Tips on Polishing Your Public Speaking

BE YOUR OWN BEST AUDIENCE

- Get Excited—Be excited about the opportunity to speak and let it show in your presentation. Enthusiasm is contagious. Make sure the congregation feels your passion for reaching the lost.
- Practice—Practicing your presentation out loud (or recording yourself) can help you identify areas for improvement, such as areas that do not flow well or may be confusing to listeners.
- Pace Yourself—You should be able to deliver your presentation at a comfortable pace. Once you know how much time you have to speak, adjust your material so you can make your presentation within the allotted time without rushing.
- Watch Your Timing—Allow enough time to reiterate key points. People may not pick up on select numbers or facts the first time they hear them.
- Watch Yourself—Video yourself making a presentation, or have someone you trust listen and provide honest feedback.
- Stay in Control—Space-fillers like “uh,” “um,” “like,” and “you know” signal to your audience you are nervous. If you catch yourself using space-fillers, try pausing or holding your breath. The congregation will barely notice a short pause, and you can get back in control of your speech.

OVERCOMING ANY ANXIETY

- Embrace the Fear of Speaking—Nervousness prior to speaking before a group is normal. A little bit of nervousness can boost your energy.
- Pray—This is God’s ministry, and He wants it to succeed. Your prayer partner will be praying for you. Remember God’s Word: “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you”—Psalm 56:3 (ESV).
- Prepare Well in Advance—Know your facts, testimonies, and appropriate Scripture references. Diligence beforehand can build your confidence and help you give your presentation to the best of your ability.
- Engage with the People—Arrive in time to meet the pastor. Greet the congregation members as they arrive. Also consider attending a Sunday School class. Keep in mind the members of the congregation and the pastor also want you to succeed.
CONTENT IS KING
• Be Organized—Create a seamless presentation through skillful transitions. Attention-getters, testimonies, informational statements, Scripture verses, and the close must all work together. Samples of each of these components can be found in the Key Components document.
• Make the Presentation Your Own—The basic format of a Gideon presentation is set for you. Within that framework, you have a great deal of latitude. Choose what testimonies to share, what order to put them in, what statistics to use, and more.
• Use Fresh Testimonies—Keep your presentation relevant with new testimonies. Many are available at gideons.org/blog or theConnection. People want to hear where we’ve been lately.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER
• Testimony Placement—Think carefully about which testimony would be your lead testimony and which testimony would be most effective to use right before asking the congregation to take action.
• Number of Testimonies—Check to make sure you don’t have too many testimonies from one distribution channel or country.
• It’s All About the Impact—Do your testimonies glorify God instead of The Gideons International? Do they show the audience how they can make a difference? Talk about local distributions as well as global effectiveness.
• Know Your Testimonies—It’s very important to always be able to tell a testimony from the heart without looking at your notes. Take your audience to the scene of the salvation. Always tie your testimonies back to the support of local church members. “Because someone like you prayed ...”
• Questions—Use questions to force the audience to think with you and to draw them into your presentation. (“How many of you have ever ...?” “Remember when you first ...?”) Transition questions can also be rhetorical. (Example: “So when will we go back? Where will we go next?)
• Statements of Agreement—Bridge the distance between concepts by helping your audience agree with you. Some possible statements of agreement: “I’m sure you would agree having a copy of God’s Word is vital and here’s how ...” “No one would disagree that ...” “It’s easy to understand why ...”

TIPS ON USING BODY LANGUAGE
• Smile—It will force you to pause, look at your audience, and put them at ease. People will smile back!
• Sometimes It’s What You Don’t Say—Most interpersonal communication is non-verbal: how you look, how you dress, how you stand, the way you gesture. These are just some of the visual cues you’re sending to your audience before you even say a word!
• Make Eye Contact—Eye contact is one of the most important ways you communicate non-
verbally with your audience. Are you reading from notes? Then they can’t see your eyes. Look slowly from person to person, side to side.

- Look at the Camera—If you are speaking in a church where you will be on camera, look at and speak to that camera. Your audience may be looking at you on screen, not at the pulpit.

**CHOOSE THE BEST METHOD OF DELIVERY FOR YOU**

- Scripts—The script provides a great deal of comfort and security for new presenters. However, you need to make eye contact with your audience. Reading your presentation doesn’t deliver the proper message to your congregations. Make sure you can look up and down from it without losing your place.

- Notes—Notes are much more acceptable than scripts. Keep your notes as short as possible and limit them to key concepts and phrases. Use notes to jog your memory or serve as a reminder of your presentation outline. Notes can be less distracting to the audience, as long as you don’t shuffle them too often or too loudly.

- Memorization—Reciting your presentation from memory eliminates any concerns about lack of eye contact. It makes you look most at ease. However, if something distracts you, you need to be adept at remembering where you were. This works best if you are very comfortable with your public speaking. Be sure to speak from both your head and your heart.

**KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**

- Obtain Pastor Input—Talk with the pastor in advance of the service and have a working knowledge of what areas of ministry are most important to that particular church. Also, certain engagement opportunities—such as GideonCards, The Life Book, or an offering—should be included in the presentation only with the pastor’s prior agreement. Get to know the congregation if you can (perhaps attend one of their events or a Sunday school class).

- Help Them Take Action—An important part of the church speaker’s job is to help the congregation take the next step. After a great attention-getter, compelling information, and strong testimonies, congregations can still miss the point of it all if they are presented with too many action items. For this reason, the close of a presentation—the call to action—must be tailored to each congregation as much as possible.

- Be Selective, Not All-Inclusive—There are a great many ways congregations can respond to a presentation. These points of engagement include prayer, GideonCards, membership, Friends of Gideons, financial support, The Life Book, The Gideons blog, and the Gideon Bible app. Which items you include in the close of a presentation depends on what is appropriate for that particular church. Never try to cover them all in a single presentation. Remember, when you highlight everything you have really highlighted nothing.