Range of speakers: anchors, comedians, authors and more.

Celebrity Speakers India

celebrityspeakersindia.com

Range of speakers: motivational, actors, sports and more.

Speakers Bulgaria

speakersbulgaria.com

Range of speakers: architects, human resources, actors and more.

IRELAND

Speakers Solution

speakersolutions.ie

Range of speakers: after dinner, motivational, business and more.

Pro Motivate Speakers Agency

pro-motivate.com

Range of speakers: diversity, medical, adventure and more.

Athenas Irish keynote & guest speakers

athenas.ie

Range of speakers: authors, sales, reporters and more.

NEW ZEALAND

SpeakersNZ.com

speakers.co.nz

Range of speakers: sales marketing, leadership, health and more.

SpeakerLink

speakerlink.co.nz

Range of speakers: celebrities, inspirational, after dinner and more.

Captive Audience

captiveaudience.co.nz

Range of speakers: adventurers, journalists, business coach and more.

ICMI

icmi.co.nz

Range of speakers: celebrities, business, franchise and more.

Inspiring Speakers

inspiringspeakers.co

Range of speakers: entrepreneur, leaders, educators and more.

Celebrity Speakers

celebrityspeakers.co.nz

Range of speakers: entrepreneur, athlete, motivational and more.

National Speakers Association of New Zealand Inc.

professionalspeakers.nz

Range of speakers: leadership, law, lifestyle and more.

PHILIPPINES

Ariva Academy

ariva.com.ph

Range of speakers: digital marketing, leadership, social media and more.

Umbrella

umbrellaspeakers.com

Range of speakers: motivational, authors, broadcast journalist and more.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Washington Speakers Bureau

washingtonspeakers.com

Range of speakers: actors, athletes, authors and more.

SpeakInc

speakinc.com

Range of speakers: entrepreneurs, authors, influencers and more.

Executive Speakers Bureau

executivespeakers.com

Range of speakers: business, branding, celebrities and more.

SpeakerMatch

speakermatch.com

Range of speakers: adventurers, authors, celebrities and more.

Ottelus

ottelus.com

Range of speakers: leadership, sports, motivational and more.

The Speakers Group

thespeakersgroup.com

Range of speakers: authors, directors, athletes and more.

SME Live Nation

smelivenation.com

Range of speakers: business keynote, authors, chefs and more.

Orange County Speakers Bureau

orangecountyspeakersbureau.com

Range of speakers: keynote, authors, comedians and more.

The Sweeney Agency

thesweeneyagency.com/

Range of speakers: technology, innovation, leadership and more.

Key Speakers

keyspeakers.com

Range of speakers: comedians, sales, business leaders and more.

The Elite Speakers Bureau

theelitespeakersbureau.com

Range of speakers: violence, law, business and more.

MVP Seminars

mvpseminars.com

Range of speakers: business writing, leadership, sales and more.

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

scbwi.org

Specialises in educational speakers: writers, illustrators, translators and more.

Speakers Bureau San Diego

speakersbureausandiego.com

Range of speakers: keynote, celebrities, sports and more.

Eagles Talent Speakers Bureau

eaglestalent.com

Range of speakers: authors, coaches, finance experts and more.

Creative Artist Agency

caaspeakers.com

Range of speakers: bestselling authors, business, celebrities and more.

Wavelength

thesamewavelength.com

Range of speakers: CEO, Innovation, Leadership and more.

Carpenter Speakers Bureau

carpenterspeakers.com

Range of speakers: keynote, leadership, marketing and more.

Las Vegas Keynote Speakers

lasvegaskeynotespeakers.com

Range of speakers: motivational, sales, digital marketing and more.

Las Vegas Convention Speakers Bureau

lvcsb.com

Range of speakers: keynote, motivational, emcees and more.

WCD Enterprises

wcdenterprises.com

Range of speakers: authors, athletes, entrepreneur and more.

Pastorini-Bosby Speakers Bureau

pbspeakers.com

Range of speakers: business, adventures, addiction and more.

Gold Stars Speakers Bureau

goldstars.com

Range of speakers: authors, social media expert, inspirational and more.

Speakers Unlimited

speakersunlimited.com

Range of speakers: creativity, sales, branding and more.

Crown Speakers

crownspeakers.com

Range of speakers: authors, branding, networking and more.

Long Island Speakers Bureau

longislandspeakersbureau.com

Range of speakers: marketing strategists, authors, athletes and more.

Leading Authorities International

leadingauthorities.com

Range of speakers: military, celebrities, keynote and more.

Premiere Speakers Bureau

premierespeakers.com

Range of speakers: authors, CEO, entrepreneurs and more.

APB

apbspeakers.com

Range of speakers: politicians

ns, business leaders, public intellectuals and more.

Big Speak

bigspeak.com

Range of speakers: business, personal growth, sales and more.

All American Speakers

allamericanspeakers.com

Range of speakers: celebrities, authors, business consultant and more.

Gig Masters

gigmasters.com

Range of speakers: authors, sports, business and more.

The Harry Walker Agency

harrywalker.com

Range of speakers: economy, health, technology and more.

Speaker Hub

speakerhub.com

Range of speakers: engineer, coaches, directors and more.

PART V

**ADDITIONAL SKILLS &
REFERENCE.**

SOUND

A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF sound and how it can be applied to our industry is huge. Get this right and you'll be standing tall, speaking loud and making the most of your environment, while others are struggling to be heard over echo and ambient noise.

Although the wonderful complexity of sound is responsible for profound jumps in our understanding of the universe and rapid advances in technology, this isn't The Big Book of Physics! We won't be charging into complex formulae or delving into multi-level explanations. Instead, we'll be breaking sound into simple analogies and, importantly, we'll only look at sound relevant to public speaking.

'Let thy speech be better than silence, or be silent.'

DIONYSIUS

In this chapter: How Sound Works, Sound Drop-Off, Echo & Reverberation and Talking Outdoors.

HOW SOUND WORKS

Sound is energy that is carried in the form of a vibration from a *source* to a *destination* . The medium that these vibrations travel across is air molecules.

To keep this simple, we're going to illustrate this using a drum as a source and the human ear as the destination. (Take a look at image 'A' below).

When the drum is struck its skin begins to bounce back and forth; it vibrates. As the skin moves forward, it squishes the air in front of it, causing the molecules to compress. This compression of air molecules creates a moment of *high pressure* . When the skin moves backwards it pulls the air with it causing the molecules to relax (and expand), creating a

low-pressure moment. It is this push and pull of the drum's skin that causes the very air to vibrate.

