**8 Ways to Instantly Improve Your Public Speaking**

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By Brooke Howell, Monster Contributing Writer

Want to become a top-paid executive? Better work on your public speaking. This highly valued communications skill is also among many people's top fears -- [74% of people suffer from speech anxiety](http://www.statisticbrain.com/fear-of-public-speaking-statistics/) -- but it's one that can be conquered.

***Here's how:***

* **Prioritize preparation.** Showing up prepared is the No. 1 way to calm your nerves going into a public speaking experience, says [Ryan Estis](http://www.ryanestis.com/), who speaks for a living and wrote about how he calms his nerves in [a 2011 blog post](http://www.passiononpurposeblog.com/throw-up-nervous/). Preparation will also help you to improve the quality of your speaking. "Too often, speakers are not as effective as they could be because they haven't given enough thought or practice to what they really want to say and how they want to say it," says leadership coach [Scott Eblin](http://eblingroup.com/).
* **Alter your outlook.** A few years ago Eblin learned how your thoughts about speaking can affect your nerves after getting some good advice from a speaking coach. "He told me to think right before I went on stage, 'Wow, I get to share a message I'm passionate about with a thousand people. How cool is that?'" explains Eblin. "That simple shift of 'I get to share a message' was huge for me. It helped me to view the event as a cool opportunity instead of something to be nervous about."
* **Make peace with quiet.**  "To calm one's nerves, get comfortable with not speaking," advises communications coach [Eileen Sinett](http://www.speakingthatconnects.com/). "Allowing oneself the choice of speaking with words or speaking without words -- presence and silence -- is awkward and uncomfortable at first, but freeing and calming in the end. Being silent and noticing one's breath is a key practice to overcoming nervousness."

Once you've calmed your nerves, there are more steps you can take to advance your public speaking skills.

* **Embrace the short and sweet.** Talking too long is a common problem with public speakers, says Sinett. "Since the average listening attention span is just 20 minutes, speakers need to embrace 'less is more' and learn how to make those 20 minutes memorable."
* **Embody energy.** Eblin recalls a client who gave him the most useful speaking advice of his career when she told him that his job as a speaker was to lead the audience's energy rather than let their energy lead him. "She was absolutely right. Ever since then, I really try to get clear on the level of energy I need to show up with to deliver an effective presentation."
* **Engage in eye contact.** Start in your day-to-day life by becoming "a real expert at one-one eye contact within a group," says Sinett. "This is not just looking at a person's eyes but rather looking deeply through the eyes to the essence of the individual. This makes the connection that makes all the difference between speaking at or to an audience, and speaking with an audience."
* **Turn to TED.** Watch some of the highest-rated [TED talks](https://twitter.com/angryredmonkey) and learn from the way the speakers handle themselves, advises Eblin. Then "recruit some trusted friends to give you feedback as you practice those techniques."
* **Rinse and repeat.** With speaking, "like most things in life, the more you do something, the more work you put into it, the more you study and learn, the better you get," says Estis.