

70 Principles of Public Speaking

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A speech should be about one
idea and one only!



A successful speech leaves room
for the audience to participate.



What you don't say is as
important as what you say!



The speaker can not simply assert, however, any foundational aspect of her argument that is a matter of debate without acknowledging the sleight of hand.



Everything you do say is subject to the standards of proof that prevail in your field of knowledge.



Speakers can reaffirm what the audience already believes or take them on a journey to a new belief. The former are motivational speakers and entertainers. The latter are true teachers.



A good speech is a contract that
exchanges attention for insight.



A speech should be particular to a certain audience, time and place.



A great speech foreshadows,
teases, anticipates and builds
suspense.



A great speech addresses a particular problem the audience has.



A great speech begins by framing a problem the audience has in a way it hasn't thought about before.



A speech must begin with a
point of view.



A speech is performance art –
and science.



The more immediately relevant
a speech is, the more likely it is
to be well received.



A great speech presents
hierarchical thinking.



The most important quality of a speaker is presence.



A great speech is fully human!



A speaker is a fox; the speech is
a hedgehog.



A great speech strives for
objectivity but acknowledges its
particular subjectivity.



The science of public speaking lies in getting the basic persuasive structure right. The art of public speaking lies in getting all the details right.



The structure of a speech should always be informed by its main purpose – and you should be able to state that in a sentence.



A good speaker should be able
to improvise in the moment.



A good speech begins with
specifics and ends with
generalities.



Good speakers save their best stories for the end of the speech. Great speakers start with their best stories and find even better ones.



A great speech is a process, not
a product.



Emotional truth is as important
in public speaking as
intellectual truth.



Great speakers immerse
themselves in the craft of
speaking.



If you are talking about a specific topic in your speech, the values of the topic need to be reflected in the speech and in the speaker.



Nonetheless a speech should
never be mistaken for its
subject!



Facts in speeches establish the speaker's credibility. Stories in speeches create trust.



A great speech almost always invokes the opposite emotion in counterpoint to the main one in the presentation.



A great speech addresses the
past, present and future of its
topic.



Speeches should present ideas
to their audiences in odd
numbers.



A great speech opens the audience to wider territory at the close.



A great speech should be simple
in structure and rich in detail.



Good speeches present complicated subjects with all their complexity. Great speeches present complicated subjects with simplicity.



A speech can persuade, it can teach and it can motivate, but it can't do all three.



If you can't give your speech to your children or grandchildren and hold their attention, you're not ready to speak yet.



For those speaking globally,
your content will need to vary
by culture, but your body
language should stay the same.



The length and tone of your speech should vary depending on the time of day it is given.



A speech is a whole, not a
collective of parts.



A great speech is fractal.



A great speech asks questions.



But a great speech doesn't ask
its audience for things it cannot
do.



All speeches are persuasive.



In public speaking, as in
architecture, form should follow
function.



Speeches should be just long
enough to persuade the
audience, no longer.



There are two ways to deal with the structure of the speech during the speech itself: to reveal it or conceal it. The more complicated the structure, the more audience needs to have it revealed.



The structure of the speech
itself can influence the act of
persuasion.



Structure your speech to have strong overall flow, but learn it in sections.



Props enhance a speech more
than slides.



Every speech at least implicitly addresses the three limitations of the form: the limit of the speaker to convey information, the limit of the audience to remember, and the limit of time.



The speaker and the speech are
both in service to the audience!



Prepare more material for a
speech than you intend to give.



It is more important to move
the audience than it is to deliver
a perfect speech.



Success in public speaking, like everything else, follows the 80/20 rule.



The more successful a speech is
the more chaotic it will feel to
the speaker and the audience.



The most important factor for success in a speech is not the brilliance of the content, or even the persuasiveness of the ideas – it's the voice of speaker.



Speeches reflect the tenor of
their times.



More important than the accuracy of a particular speech is the power of its narrative.



A great speaker is the vehicle
for a great message, not the
message itself.



A great speech induces the audience to believe that it owns the ideas therein rather than the speaker.



Create a speech from back to front.



Always remember the context in which the speech is given.



Speakers: find ways to protect
your soul even as you make
yourself vulnerable.



Speeches and speakers must ultimately remain optimistic, even the ranters.



Own both your success and failures!



Speakers must embrace
authenticity and transparency.



Let your performance go!



Never court the emotional favor
of the audience.



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