

## Public Speaking Myths and Facts

### Myths

1. You are born with the talent to be a public speaker; you cannot learn to become one.
2. You do not need to plan in detail for a presentation to a client because you know your subject well. You can 'wing it' –make it up as you go along.
3. Frequent use of 'Umms' or 'Ahs' when speaking demonstrate that you are considering your response or that you are a person of deep thought.
4. When speaking to the media, you need to give in depth responses to questions.
5. The purpose of the lectern is to give the speaker a place to rest his/her hands and papers during the presentation.
6. The lectern is a safe place to stand behind.
7. Public speaking is the same as elocution.
8. If you speak often before groups, you no longer need to rehearse beforehand.

### Facts

People can be trained to become great, indeed, exceptional public speakers.

Skilled presenters and experienced speakers spend far more time constructing their presentations, rehearsing and honing them to perfection than they do delivering them. They are able to think on their feet and handle even highly critical questions with confidence.

Frequent use of 'Umms' or 'Ahs' during your speech suggests you have not done enough preparation, are losing your train of thought or are unsure of yourself. At worst, it irritates listeners.

Usually, clips for inclusion on radio or television are 10 to 20 seconds long. Your main points should be in 10 – 20 second sound bites, so that your key points don't lose clarity and focus if they are edited.

The lectern is useful for holding notes or visual aids that the speaker will use. If the microphone is fixed to the lectern, do not move away from the lectern when addressing your audience. Only move away from the lectern when speaking without a microphone or are using a tie-clip one.

Speaking away from the lectern allows you to make greater use of the platform and be physically closer to your audience.

Vivid and expressive speech for persuasion is one aspect of public speaking. Business presentations include informing and engaging with clients or a general audience.

Exceptional speakers excel because of experience, they **plan, prepare and practise**.

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9. You can use PowerPoint slides to prevent the audience from focusing on you, the speaker. They are also a useful memory aid.
10. Speakers should be relaxed –standing with your weight on one foot, leaning against the lectern, perching on a handy table or with folded arms are all signs of being relaxed.
11. The microphone needs to be placed close to your mouth and held firmly at the upper end.
12. Professional speakers who move about a lot and wave their arms really make a big impact.

### Facts

PowerPoint slides are **aids** to presentations, not distractions. Slides should be used to show visual images that provide even greater clarity to your presentation. Your use of notes on the screen will encourage people to read rather than listen to you, this will dilute the effectiveness of your presentation.

Speakers should stand with both feet planted firmly on the ground -this gives the speaker maximum balance while speaking.

For maximum effectiveness, the microphone should be held securely (but not too tightly or you'll get cramp in your arm) towards the lower end and 15-30cm away from your mouth.

Platform performance must be appropriate for occasion and the audience. Wide and vigorous gestures may be suitable for whipping your audience into a frenzy in a motivational or evangelical presentation, but are unsuitable when speaking to colleagues, before clients or addressing your Board.



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