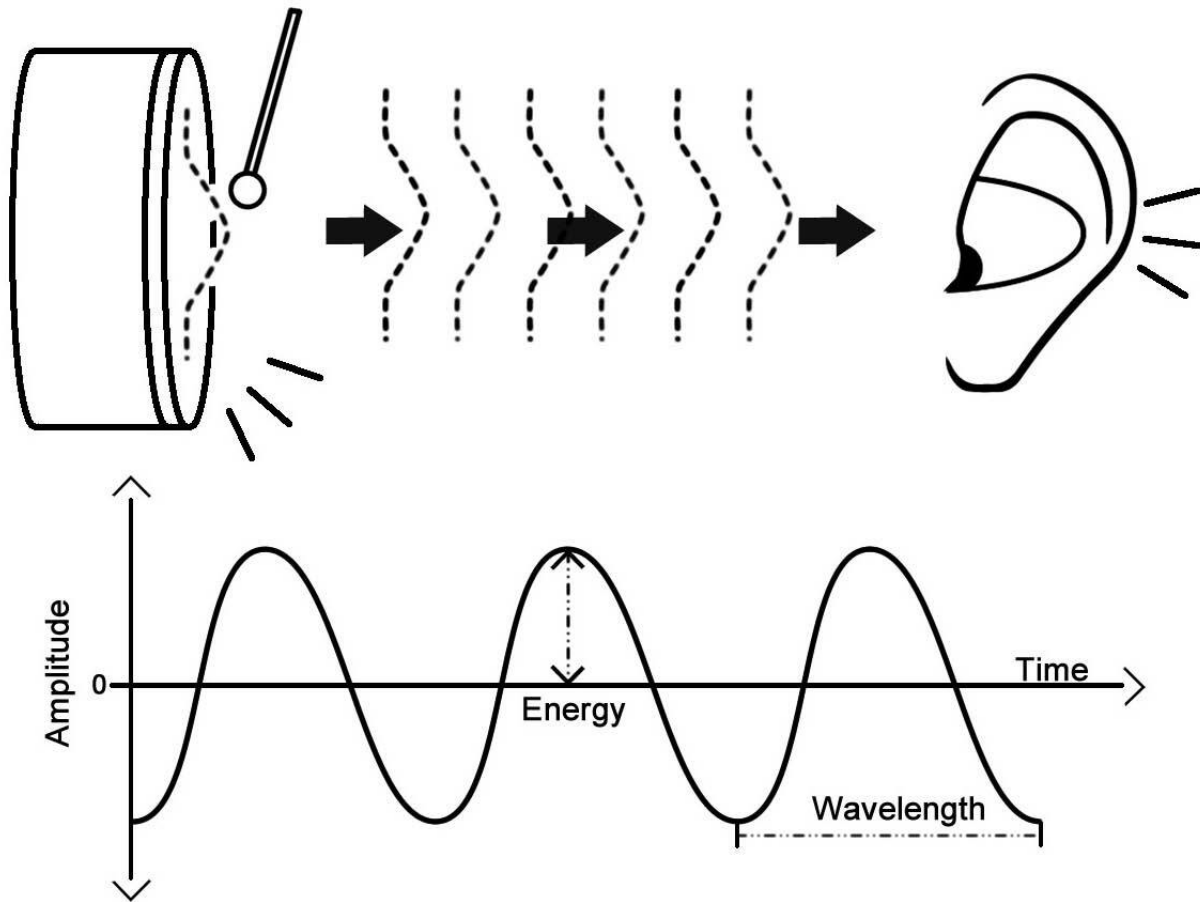


FIGURE 20 A) *How vibration (sound) travels and B) the sound wave.*

This vibration of high pressure/low pressure begins to carry across the room. Each group of molecules bump and jostle with neighbouring molecules, which in turn mimic the same movement. This wave spreads in a long chain through the air until the vibration reaches the human ear. It's at this point that the delicate mechanism of the ear registers the changes in air pressure and delivers this information to our brain as sound.

An important distinction should be made: the air molecules next to the drum aren't pushed across the room until they reach the ear (don't mistake the mechanics of sound for wind)! Instead, groups of molecules stay in

place but pass the message from one group to another like enthusiastic sports fans send a Mexican wave across a crowded stadium.

**NOTE – the source of sound for public speakers is the vocal folds. Next time you talk gently lay your hand on your throat and you'll feel them vibrating away, much like a skin on a pounding drum. And just like the drum, the vibration of your vocal folds will cause high pressure and low-pressure moments, allowing the sound of your voice to travel across a room to your audience.*

The sound wave

Most of us are familiar with the curving image of a sound wave. It's a line made of peaks and valleys. The peaks indicate air molecules that are bunched together to form high-pressure moments. The valleys indicate low-pressure moments where the air molecules are spread out.

Images of sound waves might appear complicated but a little know-how can remove the mystery of it. In addition, this brief and basic knowledge will allow you to understand why your voice is or *is not* carrying across a particular venue.

To start, let's forget the wave and focus on the graph (image 'B' above). The horizontal bar that stretches from left to right indicates time. The further right we go, the more time the sound has been vibrating. The vertical bar indicates *amplitude*. Amplitude measures how much energy is in the wave. Louder sounds have more amplitude while quieter sounds will have less amplitude. Unlike most graphs, the vertical bar is split in half by the horizontal bar; this is so that both high and low-pressure moments can register. The point where both bars meet indicates silence.

Let's move on and look at the actual wave with its peaks and valleys:

- The distance between two peaks is a measure of *wavelength*.
- The height of peak indicates *energy* or *amplitude*. The higher it is, the louder it is.
- The speed of the wave's vibration is known as *frequency*. Longer waves are slow-moving and indicate lower pitches while short waves are faster and indicate higher pitches.

- Sound waves are measured by the repetition of each wavelength per second. This record of measurement is known as a *hertz* or a Hz (thanks to German scientist Heinrich Rudolph Hertz). For example, if a sound produces 60 sound waves in one second then that frequency is 60 Hz. Or if a sound wave repeats 2,000 times per second then that frequency is 2,000 Hz (or 2kHz).
- Typically humans can hear as low as 20 Hz and as high as 20,000 Hz (20 kHz), although this range decreases somewhat with wear and tear in ageing ears.

If you'd like a visual and audible demonstration of sound waves, do check out these awesome videos over on YouTube:

- '20Hz to 20kHz (Human Audio Spectrum)' by YouTuber AdminOfThisSite
- 'Cool Hearing test' by YouTuber ScienceForum
- Alternatively, search for '20hz 20khz' to find a wide range of videos displaying imagery of waves alongside the appropriate audio.

Loudness

Intensity of sound (or how loud something is perceived) is measured in units of decibels (or dB).

- 0dB – silence.
- 10dB – human respiration/breathing.
- 20dB – a whisper.
- 30dB – muted background conversation.
- 40dB – normal conversation.
- 50dB-60dB – louder conversation.
- 70dB – vacuum cleaner.
- 80dB – alarm clock.
- 85dB – at this point hearing damage occurs at prolonged exposure.

- 90dB – shouting or screaming.
- 100dB – power tools (pneumatic drill, angle grinders etc)
- 110dB – rock concert/wild nightclub.
- 120dB – the threshold of pain/hearing damage occurs at this point after only a brief exposure.

**NOTE – as an effective public speaker, you should aim to train your voice so that it is comfortable working in the 70dB – 90 dB range for long durations.*

Of course, the measure of decibels depends on how close you are to a source of sound. If you were to stand next to a revving car engine, no doubt it would sound painfully loud and the decibel level would be high. But if you were to hear that same car engine from a couple of hundred metres away, it would be perceived as a low buzzing and the decibel level would be much lower.

