

## Tip Sheet: Public Speaking in the Classroom

Here are a few 'key principles' to keep in mind when you are preparing to speak in front of others, whether it is in the classroom, at a conference, in an interview, or as part of a seminar. The principles are deliberately broad so that they can be applied to a range of disciplines and contexts.

### Key Principles of Communication:

- **We are all always communicating.** There are three main registers of communication; **to be as effective as possible, we must be actively aware of them all.**
  - **Body language:** non-verbal communication
  - **Tone:** vocal communication
  - **Content:** the content or message
- **Goal and Audience:** What do you want your given audience to do/remember?
  - **Be clear about your Goal.**
  - **Modify your Goal to appeal to your specific Audience.** (Remember, you can change your goal, but not your audience!)
- **WIIFM: "What's In It For Me?"**
  - This question (asked from the perspective of your audience) must be answered as directly and practically as possible at the beginning of any lecture, interview, conference paper, seminar discussion.
  - **Tell your audience what they will gain from paying attention to and remembering the material you are presenting/discussing?**
- **Credibility:** "Why should I listen to you?"
  - **Tell your audience how you know what you know.** Have you done research/ taken a class/ received your degree/ done this before/ had personal experience in a given area?
  - **Do you have common ground with your audience?** This can also help establish credibility and WIIFM ("I am like you, I know that this information will help you as it has me...").

### Tips for Non-verbal and Vocal Communication:

- **Physical Communication**
  - **Take up space**
    - Stand with your feet hip distance apart, fully facing your audience.
    - Build in meaningful movement, commanding space between lectern, computer, chalkboard etc.
  - **Make eye contact**
    - Spend a few seconds with each person you look at.
    - For bigger lecture halls, use an M or a W pattern to spread eye contact throughout the room.
  - **Avoid defensive postures:**
    - Arms crossed, hands in pockets, hands clasped behind or in front of body.
    - These postures limit your gestural ability and will make your audience close off as well.
  - **Avoid fiddling with props**
    - Put down the pen/chalk/remote when you are not using them.
    - If you know you play with jewelry, don't wear it; if you play with your hair, pull it back;
    - Empty your pockets of change and keys that make noise and tempt fiddling.
  - **Stand your ground**

- **Avoid** swaying, pacing
    - **Avoid** the hip-cock
  - **Fake it till you make it**
    - **Smile!!** Even if you don't feel like it; this will put your audience at ease and soon you will feel better!
- **Vocal Communication:**
  - Be aware of your habits in the following areas:
    - **Volume** – how loud you speak in relation to size of space and audience
    - **Pitch** – where in your voice you speak (high/low/monotone)
    - **Rate** – Speed, how slow or fast you speak
    - **Vocal Variety** – how often you change your pitch, rate, and volume
  - Together, these aspects create **Tone**: the emotion, confidence, enthusiasm with which you speak.
  - **Avoid filler words:** um, uh, sort of, like, you know
    - What to do?**
      - Enlist a monitor or tape yourself; you need to hear it to change it.
      - Replace these with silence: **Pauses** are good for you (sound well considered) and your audience (time to process info)!
  - **Avoid upspeak:** when you turn statements into questions, upward inflection after all statements.
    - What to do?**
      - Enlist a monitor or tape yourself; you need to hear it to change it.
      - Picture exclamation points after your statements; vocally send your points in a parabola that lands with your audience; silently say “dammit” after a declarative statement, such as your name.

### **Know Yourself to Help Yourself: How do your nerves manifest themselves?**

- **Note what happens when you get up to speak**
  - Do you sweat/ shake/ mind goes blank/ pace/ talk too fast/ and so on?
  - Knowing what to expect will keep you from feeling thrown off in the moment.
  - Mind shift: this is normal and even necessary! It is your body's way of getting ready to perform. Anxiety = Energy!
- **Anticipate and prepare:**
  - Wear dark colors if you know sweat; write yourself notes to SLOW DOWN in the margins of you notes; take a deep breath when your mind goes blank
  - Warm-up and get some exercise before hand to release nervous energy in your body
  - Do not drink too much caffeine before presenting
  - Build in some meaningful movement (not pacing!) to use some of that nervous energy
  - Bring water
  - Make sure your blood sugar is not too low (don't forget to eat!)
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- **DO NOT tell your audience you are nervous.** Things are never as apparent from the outside as the inside.
- **Be other-centered:** Remember that you are speaking in service of you audience. Everything you do is to help them learn/ remember/ take action. The less you focus on yourself, the less nervous you will be.

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