

10 tips for speaking like a Ted Talk pro

Advice from the experts on how to make any presentation

sing- By Katherine Lee



Psychologists and graduate students are often called upon to speak to an audience, whether to give a conference presentation, deliver a lecture to a class, lead a meeting or give a talk in the community. But public speaking is a skill that comes more naturally to some than to others, and there are some common pitfalls to avoid, such as seeming disorganized or looking down at notes rather than at your audience.

Regardless of how practiced you may be at public speaking, there are some very effective strategies to use to deliver engaging talks. The next time you have a speaking engagement, try these tips to deliver your message like a TED Talk presenter:

1. Know your audience.

Keep in mind whom you are going to be addressing when you craft your presentation, says Robert Sternberg, PhD, a former APA president who is a professor of human development at Cornell University. Is the audience going to be mainly fellow psychologists, health professionals, other professional groups, students or consumers? What do they want and need to hear? Knowing whom you are speaking to will help you tailor the talk and will help keep the audience engaged.

2. Keep it simple, especially if you're going to give a talk to a general audience.

"People have a tendency to give presentations the audience doesn't understand," says Barry Schwartz, PhD, a psychology professor emeritus at Swarthmore College and a visiting professor at the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley. He suggests giving a talk that makes people feel like they're smart and like they want to learn more about the topic. "The curse of knowledge is that once you know something, you forget what it was like when you didn't know it," he says. "I imagine that I'm going to present to my grandmother, who had a fifth-grade education."

3. Emphasize connection over content.

To best engage listeners, build your speech from an emotional place rather than from the content, says Kristi Hedges, leadership coach and author of the 2011 book "The Power of Presence: Unlock Your Potential to Influence and Engage Others." Rattling off facts and figures and talking at the audience isn't effective if they aren't interested in what you are saying. "Be clear about what you want the audience to walk away with when they leave and use that intent as a structure to frame your talk," says Hedges. Your passion for a topic can draw people in; talking without any enthusiasm

for the topic can deplete energy in the room and eclipse your message. "Talk to persuade, not just to inform," adds Sternberg.

4. Be authentic.

Some speakers may try to sound like someone they admire instead of being themselves, notes Daniel Gilbert, PhD, professor of psychology at Harvard University. "Some people try to sing like their favorite singer or dance like their favorite dancer," says Gilbert. "Similarly, some speakers may try to sound like Martin Luther King Jr. or John F. Kennedy." Authenticity—sounding like yourself and using everyday language—is key to getting your message across to an audience, says Gilbert.

5. Diversify your delivery.

People don't learn just by listening—different people learn in different ways, says Susan H. McDaniel, PhD, APA's 2016 president. Use visual tools (such as slides or a video), incorporate research and tell stories. Anecdotes can be a particularly effective way to connect with an audience. "It could be a story about yourself, especially if you're using humor and making fun of yourself," says McDaniel. One important tip to keep in mind about multimedia presentations: Don't let the technology obscure what you're trying to say, says Schwartz. "PowerPoint is incredibly powerful, but use it to get halfway there, rather than expecting it to do the whole job for you," he says.

6. Shake it up.

Another reason to use different media in your talk is to make it more dynamic and compelling. "Using mixed media creates energy and vibrancy," says Hedges. Think about ways to use slides, video, audio, handouts, props and even spontaneous smartphone polls to engage your audience. You might, for instance, start with a video and then use powerful images later in your talk, says Hedges. Or you can begin with an engrossing question and use the audience feedback as data with polling software such as Poll Everywhere.

7. Stick to your points.

Before you talk, determine your main points and outline them, says McDaniel. Some people refer to notes on stage while others may use PowerPoint or Keynote slides as prompts. One cautionary tip: Avoid simply putting the text of your speech in slides. "Writing out the words you'll be saying on slides is boring," says McDaniel. "**Slides should be used for emphasis.**"

8. Know the setup.

Have a run-through in the space you'll be speaking at if possible, especially if you'll be talking in front of a large audience. Test the tech system during that practice run to troubleshoot possible problems in advance. For instance, the sound may not run properly with your video or your slides may be set

up behind you (which would mean you'll have to constantly turn your head to see where you are in your talk).

9. Don't lecture the whole time.

Keep in mind that people don't have long attention spans. If you need to explore a topic deeply, use humor, an engaging video or other media to present various aspects of the topic. You can also break up a long talk by posing questions to the audience, suggests Hedges.

10. Leave time for questions.

Talking until the last minute is a common mistake many speakers make, says Hedges. If you have an hour long presentation, plan for 45 minutes of talking and 15 minutes for questions.

Adapted from < <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/02/tips-speaking> >