SOUND DROP OFF

Sound travels from its source in every available direction or, to put it another way, *sound travels in an ever-expanding sphere*. As the sphere expands, its surface area grows at an astonishing rate, forcing the energy within to spread ever thinner. It is this expansion that causes sound to drop off the further you get from its source.

The formula behind this is complicated (and far from necessary for public speakers)! To avoid any headache, simply work with the assumption that each time the distance from source to destination is doubled, there will be a 6dB drop-off.

Let's put this to work for public speaking in a hypothetical setting. We'll pretend an audience is crowded around a speaker. A person sat 1 metre away from the speaker registers the speaker's voice at 70dB. An individual 2 metres away, will hear 64dB and a person sat 4 metres away will register 58dB while the person sat at the back of the crowd at 8 metres away will hear 52dB.

8 metres isn't a huge distance but at this instance, it's accounted for an 18dB reduction in sound. For those seated at the back, this will be a marked decrease in perceived volume from those sitting at the front.

And this is the reality of public speaking. It doesn't matter how big your voice is, you must expect a drop off of volume for audience members sat furthest away. This isn't too much of a problem if you're working in an auditorium or concert hall with great acoustics, however, for most other venues, this is an issue that you must work to overcome. And if you were alarmed about the notion of speaking at 90dB, this rapid drop off in volume should account for why you won't damage your listeners' ears. That'll only occur if you use a powerful voice when you're standing by their side!

To avoid the pitfalls of decreasing volume, try the following:

- Sit the audience close to the stage. (Encourage ushers to ask audience members to take seats from the front first as most people instinctively choose seats further away from the stage).
- Move closer to the audience. Remember you don't always have to stand on stage. Move around!
- Focus upon crisp pronunciation of hard-sounding consonants at the start and end of each word: Ts, Ss and Ds in particular. Hard consonants shape words more than soft-sounding vowels. Poor pronunciation becomes noticeable for audience members sat furthest away from you.
- Reduce all sources of noise pollution. Shut windows, close doors and if possible ask people outside the venue to be quiet.
- If you use a microphone, remember that smaller speakers spread throughout the room are better than one large speaker at the front (which would be just as susceptible to sound drop-off).

ECHO AND REVERBERATION

Sound has two interesting properties:

- Speed! Typically sound travels at around 340m per second (this can vary slightly depending on temperature and humidity).

- Bounce! When sound strikes objects, particularly hard surfaces, there is an opportunity for it to reflect.

Sound will almost always bounce off most objects. In fact, if you were to close your eyes and talk loudly or even clap, you would be able to tell a lot about the room you were in simply from the reflected sound. If you try this in all the rooms of your house you will detect specific sound signatures for each room. Rooms with curtains and carpet sound softer, rooms with lots of glass and tile sound harder and there's a definite distinction between large rooms and small that you can easily detect.

While there will always be some sort of reflection (or bounce), there is an essential difference between a reverberation and an echo. This difference is distance.

Because sound travels so quickly, the human ear tends to add reflected sounds onto the tail of the original signal simply because our brains struggle to differentiate between the first sound and the reflection. In fact, any sound that takes less than 0.1 seconds to reach a surface and bounce back to our ears, we assume to be part of the original sound. We call this *reverberation*.

However, in a room or space that is longer than 17 metres, the time for a sound to strike a surface and return is noticeable and we call this *echo*. All of us have experienced an echo before but if you need a quick refresher, go and shout like a happy kid beneath a bridge (or alternatively go and shout like a loon at a brick wall from ever-increasing distances until you find your echo).

Reverberation has its uses and the right amount can add to a performance. Violinists like a little bit of reverb as do Georgian monks as it enhances their chanting. However, drummers hate it. The extra clash to their already hard percussive noise can sound like bedlam.

For public speakers, a little bit of reverberation can be okay but too much can be an issue as it destroys the clarity of your words, particularly for those at the back of the room. While reverberation can be a minor irritation, an echo can really destroy a talk!

Echo will occur in any room that has a gap of 17 metres or more. Echo will be more noticeable if the room is clad in hard surfaces such as brick, concrete and highly polished wood.

Both echo and reverberation can be partially remedied with the use of soft materials, acoustic boards and panels. These don't actually block sound,

instead they work by trapping the energy, preventing reflection. If it helps, consider the bouncy-ball analogy:

Pretend you're in a room with a big bucket of bouncy-balls at your feet. The room has been split exactly in half. On one side all the walls, floor and ceiling are constructed from concrete. The other half, however, has been covered with very thick and luxurious padding. When you throw the bouncy-balls at the concrete side they ricochet all over the place and you have to duck to avoid being hit by rebounding balls! When you throw the balls the other way, they plop against the padding and fall off in a desultory manner. Sound acts in a very similar way to the bouncy-balls. It'll thrive and bounce off hard surfaces but will stagger to a halt against soft surfaces.

If you're unlucky enough to work in a venue that suffers from echo you can try the following tips:

- Step closer to the offending wall until you're less than 17 metres away.
- Twist slightly and aim your voice towards a closer wall. (Because sound travels as a sphere there will of course still be echo bouncing off the original wall but less than if you faced it directly).
- Rearrange seating and stage so that you're in the middle of the room and the audience sat facing you.
- Draw curtains if possible. (Some speaker's halls have had these intentionally fitted to ward off echo. Pull these in place if the caretaker or client has forgotten to do so).
- Lower Venetian blinds to block the reflective property of windows.
- If you're going to work for long periods in a fixed location, request the client invest in acoustic boards and panels. Or if they've the budget for it, request that all hard walls are covered with acoustic cladding.

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – during school visits I'm sometimes asked to speak in a sports hall as it's the only space large enough to host all the students and faculty staff. Some of these sports halls have cricket nets (huge nets that span the entire length of the room). Drawing these goes some way towards damping down the notorious echo of the sports hall.*

TALKING OUTSIDE

The big outdoors can throw up some tricky issues for speakers as clearly you'll have less control over the environment. These following sound issues need consideration:

- Increased background noise.
- Wind noise or howl.
- Increased opportunities for an echo from buildings or natural surfaces.
- Unexpected noises or uninvited guests.

Try the following tips to ensure your audience can hear what you're saying.

- Use a microphone, (this is a must for a large outdoor crowd)!
- Look for barriers that can separate you and your audience from the general public.
- Natural barriers such as trees or hedges are ideal barriers. Leaves offer echo-reducing opportunities.
- Avoid large courtyards (these can be echo farms).
- During short and informal talks where the audience isn't seated, ask them to move as close to you as possible. To reinforce the need for them to draw close, use appropriate body language. You can hunker down or half squat to encourage the audience to draw near.

**TOP TIP – you can create your own amphitheatre out of the audience! Request that the audience forms a semi-circle around you with the tallest standing at the back. Get the back rows to remain standing but request that the closest rows hunker or sit down. As long as you remain at the focal point of this improvised amphitheatre, your voice will carry easily to everyone in the crowd while those at the back will act as a barrier to background noise.*

- If you're a coach or personal trainer, chances are you might have to work in blustery or even strong winds. Very strong winds can cause odd sound behaviours due to the wind's ability to hamper air molecules. Of note, there's the Doppler effect (where parts of the sound are yanked out of sync) and updrafts in wind currents (where sound is carried away). In the event you do have to work in these conditions, bring your audience close and talk from an upwind position (that's with the wind to your back).

