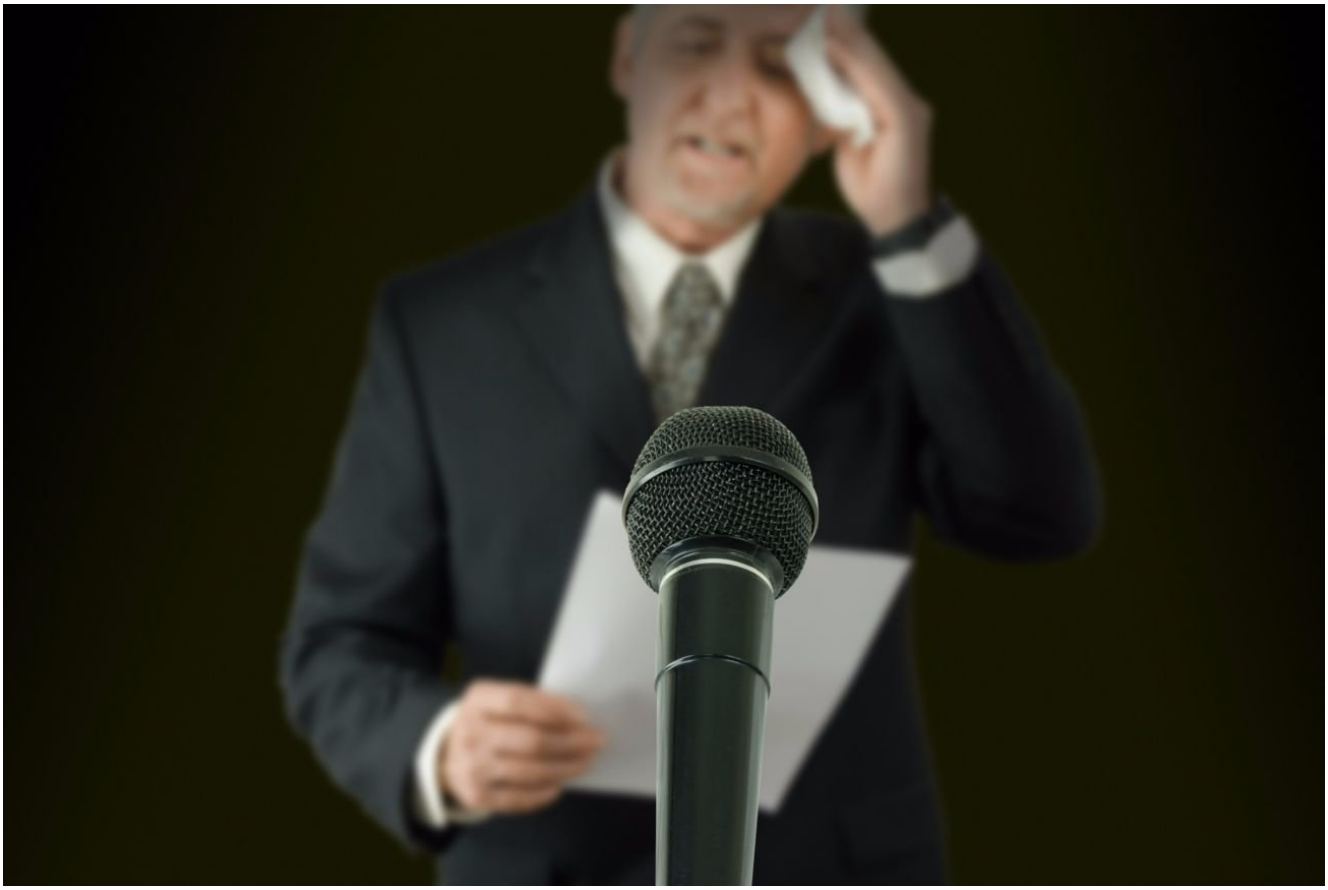
5 Public-Speaking Tips From Seasoned Experts



Here’s a tip you probably haven’t heard: Speak so slowly that it actually feels strange.

