

10. PUBLIC SPEAKING CLOSURE

10.1 TIME MANAGEMENT: Droning on too long is a common mistake for public speakers. It's also an easy mistake to make because estimating the length of a speech before you give it can be difficult. But besides being rude, speaking too long can undercut your message by irritating or boring your audience. To avoid this mistake, time yourself carefully and thoroughly prepare for your speech.

1

Write down your speech, notes or an outline. Many speakers recommend against writing out your whole speech, but you need some kind of notes. Otherwise, you may give a different speech each time, and your timing will be off.

2

Time yourself giving the speech. You should probably practice several times, because your speed may change as you become more comfortable with your material.

3

Check your timing with a live audience, if possible. Most people get more nervous in front of an audience, and nervousness can cause you to talk faster than normal. If you can't find someone to watch you practice, you can try recording your practice on camera or giving the speech to a pet.

4

Divide your speech time by the number of pages in the speech to find your average speed per page. You can use this later to estimate the length of other speeches as you write them. Once you know your time per page, multiply that figure by the number of pages in your speech to calculate the total time.

Limiting public speaking time is one of the more obscure speaker skills. It will separate the pros from the rookies.

Most programs will have time schedules to follow. No speaker is so important that they should take liberty of the audiences time. Timing is an essential public speaking skill.

So how do the pros go about limiting public speaking time?

Start by adjusting the timing of each part of your talk.

Timing and the Introduction

The length of the introduction needs to be appropriate to the length of the talk. The timing of the introduction is determined by the length.

For a 5 to 6 minute talk, the introduction needs only be about a minute. A 15 minute talk could be 2 minutes. A 45 to 60 minute talk could stretch out to 5-6 minutes.

Timing and the Conclusion

The length of the conclusion is usually slightly less than that of the introduction. So a 5-6 minute introduction will have a four to five minute conclusion.

The Body Timing

If our talk is 45 minutes, the introduction and conclusion take up a combined total of 10 minutes. This leaves 35 minutes for the body.

How to Manage Timing

When practicing, most speakers find they have too much material. No problem, just talk faster. That would be a disaster. Although people can listen fast, the ability to assimilate the information is dependent of the individual listener.

First start cutting. Cut everything that is extra. Cut everything that is not to the point.

Make the talk tightly focused on your theme and your most wanted response.

Check your timing. You might be right on or a bit over. If you are just starting to advance into speech mastery, you may be talking too much. Cut some more.

If you can not cut any more, look at what you are saying. Can you say anything more concisely and not lose the meaning you intend? Like the concept of white space in art and advertising, there needs to be silent space in your talk. Time to allow reflection and thought on what you are saying. Time to absorb what you share.

Your pauses need only be a few seconds each. Speak with a slower pace, and you may still have too much material. Cut some more.

Now practice, practice, practice. Practice it to get it in your head. More importantly, practice is for getting it in your heart. Practice speaking from your heart to reach the heart of the audience. And for the sake of this speaker skill, practice for limiting public speaking time to the amount allotted for your talk.

10.2 AUDIENCE ANALYSIS: People Our lives revolve around people - the people we know and love, strangers we interact with, those who influence us. A speech is very similar. Most first-time speechwriters or novice public speakers spent much of their time focused on one group: the audience. Of course, the audience are not the only group of people you should consider when planning your speech. Let's look at the people whom you should consider when planning or making your speech.

The subject(s) of your speech

Most speeches are about a single person, a couple, or a group of people. (I will touch on speeches that are about subjects other people later).

The Ancient Greeks carved the words Gnothi Seauton, meaning "Know Thyself", on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. If the Temple of Speechwriters existed, I am sure that the words "Know Thy Subject" would appear somewhere on it.

At the outset of the speechwriting process, you re likely (but not always so) to have a familiarity with the subject of your speech be they a friend, relation, work colleague or even a celebrity. As such, you should try to organize what you know about your subject(s) on paper.

My favorite way to collect my thoughts about the subject(s) is to use a piece of paper with helpful headings over blank paragraphs as an aid to your brainstorming. Samples of headings could be:

- First impressions
- Fond memories
- Favorite Quotes
- Funny moments
- Features & Characteristics

The next part is fun. Take your time, and think about everything you can remember about the subject(s), in keyword form, under each heading. Time will pass quickly and before you know it, you will have a page that should summarize the subject perfectly and act as a terrific tool when writing your speech.

Tip: Once you have delivered your speech, this brainstorming page (preferably framed) can act as a wonderful gift and touching memento for the subject(s) of your speech.

Associates of the Subject(s)

Associates of the subject(s) may include parents, siblings or other family members, friends or colleagues, and especially their husband, wife or fiancé. These people are extremely important as a source for additional information about the subject of your speech.

They will likely know aspects of the subject(s) life that you don't know, this will surely enrich your speech. There are additional benefits in consulting the friends and family of the subject(s) as they will appreciate your decision to involve them in your speechwriting. You should also bear in mind that as they are certain to be in attendance at the event, you will already have won over some of the audience!

Other public speakers

It is very likely that you will be a co-speaker at the public speaking event. If this is indeed the case, you should consider contacting the other speakers before your speech. This will ensure that you are not duplicating content and that there is a nice flow of themes and/or contact from one speaker to another. It may also be an opportunity to share ideas and provide moral support to one another.

The audience

The audience, of course, are a critical part of delivering a speech. At this stage of planning, it is important to realize that your audience are not there to be lectured at. Your public speaking goal is to do one or more of the following:

- Engage your audience
- Stimulate your audience
- Entertain your audience
- Pique your audience's interest
- Convey a message, theme or order

There are countless other ways and reasons to communicate with an audience. How many more can you think of for your speech event.

Non-human Speech Subjects

Of course, you may be asked to speak about *things* too, be it a product, a country, an argumentative thesis, and so on. of course in those instances you should consult authoritative sources such as encyclopedias, college professors and local library resources, to name but a few.

Note that even when the topic is non-human, a compelling story can often be told by focusing on the people involved - for example the inventors or engineers of a product, modern or historical figures of a country, or proponents or opponents of an argumentative thesis.

10.3 FEEDBACK: Getting feedback on your speech: At this stage you have got the speech to a point where you are quite happy, possibly even very happy. That's great. The day for your public speaking debut is fast approaching. It's now time to do something that many people are loath to do. It's time to get some feedback on your speech.

This is an invaluable step that will only enrich your speech and potentially save you from much controversial. It's much better to learn of any problems with your speech now, than when you are delivering your speech on the podium at your public speaking event. Ideally you should seek feedback from 2-3 people, at least one of whom is not directly related to or attending the event - an impartial critic, if you like.

Examples of feedback you should seek include:

Inappropriate content

Error(s) of omission

Grammatical problems

Appropriate use of humor

On the topic of grammatical problems, I'm a strong advocate of *natural language* when it comes to writing non-formal (e.g. business, award ceremonies). In other words, if you're writing a best man speech, it's much preferable that the voice is yours, rather than perfect English. This familiarity will help your audience engage with you and put you at ease when delivering your speech.