

## Public speaking

**Practice in front of a mirror**, at first it may feel really uncomfortable but the more you do it the more comfortable you will feel and if you can do this you will feel more confident presenting in front of people.

When you practice in front of the mirror play around with body language and putting in something that will make you smile/ laugh, e.g. an icebreaker; think about how someone who presents confidently would conduct themselves- you could look at Youtube videos to help with this.

**Be kind to yourself.** Everybody who's ever stood up and presented has felt nervous. Every. Single. Person. In fact, most professional performers said that if they weren't nervous, they would think that something was wrong. Nerves are a natural and healthy response to a stressful situation. It's not normal to stand up in front of people and have the spotlight on you.

The sensation we call 'nerves' is simply your body's way of preparing you for flight or fight. Tell yourself 'I'm nervous. That's fine, in fact it's more than fine, it means that my body is working in a healthy and natural way.' And remember – the presentation is important to you, but your audience aren't paying nearly as much attention to it as you are. In the long-term, it will all be alright!

**Name the nerves.** Give yourself a minute or two to name what's happening to your body as precisely as possible. So, instead of thinking 'I'm nervous', say 'That's interesting, my heart is beating really hard and my throat feels dry'. Or 'That's fascinating, my hands are feeling clammy and I've got butterflies in my stomach.' Naming the sensations you're experiencing just seems to take the power out of them.

Focus on transforming nervous energy into enthusiasm; sometimes just relabelling nerves as 'I'm feeling excited' can help with this.

**Use positive visualisation-** imagine that you are delivering your presentation to an audience that is interested, enthused, smiling, and reacting positively. Cement this positive image in your mind and recall it right before you are ready to go on.

**Take deep breaths** before and try to breathe normally during your presentation- it's not as simple as it sounds. One of the most common signs of nerves is shallow breathing. Shallow breathing makes you sound tense. It raises the pitch of your voice, making you sound less authoritative. It makes presenting effortful, and can make your audience feel uncomfortable on your behalf. Take a few moments before your presentation to take a few deep breaths and then let your breathing return to normal. You could try humming gently about two minutes before presenting. Humming helps your breathing return to normal, and adds a quality of resonance to your voice.

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**Smile** – this is a natural relaxant that sends positive chemicals through your body.

**Just before you start talking**, pause, make eye contact, and smile. This last moment of peace is very relaxing and gives you time to adjust to being the centre of attention.

**Speak more slowly** than you would in a conversation, and leave longer pauses between sentences. This slower pace will calm you down, and it will also make you easier to hear, especially at the back of a large room.

**Move around** during your presentation. This will expend some of your nervous energy.

**Remember that you're not performing**, you're communicating a message. You're not a performer, and no one is expecting you to get up on stilts, talk in a funny accent, or wear theatrical clothes. The only thing that the audience cares about is your message and whether it's right for them. Focus on getting your message across to the audience, rather than focusing on yourself.

**Learn the beginning and end of your presentation.** If you're rock-solid on what you're going to say in the first and last minute of your presentation, you'll feel much more confident. It's not recommended to learn an entire presentation verbatim, but taking the time to get the beginning and ending right helps you look and feel more confident.

**Practice positive self-talk.** Replace negative thinking with affirmations, which comes from the Latin affirmare, 'to make steady or strengthen. Say to yourself, 'I am a dynamic speaker.' 'I am enthusiastic and engaging.' 'I am prepared and confident.'" As Henry Ford once said, "Whether you think you can or think you can't — you are right.

**You don't look as nervous as you feel.** Presenters who review their videotaped presentations almost always say, "Wow, I don't look nearly as nervous as I felt." "Remember, your audience does not see how you feel inside; they only see how you look and act on the outside.