

Hints for Nervous Speakers

1. Know exactly what your listeners expect from you. Ask the person who requested the presentation or a prospective audience member.
2. If possible, familiarize yourself in advance with the room set-up.
3. Rehearse your presentation at least twice. The first time, focus on familiarizing yourself with your material and checking your timing. The second time, record yourself for playback, or present to a friend/colleague, and time the presentation. Ask for feedback.
4. Eat before you present. Speaking with an empty stomach exacerbates anxiety.
5. Avoid excessive caffeine, which also exacerbates anxiety.
6. Before the presentation, chat with audience members.
7. During the presentation, talk directly to individuals for several seconds; choose individuals throughout the room.
8. Use your gestures to enhance communication, not distract from it. Be aware of nervous mannerisms you have (e.g., playing with a pen, stroking your beard, smooth back your hair) and practice suppressing them.
9. Speak slowly and distinctly in a low register. A rapid rate at a high pitch indicates nervousness.
10. Prepare good notes and practice using them appropriately for an extemporaneous presentation.

Most importantly, remember to focus on what your audience needs, not on yourself and what you know.

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