March 26, 2018 5 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

What are you most afraid of? If you’re like most Americans, public speaking bothers you more than heights, bugs, snakes, enclosed spaces, flying, strangers, clowns and the prospect of drowning. In fact, more than a quarter of the U.S. population has a fear of public speaking.

Related: 8 Master Tips on How to Get Paid for Public Speaking

But, as an entrepreneur, you likely need to get comfortable with public speaking — at least on some level. You’ll be

making pitches to investors, after all. You'll be selling deals to big clients. You might even be presenting in front of an entrepreneurial crowd.

Fortunately, you won't be alone in this: Thousands of entrepreneurs and public-speaking gurus have conquered their fears in the past, and they're willing to share the knowledge and tips that helped them become a success.

1.Talk about what you know you know.

Dale Carnegie (1888-1955), the famed author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and founder of the Dale Carnegie Institute, which teaches a public speaking course, encouraged people to speak about topics they know a lot about. More than that, he encouraged them to speak on topics they know they know a lot about.

There are multiple positive effects to note here, but the most important and obvious one is the confidence boost you'll get from covering a topic you know well. You won't worry about saying the wrong thing if you're sure you know all the right things, and your vocabulary and anecdotes will be more diverse on a topic you're well prepared for.

2. Speak so slowly it feels strange.

Simon Sinek is currently one of the most-watched TED Talk presenters of all time, with more than 22 million cumulative video views; he is also the author of *Start With Why* and *Leaders Eat Last*. You'd never guess he was a shy introvert. But he's also a seasoned speaker, and one of his best tips is to speak slowly.

Related: 7 Powerful Public Speaking Tips From One of the Most-Watched TED Talks Speakers

Most speakers, due to some combination of nerves and the desire to seem dynamic, end up rushing through their presentations faster than they intended. With no dialogue partner to provide a counterbalance, they never notice how quickly they're speaking.

Deliberately and slowly speaking your words will make listeners more attentive, and will make you seem more thoughtful and in control. It also gives you time for forethought, so you can avoid more mistakes.

3. Talk to the back of the room.

Jeannette Nelson, author of *The Voice Exercise Book* and head of voice at the National Theatre, recommends speaking to the back of the room, and drawing your breath from the back of the room, as well. Many speakers make the mistake of starting out with a strong voice that they project well; but then they fade out gradually over the course of their speech.

Concentrating on the back of the room will give you a constant focal point, so you can keep the level of your voice consistent throughout the presentation. It will also ensure that everyone in the room, from front to back, can hear you clearly.

Related: 4 Tips for Successfully Putting Yourself 'Out There' as a Public Speaker

4. Don't copy someone else's style.

You might be tempted to watch a popular lecture and mimic the style of the presenter leading it, but doing so can actually be a disservice. Nicola Sturgeon, first minister of Scotland and leader of the Scottish National Party, is known for her

public speaking. She recommends finding your own unique style, and your own voice to use in your presentations.

If you're ordinarily soft-spoken, this might not work, but chances are you can find a style that fits your personality and still makes for compelling listenership. In most cases, trying to mimic someone else's style will make you look like a cheap imitation, when your own personality will do just fine.

5. Let your energy empower you.

There's almost no way to completely eliminate the nervous energy you feel before a talk. As you get used to public speaking, those nerves might decline but they won't go away entirely. Gary Vaynerchuk, entrepreneur and internet personality, suggests people find a way to harness that energy into their performance, rather than being consumed by it.

He's known for working himself up into an adrenaline-fueled state before going on stage for a presentation, almost like a boxer before a match.

You don't have to whip yourself into that kind of frenzy, but you should think about your nervous energy differently; this is your body's way of preparing you for a challenge, through the fight or flight response. Use that energy as fuel to make a compelling presentation.

Public speaking, like any other skill, can be improved and refined through understanding and practice. There's no fast solution to eliminate the nerves before a presentation, nor is there any one strategy that will work for everybody.

All you can do is learn from the advice and experiences of the people who came before you, and keep working to improve your own abilities.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/310871