

# 15 tips to help novice public speakers nail their next presentation

**Many people are intimidated by public speaking, but by following a few simple tips, you can calm your nerves and engage your audience.**

Presentations, whether virtual or in-person, are a part of the day-to-day work of many professionals. This is especially true for entrepreneurs and company leaders, who frequently have to present to employees, clients, board members, the media, and other stakeholders.

However, if you're new to public speaking, you may not be sure how to prepare your remarks, structure your presentation, or—most importantly—settle your nerves. Getting tips from a seasoned speaker can help you get ready to effectively engage and educate your audience.

No strangers to giving presentations themselves, the members of [the Fast Company Executive Board](#) have learned ways to prepare and give presentations that make a lasting impression. Below, 15 of them share their best tips to help novice speakers successfully find their voices and hone their skills as presenters.

## 1. ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE IN A CONVERSATION.

As a leader, presentations are almost all you do. People are looking to you for the “why behind the what.” To deliver on that, the message needs to be consumable. Command of the content is a given for leaders. Beyond that, look for ways to call on people or somehow engage them with the conversation—if you do, your talk can be far more personal and impactful. In addition, I find this method to be more fun and authentic. – [Kermit Randa](#)

## 2. KEEP HONING YOUR SKILLS.

Practice, practice, practice! It gets easier over time, and if you have prepared, it will give you the confidence you need to deliver a strong presentation. The important thing to remember is we are all human and have failed at one time or another in a presentation. The key is to keep honing your presentation skills. – [Heather Jerrehian, Hitch Works, Inc.](#)

## 3. CREATE A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR AUDIENCE.

One of the most important things is to connect with the audience. Create a relationship between you and them. This can be done by demonstrating something you have in common, like your background or a shared vision or interest. Many speakers worry about adding humor, but you might risk losing the audience. However, if the audience feels you understand them, they come away feeling like they have been in a shared experience, not just a training session. – [Lonnie Buchanan, Veracity Solutions](#)

#### **4. FOCUS ON HELPING YOUR AUDIENCE.**

Preparation and mindset drive successful presentations, but the mindset is the most underused tool. Create a mindset of helpfulness and being audience-focused. Remember, the audience will benefit from the information you intend to share. Don't focus on yourself, which drives feelings of insecurity and perfectionism. Know you have a lot to offer and strive to be of service to the audience—you will slay it! – [Steve Dion, Dion Leadership](#)

#### **5. SHOW YOUR PASSION FOR YOUR TOPIC.**

Both your expertise on the subject you're presenting and your authenticity will drive credibility, and that is key to delivering successful presentations. But even more important is to be passionate about the topic you are speaking about. The energy transmitted by a speaker who is truly passionate about their topic has the unmatched potential to win over even the most demanding audiences. – [Ivonne Kinser, Avocados From Mexico](#)

#### **6. REVIEW YOURSELF ON VIDEO.**

In the course of my work, I regularly give presentations during speaking engagements as well as training. Preparation and practice are key. I recommend watching yourself at least once on video doing the presentation and then sharing that video with peers to get their feedback on sharpening your skills on the mic. – [Cheryl Contee, The Impact Seat](#)

#### **7. ASK YOUR AUDIENCE FOR QUESTIONS BEFORE BEGINNING.**

If you are presenting to an external group, take the time to get to know your audience to better tap into their interests. Ask the organizer or your audience for their questions at the start of each presentation. Refer to the most salient questions in your presentation. This can help create a shared experience with a more engaged audience of active learners. – [Brenda Weitzberg, Aspiritech, NFP](#)

#### **8. PRACTICE EMPATHY.**

The familiar adage, “Know your audience,” is such a critical one, and it's easy to forget as you design presentations. Often as we create materials, we build the story based on what *we* think is fascinating. Continually reminding yourself about who is going to be there and what they most care about—practicing empathy—is one of the most important pieces of advice. – [Amaya Weddle, bande](#)

#### **9. TAKE A TIP FROM A TAXI DRIVER.**

Talk like a cab driver. I once met a Boston taxi driver who told brilliant stories about the city's streets. He told me when people would ask him about a place, he'd go off and research that block. He'd elaborate on what he learned through many retellings. He eventually wrote a successful book on this advice. Write the way you tell stories—like you are sharing with a passenger in your cab. – [Mark De L. Thompson, Dialog](#)

#### **10. LITERALLY WALK THROUGH THE STORY WITH THE AUDIENCE.**

Never leave a table between you and your audience. Invite them out from behind the table. Print out your presentation and stick it on the wall like a “storyboard,” and walk the walls with your client. Cover your final recommendation, because we know they read ahead. When you walk the walls together, you turn a presentation into a conversation, and they will build on your ideas as you go. – [Duncan Wardle, iD8 & innov8](#)

## **11. HAVE FUN**

Remember to have fun. Of course, you’ll cover the basics: You’ll know your audience, practice so you’re telling a story instead of reading notes, and land your one big idea. But if you’re not having fun, the audience won’t either. Steve Jobs’ presentations were memorable not because of the technology but because he loved being on stage sharing his passion. When’s the last time you had fun as part of an audience? – [Shannon Lucas, Catalyst Constellations](#)

## **12. HELP YOUR AUDIENCE MAKE A CONNECTION.**

Presenting not only requires knowing and understanding your content but also making a connection. I feel like the content is better received and more digestible when the presenter helps the audience make a connection. I like to spend time understanding who is going to be in a room and why the content matters to them. If I can make a connection for them—either to me or to the content—that’s a win! – [Liz Carter, ServiceMax](#)

## **13. BRING SOMETHING NEW TO THE TABLE.**

Add real value in the form of data or a truly fresh perspective that is memorable. Have a real point of view that brings something new to the table, no matter what the subject is, and bring your authentic personality into the equation. – [Esther Kestenbaum Prozan, Ruby Has Fulfillment](#)

## **14. BRING YOUR AUDIENCE MEMBERS INTO THE PRESENTATION.**

Be authentic, and think of the presentation as a conversation. No one wants to sit through a presentation where the presenter reads off a long list of slides. As much as you can connect with others and make your presentation interactive, the better. Try and use people in the room as examples, or ask questions to engage them. Most importantly, be yourself and have fun with it. – [Scott Burgess, Continu](#)

## **15. LET YOUR PERSONALITY SHINE THROUGH.**

Speaking in public is enjoyable when you’re passionate about the topic you’re presenting. Your audience feels the excitement in your voice, and your body language will visibly convey confidence. Look for ways to make your talk fun and meaningful for you. Share personal stories and examples, tell a joke, and draw on what you believe about your business. In this way, you’ll always make an impact. – [Syed Balkhi, WPBeginner](#)