'Words empty as the wind are best left unsaid.'

HOMER

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE XII

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: LOUISE AND HAROLD MESSER

Louise and Harold are celebrated dentists, known for their expertise in their given fields. Although married, they teach and tour independently of each other. Between them, they have more than a hundred years of lecturing expertise. That's a whopping amount! These are their words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

Don't speak until you have your audience's attention. That means waiting until they've completely quietened down. If they don't, start talking below the audience's level; other audience members will start shushing until everyone is at last quiet. At that point, you can start raising your voice.

View the audience constantly. Look around the audience and keep your eyes roving so you know what they're doing but also so that the audience feels connected.

Visual aids can be invaluable as illustrations for your audience. However, ensure that you know your material well enough that you don't rely on these to recollect your speech.

LOUISE MESSER,

Paediatric dentist, doctorate and lecturer.

When talking internationally slow your speech down enough so that non-native English speakers can better understand.

While talking in non-English speaking countries overseas, don't be surprised to find that people can be shy in a crowd which can lead to fewer questions being asked. Be prepared, however, for these timid individuals to approach you with their questions away from the crowd: after the event or during breaks.

It dawned upon me while talking in Indonesia that if the audience was quiet, they weren't necessarily taking everything in but when I mentioned

something that was engaging, the audience would suddenly start talking to each other. When I realised this hubbub was a sign of interest, I looked for it so I'd know that I was actively captivating the crowd.

HAROLD MESSER,
Endodontist, doctorate and lecturer.

THE STAGE AND ITS HISTORY.

WE'RE PUBLIC SPEAKERS, NOT actors. Knowledge of stages and their history isn't necessary to do the job but it's nice to know.

In this chapter: the History of the Stage, Types of Stage and Stage Terminology.

THE HISTORY OF THE STAGE

Ancient Greece is one of the earliest sources of both plays and theatres.

- Thespis was the first recorded actor circa 6th Century BC, (hence the word thespian to indicate actors).
- Dionysus was the Greek God of partying! Celebrations in his name gave birth to the festival of Dionysia during which great theatrical rituals were held.
- One of the earliest surviving theatres, the Theatre of Dionysus, is situated in Athens and has been used since circa 6th Century BC.
- Early Greek democracies would meet in the ekklesiasterion – a great, often circular building capable of hosting large numbers of people. In some cities or towns, the ekklesiasterion would be used for multiple purposes: political speeches, theatre and official gatherings.
- The Greeks would often use hillsides as a location for speeches or plays. Those acting or speaking would perform on level ground while spectators would take advantage of the slopes above as they presented a natural vantage point, easy seating and good acoustics.

- Most Greek theatres were built to mimic this hillside layout. Seating rose in staggered steps around a sunken stage. Great examples of this are the Theatre of Delphini, the Theatre of Syracuse and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus.
- Greeks used Mathematics to ensure good acoustics in their architecture.
- The word ‘theatre’ springs from the Greek word ‘theatron’ meaning *viewing place* .

TYPES OF STAGE

In the simplest of terms, a stage is a designated space for performing. As a public speaker you don’t need an official stage; if you’ve got an audience and you’re talking to them where you stand is the stage.

Having said that, there are purpose-built stages. The most common are:

- Proscenium stage. This is the stage that most of us are familiar with and the one you will see most frequently in West End and Broadway theatres. The audience sits facing the stage and can see into it through a border, arch or window (hence the alternative name for proscenium stage ‘*a picture frame stage*’).
- Thrust stage. The stage extends into the theatre hall, allowing audience members to sit on three sides of the stage.
- Theatre of the Round. The stage is situated in the middle of the room and audience members sit around it.

Proscenium stages are the most prevalent type and the stage that you will most likely spend the majority of your time as a speaker.

Thrust stage and Theatre of the Round are lots of fun and make a welcome change from the monotony of Proscenium. They give you room to pace and guarantee greater audience interaction and participation. However, there are some potential pitfalls to be aware of:

- It’s easy to neglect part of your audience. Remember to turn and face different directions so that all of the audience can feel involved.

- To address one part of the crowd means turning your back on the other. In purpose-built theatres, this shouldn't be a problem as the acoustics will be great. But this can be an issue for low budget establishments or stages that spring up for a one-off event. To combat this speak louder, enunciate clearly and project your voice further.
- Spotlights are encompassing. Expect to get dazzled from time to time. (Unfortunately, lighting is set up for the audience, not the performer. This is something you'll just have to deal with).

STAGE TERMINOLOGY

Stage terms and directions come from the performer's point of view and not the audience's.

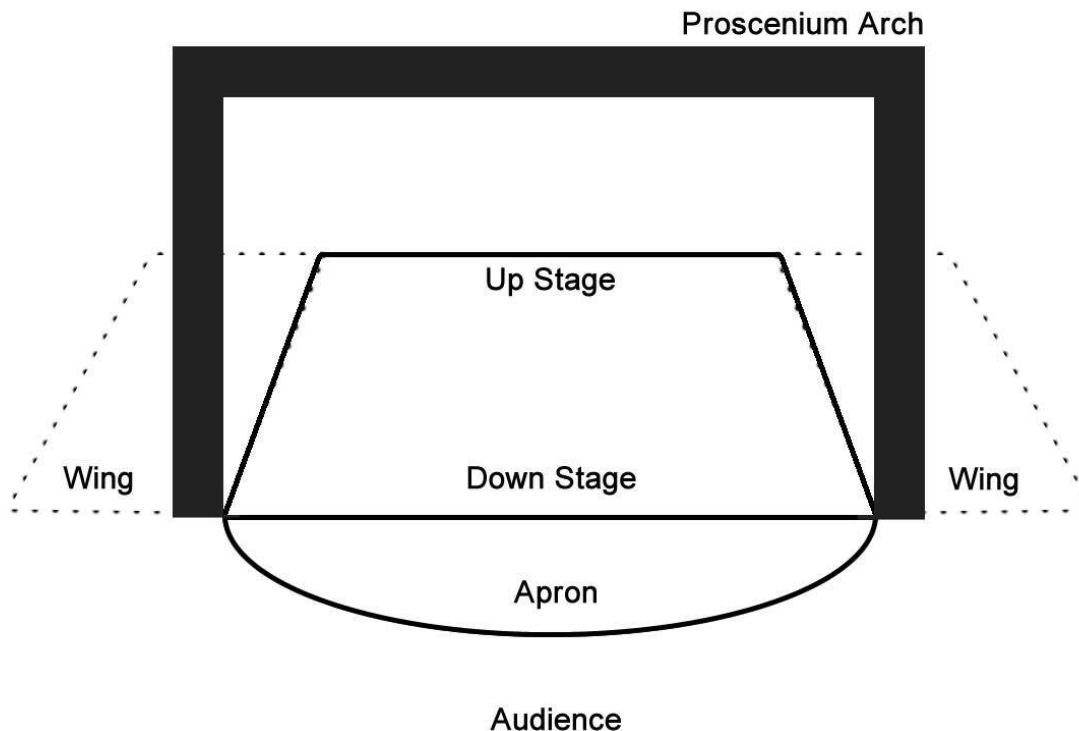


FIGURE 21 Stage terminology (featuring a proscenium stage).

