



Leadership Handouts

Personal Development Series

Activities Resource Center
Department of Campus Activities
University of Houston

Public Speaking

Mastery of public speaking is one of the primary goals of an effective leader. Student leaders who are able to hold the attention of an audience develop skills valuable in later life. Leaders wishing to brush up on their speaking can follow these guidelines.

1. Know your audience. Basic Knowledge about your audience's composition (level of education, age and gender) can help you to establish rapport quickly. Answer the following questions about your audience: What do they know about your topic? What prejudices do they hold? Why are they there? The answers will help to give your speech direction, focus, and clarity.
2. Know and understand your introduction and conclusion and keep them brief. Know why you are speaking. Are you speaking to entertain, instruct, persuade or inspire. By identifying your intentions, you can eliminate inappropriate material in the body of your speech.
3. Avoid memorization to lessen the chances of "freezing" in the middle of a thought, idea, or sentence.
4. Connect with and captivate the audiences by starting with an attention-grabbing introduction. To do this, you can use quotations, body language, personal experiences, visuals, trend displays, or humor.
5. Plenty of preparation and practice beforehand will help to minimize stage fright, sweat, and jittery nerves.
6. Do not simply read your speech to the audience. Rather you should perform and deliver it with your body, using hands, face, posture, emotion and intellect to better convey your point. Also, use body language to introduce a new topic.
7. Believe in your material and stay focused on what you are communicating while you are delivering the message. If you try to judge how you sound while you perform, you will lose your train of thought.
8. Stay within your expected or allotted time limits. Brevity is an asset.
9. Check your grammar.
10. While speaking to a large audience, pick out three or four people on which to focus. And be sure they are ones that seem to be interested.
11. In your conclusion, try to think of your last sentence or two as something which might produce applause.