Directions:

- Downstage – the front of the stage nearest the audience.
- Upstage – the rear of the stage close towards backdrops.

Other areas:

- Stage apron – part of the stage that projects past the frame that marks downstage and juts out towards the audience.
- Playing area or acting area – all parts of the stage that are visible to the audience.
- Wings – obscured areas to the side of the stage, allowing for normal entry and exit.
- Backstage – parts of the stage obscured from the audience.
- Proscenium – the frame that, when the curtain is pulled back, allows the audience to see through into the stage, (think of it as a window frame with the stage being the picture).

'All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts...'

SHAKESPEARE

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE XIII

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: GAUTAM LEWIS

Gautam is a phenomenon. In fact, I'm so impressed with Gautam's accomplishments that I use him as an example of a hero during my motivational talks. As a polio-survivor he's overcome huge adversity in his life to go on and achieve his childhood dream of becoming a pilot (designing and engineering a set of foot pedals that allow him to control a plane without the need to use his legs). More than that, Gautam has set up a charity, (Freedom in the Air), where he takes able and disabled students into the skies, allowing them to fly the plane to show they have control of their lives (amazing)! Gautam often talks internationally to large crowds of movers and shakers and can often be seen on TV interviews. These are his words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

Prepare, prepare, prepare, before you get in front of your audience!

Research your audience. What age they are? Why they are attending your talk? What types of language or words they might use? I use different words and styling for children or young people, versus a grown-up and mature crowd.

Know your subject and if you need to read off your notes, that is ok too. It's better to convey your message with focus, a steady speed, keeping your audience focused on your words, than to mess up and stumble and get it wrong. But at the same time, you want to be able to play around your written speech and adjust your presentation, depending on the reaction of the audience.

Always treat every audience member, regardless of age, with respect and be humble. Do not ever show off.

GAUTAM LEWIS,
Polio survivor, pilot, charity worker, hero.

THE CLAP AND THE HANDSHAKE.

I KNOW THAT CLAPPING and shaking hands seems woefully mundane but I spend such a large amount of time using both to interact with my audience and clients that it's well worth putting these into a chapter. Particularly as there are some nuances that, if followed, can make you appear more of a leader on stage and more approachable off.

Before you laugh, spare a moment's thought; have you ever shaken someone's hand and thought it limp? Or have you chuckled at someone's timid applause? We judge people by the perceived strength of these abilities. A firm hand indicates fortitude. A loud clap displays a willingness to stand out from the crowd.

THE HANDSHAKE

Expect to spend a lot of time shaking hands as a speaker! In smaller venues with an audience of less than thirty, you should be taking time to mingle after a talk. In larger venues expect to get mobbed by eager crowd members wanting to meet you. During signings you'll have to shake everyone's hand in the queue. Most importantly, you need a good handshake when you meet other speakers, event organisers and potential clients.

The basic handshake – a good handshake conveys confidence, honesty and openness. While it might seem ludicrous to walk you through a handshake, I'm going to do it as a surprising number of people get it wrong!

Step 1: Look at the person approaching you and smile in a welcoming manner.

Step 2: Be the first to initiate the handshake. Reach out your hand in a positive manner: hand rotated slightly so your palm is beginning to angle upward, arm outstretched with only a slight bend at the elbow. At this point

welcome them vocally with a 'hello', 'hi', or whatever your preference for the occasion.

Step 3: As you receive the individual's hand in your own make good eye contact. Dip your head slightly in acknowledgement as you commence the squeeze. Broaden your smile.

Step 4: Squeeze the individual's hand. Be firm but not aggressive; use the same amount of pressure you would apply to a bannister or rail when walking up a stairway.

Step 5: Shake the hand. Move upwards first, then downward; repeat two or three times.

Step 6: Release the hand and continue to smile as you break eye contact.

No biggie, right? However, as a speaker there are some nuances that you need to be aware of. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, most audience members will feel vulnerable when approaching you. Throughout the duration of your performance they will have watched and listened to you while you walked around on stage. Psychologically this has put you, the speaker, in an elevated position in the mind's eye of the audience member. Another way to consider this is to think of your audience as guests and you the host. So be welcoming! Do smile to display your openness, make firm eye contact to show you respect the audience member and take his or her hand with a firm grip to convey your confidence.

The hand position

For most of us, the handshake is a symbol of welcome and introduction. For others though – politicians, convicts and other individuals jockeying for power, the handshake is an opportunity to assert dominance. Politicians, in particular, are coached at great length on how to shake hands and how to counter and combat other politicians' handshakes.

For instance, politicians will always try to have their hand angled so that when they shake *their* hand is on top, palm down on their opponent's hand – this is considered a dominant position. Political coaches take this even further and offer a series of counters! If a politician is unfortunate to lose the first positioning of hands so that their hand is palm up, they'll go for a double handshake, placing their free hand on top of the other politician's

hand. Now they have turned tables, both hands placed around the other's single hand is dominant. Outrageously there's a counter for this too! The other politician will now reach out with his or her free hand to grasp the double-hand shaker's elbow. This new position is seen as a more dominant gesture than the double shake. It can go on and on. Famous examples would be George Bush's meeting with Tony Blair at Downing Street in 2003. Bush's hand on Blair's back as they walked inside number 10 was a moment that perhaps Blair wished had gone differently. Donald Trump's bizarre and blustery handshake where he pulls people's hand towards him is another display of power play.

Convicts will apply a merciless squeeze to new fish or when facing a rival. This is far from subtle but the power play and unspoken threat is obvious.

As speakers, the concept of jockeying for dominance is ridiculous! All we have to do is show approachability and confidence. Both are key. Approachability will improve your image and instil a greater probability of audience members returning to future events and spreading favourable word-of-mouth. A confident handshake will prove to audience members that they had every right to take your words and your performance seriously and to heart.

This is why when we shake, we offer our hands tilted slightly upward; it's an open and welcoming display of body language.

Awkward shakers

As you shake hands throughout the day you will meet every type of handshake, most notably are the ones that we strive not to emulate ourselves:

The limp shake – there's no reciprocal grip, the fingers are limp resulting in the individual appearing weak, lacklustre and uninterested.

The finger gripper – the individual doesn't insert their palm into yours and instead chooses to only grip your fingers giving us the assumption that they are stand-offish or aloof.

The crushing shake – the other person seems intent on crushing your hand to dust in an attempt to assert their dominance.

The off-time pump – instead of shaking your hand up, then down, the individual shakes down first or oddly chooses to pump your hand forward then backward. This feels discordant and causes you to question the individual's social abilities.

The wet shake – you feel your hand slide in someone's wet palm. Never pleasant and you've got to wonder why they're sweating; nerves, uncertainty, (just exited the toilet)?

The upward head tilt – a downward nod of the head is a sign of respect. An upward tilt of the head during a handshake can oft be seen as a sign of haughtiness or snobbery.

While it's important to try to master our own handshakes, a little diplomacy never hurts when dealing with the awkward shake of others. Some people will be nervous and will fumble their hand position. If they grip your fingers, or have a limp shake or any of the above, it's no real indication of character; it could simply be a one-off slip on their behalf. Often times I've found that people have inserted their entire hand, with their thumb squeezed into my palm, making for a very odd greeting! Sweaty hands can be unpleasant to deal with but be aware that in the UK between 1 and 3 out of 100 people will suffer from hyperhidrosis (uncontrollable sweating). Whatever the issue with a poorly received handshake, I'd always advocate being forgiving and that you do your utmost to break any social awkwardness with a big smile.

CHEAT METHODS AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR HANDSHAKES

The bump

As an author, book signings can be prolonged. If you're on top form and can cut interaction down to twenty-five seconds per individual, you're still looking at a forty-minute period for a queue of a hundred! Some individuals will have extra questions or will want selfies in addition to a signature so using every tool in the box to speed up the process is an essential tactic. Because I'm right-handed to avoid having to drop my pen to shake each hand, I'll often choose to close my hand around my pen and exchange a fist bump. While fist bumps might not be acceptable in all situations, my age

range for book signings tends to be youth (aged from 8 to 24) which allows me to take advantage of this tactic.

Bill Clinton famously multitasks at book signings. Being left-handed, he's able to sign and shake hands at the same time! If you're left-handed, consider following his example.

**TOP TIP – to cut downtime with selfies, inform everyone in advance that you're willing to have your photo taken on the provision that their mobile cameras are turned on and reversed in advance. If you detect that a group of the audience are mutual friends, take a group photo on one mobile and ask that it be shared to avoid repetition.*

The thank you

At smaller events and with elder audience members, I'll sometimes walk to the venue exit and shake the hand of each individual as they leave. This is a great opportunity to leave a lasting impression and to thank people for their time.

The high five

As an author, I'll often visit schools. Unfortunately, it's all too easy to become mobbed by over-enthusiastic children. To sidestep this, I'll walk past all the students and exchange a high five as I go. It's quick and easy and leaves everyone happy.

The early sign of respect

Not all audience members will be happy to see you and some will come from socially hostile environments. I've talked to ex-cons, gang bangers and hardened youth who have grown up on Murder Mile. To assert authority and lay down initial grounds for mutual respect, I'll stand at the entranceway to a venue and shake the hand of everyone. I'll use a firm handshake, maintain eye contact, nod and smile (without being overbearing). This early interaction is seen as a courtesy, gives the audience a chance to size me up and, because I've gone out of my way to greet the audience and treat them as equals, it reduces potential confrontations.

THE CLAP

You'll find there are many times when you need to initiate clapping; at award ceremonies, handing out prizes, thanking an audience member for joining you on stage, encouraging shy members of the audience to share a story or experience and more!

'Applause is the spur of noble minds, the end and aim of weak ones.'

CHARLES CALEB COLTON

Your clap needs to be loud enough to carry across a crowded room and it needs to be as confident as your handshake. Audience members will subconsciously judge your clap every bit as much as they gauge your body language.

Here's how to do it properly.

Step 1: Cup both hands as though you were about to receive a thrown tennis ball in each hand.

Step 2: Spread your hands so that they are shoulder-width apart.

Step 3: Maintaining the cupped shape, drive both hands rapidly together.

Step 4: As your hands strike, do not flatten your hands; instead continue to keep the cupped formation.

Step 5: During the moment of the hand strike, reinforce the hollow space between your palms by curving your fingers over the back of the other hand.

Step 6: Disengage and repeat.

**TOP TIP: it's the cupping of the hands that causes volume. As soon as you flatten your hands, you'll lose power. If you want to experiment, try clapping next time you're in the bath or shower! The trapped moisture on your hands will amplify sound, making it quicker and easier to judge which hand positioning works well for you.*

As a public speaker you're in the driving seat. The audience will look to you for guidance. To initiate clapping, use the following body language to increase crowd participation:

Step 1: Turn your head to look slightly above the centre of the crowd. Adopt a confident pose, wide stance, shoulders back.

Step 2: Raise your hands in a slightly exaggerated spread.

Step 3: Smile and start to clap.

Step 4: Continue to clap along with the crowd.

Your body language needs to be tweaked if you're trying to initiate clapping for someone sharing the stage with you.

Step 1: Angle your torso so your shoulders face a point halfway between the crowd and the person you wish to applaud.

Step 2: Position your feet so one foot is angled toward the crowd and the other again, towards the individual you're applauding.

Step 3: Clap as normal.

The tweaked body language is inclusive of all, indicates your points of interest and puts you in a position of authority.

SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE XIV

GUEST SPEAKER ADVICE: CASPAR CRAVEN

Caspar is a phenomenon. Where most fear to break the routine of family and work life, Caspar tore it apart and completely re-wrote the rules! He's sailed across the world with his wife and three children and, riding on the back of his business successes, has gone on to become an outstanding author and a truly inspirational speaker. These are his words of advice when it comes to public speaking:

It's 100% about your audience: what's the impact you want to have on them? What are they likely to be thinking before they see you? What are their likely impressions of you? Meet them in their minds and then take them on a journey where you leave them in a better place than before you turned up.

Enjoy the experience. You are being given the amazing gift of people's time and attention. They want to hear what you have to say. Remember that and enjoy the gift of being able to share your wisdom, ideas, energy and inspiration.

CASPER CRAVEN,
Adventurer, motivational speaker, author, gentleman.

PROJECTORS, SLIDESHOWS AND VISUAL CONTENT.

A GOOD PERFORMANCE OF public speaking is more than just the vocal conveyance of information; it's about displaying the right visual information too. Try explaining an advanced concept without accompanying images then try repeating it with projected images and you'll soon find there's truth to the old adage that 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. Images increase the speed at which an audience can achieve clarity and it reduces the time you need to speak on one subject. Projectors and slideshows are public speaking magic and the great orators of yesteryear would have sold their right leg for the same technology.

But with all technologies, there is real potential for failure or mishap. To reduce these, I always suggest that you arrive at a venue with your own laptop. Using your own laptop means you don't have to worry about:

- Cross compatibility issue between your slideshow and the venue's system: Windows, Mac or Linux.
- Having to rely on a venue's outdated software.
- Working with processors or RAM that is subpar and causes hangs or lags in your presentation.

In addition, using your own laptop offers these additional benefits:

- Reliability.
- Reduced set up time.
- Familiarity.
- Convenience.

While you can arrive at a venue with your presentation on a USB drive, I've found this leaves you open to technical difficulties (this is IT we're talking about; there's always difficulties)! Using your own laptop is the best way you can retain control, ensure consistency and reduce technical upsets.

In this chapter: External Memory, Projectors, Slideshows, Animation, Software and Troubleshooting.

SLIDESHOWS

Animated slideshow software like PowerPoint, Prezi and Moovly allow speakers to deliver powerful visual messages quickly and easily and without the need for specialised training, (two to three hours of self-tuition on these software platforms can put you on the road to producing animated wonders).

Unfortunately, too many speakers seem to be stuck in the 1980s, sticking to that tired method of showing one image before clicking onto the next. Which is ridiculous when you realise how easily modern programs can transform images, your logo or your product into animated masterpieces. These programs are designed to make things easy so there's no reason to shy away from learning the basics. If you invest one or two days of work each year into animation and slideshows, you'll have taken the first steps toward creating a vault of content that can be used again and again throughout your career.

Warning – whatever happens, avoid the dreaded pitfall that many speakers fall in; reading and delivering the content from their slides verbatim. There's no quicker way to disengage an audience!

The following YouTubers give great tutorials on getting the most out of your animation:

- PowerPoint Spice – youtube.com/powerpointspice
- The Teacher – youtube.com/rajivkohli
- Powerpoint Pro – youtube.com/channel/UC41u3UM1Sm6Jm_ptXpHQi2A
- Creative Venus – youtube.com/channel/UCuidUC7GvuA1jkP2nc-1qGA

- PowerPoint School [youtube.com/channel/UCngkX2grzKhYBx1stz08Z3Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCngkX2grzKhYBx1stz08Z3Q)

Strong alternatives to PowerPoint are Prezi and Moovly. Their websites:

- prezi.com
- moovly.com

Before making a decision as to which program you want to use, invest half an hour of your time researching each, checking reviews and learning the pros and cons before deciding which will be best for you.

APPROPRIATE IMAGES FOR ANIMATION

Before jumping in with animation, give some thought to the type of images you're going to use. Specifically what type of image *file* you'll use. Image files become an issue when you start to play around with *layered* animation. Layered animation is when one or more images are animated across a background image.

- Images suitable for background use: .jpeg or .png
- Images suitable for layers: .png

The main difference for us, as public speakers, is that .jpeg files don't offer versatility. A .jpeg is always a flat shape (a square or a rectangle). A .png, on the other hand, offers variety in shape.

To put this into perspective, think of an image of a yellow star. A .jpeg would display the star on a white background whereas the .png would display the star by itself. So if you were to animate the star flying across a black background the .jpeg image would look awful due to its white background being visible against the backdrop. The .png file, however, would simply show the star flying across the blackness.



FIGURE 22 Both images are a logo of the main character, Charlie Keeper from my children's fantasy series *Keeper of the Realms*. The image on the left is a .png the other is a .jpeg. The advantages to using a .png over layered backgrounds is obvious.

If you aren't capable of producing these files yourself, request that your artist or graphics producer provide you with images in both .jpeg and .png formats. You don't need everything in .png format but as a bare minimum get your logo and any product images converted and their backgrounds removed.

**TOP TIP – learning to use Photoshop, Illustrator or other editing software can save you thousands of pounds each year that you would otherwise spend on the hiring of a graphic designer. You don't have to become a master by any means; you can and should still leave important pieces for the professionals but you'll be shocked by how quick and easy it is to manipulate simple images yourself.*

Sound

Don't underestimate the power of sound and song and the effect it will have on your audience! You can easily add sound, riffs and short tracks to coincide with animations. While you don't have to go overboard with this, some sound is well worth your consideration.

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – some clients request long sessions, up to two hours in length (an almost insane period of time to ask an audience to sit in an auditorium and be entertained by a solitary speaker)! When I first started these I couldn't help but notice audience members getting restless during the lulls between more exciting parts of my talk. To counter this, I added not just additional animation to specific slides but sounds too: the thud of footsteps, bird twitter, the rustle of forest canopies and more, (do note that these were sounds relevant to the fantasy writing element of my slides). When I was next asked to do a two-hour session the increased uptake of attention during these 'slower' moments was remarkable.*

VISUAL CONTENT

An animated slideshow should not be your performance nor your message; it's there simply to give another layer of depth to you, the speaker. Do not feel as though you should be anchored to the side of the projector screen. You can still move across the stage, stand in front of the screen and still leave the stage to walk through and behind the crowd. The additional option of where the audience can look will only increase their attention and interest.

Consider the following content for your slideshow:

Advertising

It can take a large crowd up to fifteen minutes or more to sit down. Even though you're not yet on stage, this is an opportunity to deliver information or advertise your services. Consider putting your product, service, social feed, hashtags or website on display and leave it looping even before you step on stage.

(My first slide is a repeating video that displays my books, my series characters, reviews and my website address. I start this before the audience enters the venue and I'll leave it running all the way into the first 2-3 minutes of my speech).

Authentication

Early in my career, I was asked to talk at ‘Troubled Teen’ events. I soon learned that some audience members would quite loudly question the validity of my claims, particularly during moments when I was recalling tales of hardship or misfortune. The next time I was asked to attend one of these events, I was sure not to talk about something unless I had an image to back the validity of my story. These images, particularly the more painful-looking photos, reduced interruptions and interestingly increased the number of raised hands during Q&A sessions at the end of the event.

While talking about a specific skill set, take the opportunity to authenticate yourself by displaying historical images of you using said skill. If you’re a motivational speaker known for working with soldiers suffering from PTSD, show images of yourself working alongside these men and women. If you’re an engineer working on new load-bearing techniques for bridges and skyscrapers, take the opportunity to show your finished works and completed buildings. When an audience can authenticate your words visually, they’ll be reassured. This assurance and confidence in you as the speaker will last throughout your speech, so ensure you get these slides in as early as possible in your performance.

Attention span and image frequency

If you’re old enough to remember the early years of YouTube, you’ll recall that most videos had twenty second titles or some manner of preamble before revealing the main content. This has long since changed! This change is a reflection of contemporary viewing habits and perhaps an indication of an ever-shortening attention span. People want almost instant access to media and have a growing appetite to consume online content. Whether you think this is a good thing or not, do appreciate that society has evolved an ability to digest large chunks of visual data very quickly. Do not be scared to have multiple images appearing on a single slide. When delivering points or talking about experiences, I often stand in front of a slide which displays a new image every two seconds ⁷. I find that this does not detract from my talk, rather it adds to it. Experiment with the visual density of your slideshow and consider what works best for your target audience.

7 Confused? PowerPoint animations allow multiple images to be shown on a single slide. This is a giant step forward from the old-school projectors where a ‘slide’ was, by definition, a single image.

Figures

Numbers and statistics will mean different things to different members of the crowd. Some of your audience members will work in metric, others imperial. There will be different types of mind in your crowd too; those that excel with figures and those that specialise in other fields. Use the power of your software to make your figures accessible to all. PowerPoint, Moovly and Prezi have the ability to animate pie charts and graphs, offering multiple ways for you to display data to the audience.

**TOP TIP – when displaying statistics, consider showing the figure as both a percentage and a pie chart. There’s more than enough room to do this on a projector screen and importantly it gives your audience a choice on how they wish to consume the information. For more on this, take a look at the Communication and Teaching Points Chapter.*

DIVIDING A SLIDESHOW INTO COMPONENTS

Not all events run smoothly! Cancellations, double bookings and random happenstance can see the client asking you to spend either more or less time on stage than previously agreed. To better cope with this divide your slideshow into components; I normally split mine into five parts. This gives me wriggle room to adapt to circumstance.

During a typical event I’ll use four of the five components and have the fifth reserved for events that need to run for longer.

For shorter periods, I’ll use three or if really pushed for time, I’ll cherry-pick two of the most relevant sections.

If, after gauging my audience, I feel that specific content isn’t applicable, I might skip a component or even juggle components in a non-sequential manner.

Having a slideshow split into sections or compartments gives advanced speakers freedom to deal with chaotic events in a creative manner.

EXTERNAL MEMORY

If you're unable or choose not to follow my advice on bringing your own laptop and instead decide to take an external memory device that contains your slideshow, do ensure that you've saved multiple versions of the same presentation. This ensures that no matter what operating system the venue's hardware runs or which version of software they're using, you'll still have a compatible file that will work.

- For video clips have both .mp4 and .wmv files.
- For audio have .wav, .wma and .m4a files.

**SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE – my laptop was damaged on the way to an event and I had to make do with using a backup presentation I had on a USB drive. The only trouble was I'd saved my videos as .wmv files which worked fine on my Windows laptop but failed to work on the venue's Mac desktops. The lack of video left me flailing to find other ways to convey my points to the audience.*

INTERNET

It's possible to store a slideshow presentation online. In fact, several websites specialise in offering software and pieces of animation to give you an amazing slideshow. Because it's stored online, you don't have to worry about carrying hardware (laptop/memory device) with you to your event.

Check these sites out:

- office.com (then pick powerpoint online).
- zoho.eu
- slidebean.com

If this excites you and you're a speaker who operates from a fixed venue or office with good internet connection, then go for it! *However, if you're a travelling speaker I'd advise against relying on this option.* Not all venues have a good connection, strong wifi or a technician who can hook you up with the correct password. I've seen some very stressed guest speakers at pop-up festivals who couldn't download their slideshow or essential video.

**TOP TIP – While not relying on online resources is a good idea, they're still a valuable commodity. I bumped into a fellow speaker who had had the misfortune of an airline losing her bag in transit while touring overseas. Fortunately, the speaker had a duplicate slideshow backed up on her Google Drive which she was able to download to the venue's system the evening before her performance. The next morning she was on stage displaying her slideshow to a packed-out auditorium. I was so impressed by her forward-thinking that I've adopted the habit.*

PROJECTORS AND SPEAKERS

Almost all venues will have access to some form of projector and speaker system. Quality will vary wildly. Expect pop-up projectors in some venues that are wheeled in on squeaky trolleys to display, with poor luminance, onto moth-bitten screens. In high-end auditoriums and theatres, be prepared to be impressed with top of the line projectors and a fleet of technicians to assist your set up. As a speaker, always hope for the best but prepare to work with the worst so that no matter where you are, you can always deliver a top-notch performance.

Regardless of what kind of venue you use, having a little IT knowledge can prove invaluable. Do your research and don't shy away from learning new technical skills. Familiarise yourself with:

- both Mac and Windows start-up procedures
- connecting cables from projectors to laptops and desktops

Cables and connections

Almost all projectors have both VGA and HDMI inputs. If your laptop has auxiliary devices connected to it such as a clicker or microphone, be aware that HDMI inputs can occasionally cause software conflict. This can be remedied fairly quickly by downloading updates and software but to avoid this unnecessary hassle, choose VGA cables where possible. (Having said that, expect VGA ports to be phased out over the coming years as hardware becomes ever smaller. My solution for my slim laptop was to invest in a compact HDMI to VGA adapter ensuring compatibility with even the most outdated venue).

Whatever your preferred cable, notify the venue in advance and they will provide it on the day. (Do note, there's no requirement for you to bring any cables, other than the power adapter for your laptop, to events).

Using projectors

At some smaller venues, do not be surprised if you're left in a room with an unpowered projector. By all means, request an IT technician but if they're not on hand, be aware that they can be famously slow to arrive. To avoid any delay that might impact your speaking time, it's worth trying to connect the projector yourself. For my non-IT-aware friends do not panic; you can do this! Although projectors are never universal, try these following tips to speed the process:

- Request an IT technician just in case. If you can't operate the projector, having a technician already on the way will save time later.
- Locate and connect the VGA/HDMI cable to your laptop. If you are working with a projector suspended from the ceiling, look for cables emerging from wall sockets at chest height or below. These cables should be in close proximity to the stage (or electronic whiteboard for workshops).
- Locate the remote control for the projector. Unfortunately, previous users all too often secure these in the most unexpected and sometimes illogical places, so get searching!
- Power up the projector. Some models can take up to sixty seconds before the bulbs come on.
- Use the remote control to find the correct input for your laptop. If this is a bare-bones projector, it could simply be a case of switching to Input 1, Input 2, VGA or HDMI. If it's a better piece of kit bordering on the professional, look for 'PC', 'laptop' or 'external input' options.
- If you can't find the remote control, don't panic; you can use manual buttons on the projector to do the same trick. If the projector is suspended, this might mean jumping onto a chair or table!

- Once the projector is on, consider your light sources; reducing glare, overhead lights and pulling curtains will improve the visual display.
- Keep the remote close at hand as some early-model projectors, annoyingly, will go into a standby mode should you fail to change slides frequently. If this happens, a quick press on the remote's power button will power it back up.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: Your slideshow or parts of the animation won't work on the venue's computer.

Solution: The venue's software is out of date. If you have internet access, update the software. If you're not IT literate, ask a technician to check your files to see if they are compatible.

Problem: Your slideshow isn't working and you've only got a couple of minutes before you're due to start.

Solution: Request the aid of a technician straight away. Alert the event organiser and if you are able to, update the crowd (they'll be understanding). Allow yourself up to 5 minutes of your performance time trying to rectify the issue. If you haven't fixed the issue by then, start your speech without the use of a slideshow, (again apologise to the crowd). This will be painful but it's far better than upsetting or alienating an audience.

Problem: The slideshow suddenly stops. There's a logo on the screen but nothing else.

Solution: This suggests a disconnect. Check that your laptop or venue computer still has power. Check the cable connections.

Problem: The slideshow suddenly stops. The computer is working but the screen is dark.

Solution: This suggests a power issue with the projector. If you have the remote control to the projector at hand, tap the power button once or manually restart the projector. (Check that some wandering soul hasn't tripped over/kicked free the power cord).

Problem: Your clicker isn't working.

Solution: Check the laser on the clicker. If you can see the laser, it's a software issue; if you can't it's a power issue (change batteries)!

If it's a software issue, go to the clicker's branded website and download an update.

Problem: Your clicker only works when you're close to the computer.

Solution:

- Move all Bluetooth and wifi-enabled pieces of kit away from the computer and take your mobile out of your pocket.
- Replace the clicker batteries.

Times have changed. The literary critic no longer holds the power they once did; in today's age it's you, the reader, that wields the ability to raise or lower an author's standing. If the book was of help and you found the knowledge within a boon towards your career, I would take it as a real kindness if you would leave a quick review on either [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) or [Goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com).

Big thanks and looking forward to seeing you on tour soon!

Marcus Alexander.

OTHER BOOKS BY MARCUS ALEXANDER:

Crow's Revenge

The Dark Army

Blood & Fire



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