



How to Give a Great Speech or Presentation

**Your Guide to Getting Your Message
to the Right People Easily and
Effectively**

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Your Guide to Getting Your
Message to the Right People
Easily and Effectively

By Wayne Olson, J.D.

AFP's Ready Reference Series

How to Give a Great Speech or Presentation: Your Guide to Getting Your Message to the Right People Easily and Effectively

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To Speak Well

As a fundraiser, you have a great message. People want to hear it. Before they can appreciate your message—or more importantly, act upon it—they must receive it and understand it. The difference between an average message and a great speech or presentation is how it is presented and how much of the presenter's original idea reaches the intended audience.

Having excellent ideas or information is not enough. You must share them with the people who need to hear them. Even the greatest minds with magnificent ideas can fail. It happens when they don't recognize that communicating the idea is as important as the idea itself.

In 1999, the United States launched an ambitious project: a spacecraft sent to orbit the planet Mars to study the surface and climate. When it approached the red planet, it missed the planned trajectory. The journey to Mars was flawless, but it crashed on arrival. The reason? Lockheed Martin engineers used the English system to plot the entry to orbit, while NASA used the metric system. Even rocket scientists, with flawless calculations and perfect data, fail when they do not communicate effectively with one another.

While we may not be rocket scientists, our information is no less important. As fundraisers, we change the world. Whether you are giving a big presentation to a stadium full of people or are talking one-on-one with a donor about a cause (or with your supervisor about a raise), what you say—and often more importantly, how you say it—makes all the difference. The key is to purposefully develop your message and deliver it in the most effective and efficient way possible.

The greatest message in the world is meaningless if no one hears it. Yet, a simple, whispered idea, when understood, can change the world.



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How you present your message matters. People want to hear and learn what you know. Think of the benefits when people hear your message:

- They may be motivated to act on something important.
- They may be moved emotionally.
- They may feel better about themselves, their jobs, or any number of possible situations.
- They may learn critical information they need to know.
- They may laugh, cry, or experience something through you that they won't experience anywhere else.

When you give a great speech or presentation, you do more than convey important information. You deliver something greater. Sometimes, we remember the speaker more than we remember the message itself. Consider the Pony Express of the American West in the 1860s. It embodies the romantic notion of the West and the perils of the frontier. Most people believe it was the primary form of communication for decades. The reality is the Pony Express lasted less than two years. The messenger is remembered and immortalized. No one can recall any of the messages the Pony Express carried.

We Have Nothing to Fear but Fear of Public Speaking

Whether you have been speaking for years or you are reading this book to prepare for your first serious presentation, there is one thing to get out of the way first. There is nothing to fear about public speaking. Any discussion about giving a speech or presentation should begin by briefly acknowledging a simple fact:

People fear public speaking.

While it is true that people fear public speaking, the four words above are not as true as these five words:



People needlessly fear public speaking.

Some people are just terrified of public speaking. Perhaps one of the primary reasons is because there are too many examples of horrible public speaking. We fear we will end up looking like some speakers we routinely see who waste audiences' time or simply fail to connect. However, the fear of public speaking is really a fear of the unknown.

- Will I reveal myself to be unworthy?
- Will I look funny?
- Will I embarrass myself?
- Will I forget what I am supposed to say?

Like many fears, the fear of public speaking can be conquered by replacing the unknowns with knowns. And fortunately, most of the unknowns about public speaking can be converted to knowns quite easily.

The same reasons most people fear public speaking can be used to help you craft a better message. The key to overcoming the fear of public speaking is exactly the same principle seasoned presenters use to deliver well: Remove the unknowns from your preparation and presentation. Leave no room for surprises, except for the ones you want to give to your audience to delight them. Do this by preparing well. As you do, think of yourself as having something someone else needs to hear or know.

More people are afraid of public speaking than dying. They would rather be in a coffin than give a eulogy about someone in it.

Water in the Desert

Giving a speech or presentation is like bringing water to a thirsty person in a desert. You and a friend are lost in the desert and thirsty. You find a spring, an oasis. Your friend is steps away but lacks the strength to make it to the well.



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You are the vessel that brings vital information to those who need to hear it.

You cup your hands, dip them into the well, and carry water to your friend. Your goal is to get as much of that water to your friend as possible, spilling as little as possible. When we give a speech or presentation, we are the finders of water in the desert.



We have what people need, and our goal is to get it to them.

Presenters fail because they don't know that appreciating the audience is as important as the material itself.

I once attended a presentation at a large, international fundraising conference. The speaker was one of the smartest people I knew on the subject she was set to talk about. She was a genius and a friendly, wonderfully nice person. She began her presentation by saying, "I just gave this presentation to another group, and most of them left. The ones who stayed rated it poorly, so you may want to leave now." I stayed, just to see how it would go. No matter how good her presentation was or could have been, she sealed its fate with that introduction. It was awful.

At the other end of the spectrum, I recently heard about a presentation at a local fundraising conference. The speaker, who is a friend and someone who knows the fundraising business well, said later that he put zero preparation into his presentation. He just got up and "winged it." He felt he was so knowledgeable on the subject that anything he said should have been useful and helpful. He meandered for 30 minutes and lost the audience. It was one of the most poorly rated sessions in a while. It's a shame, because he is a great guy with great things to say.



Both speakers failed to realize that how they presented was as important, or more important, than what they said. They could have spilled national secrets in either presentation, and no one would have heard them. The audience had left, lost interest, checked emails, or in some cases fallen asleep. Great speaking is all about your relationship with the audience.

The Audience Is on Your Side

Audiences arrive with expectations.

They want to hear something new, something worth their time, and maybe something that will make their lives or jobs better. A presentation goes better when you remember that. Presentations prepared with those expectations

in mind succeed. Those that don't will fail. It's really that simple.

This is true for all audiences in all settings. All audiences come with expectations. Prepare accordingly.

Here's the best part of those expectations: The audience is rooting for you. You have something they need, and they want you to succeed in getting it to them. They want you to win wildly.

Think of that.

The people you are about to speak to have given you their time because they want to receive what you have to give. That should give you, me, and everyone ample excitement and eagerness to speak with passion and energy.

Audiences will overlook minor mistakes, ignore imperfections, and forgive many goofs as long as you bring them what they came to hear. Conversely, we when fail to give audiences something new, something useful, or something worth their time, they know it, and we lose them quickly. We have to meet them where they are and give them more than they give us, so present passionately.

The Secret: The audience wants you to do a great job or they wouldn't be there.

“To play a wrong note is insignificant. To play without passion is inexcusable.”—Ludwig van Beethoven



How to Give a Great Speech or Presentation

Now that we have the framework for why and how you should speak (and the mindset you should have when presenting), let's get to the heart of the matter: your presentation. As we move on and look at how to prepare and present your material, let's review some key concepts:

- Preparation defeats the fear of public speaking.
- You have a message people want to hear.
- Your delivery is as important as the message.
- They are rooting for your success.

No matter how little or how often you speak, every speech should begin with the basics, and the most basic thing you should do is prepare well.



Elements of a Great Speech

When does your presentation begin? Does it start when:

- You say the first word?
- You take the podium?
- When you are introduced?
- You begin writing it?
- You start your research?
- You write the title?

The Invitation

Whether someone calls you or you call them, all presentations begin with an invitation. You will be invited to speak based on what your host knows, or thinks they know, about you. Before you write the first word or research the first article, your reputation with your host and audience will already begin to determine how your speech will go. Accordingly, the invitation and your response to it begin to shape the theme, tone, and content of your presentation. At this early stage, your host will consider your:

- Résumé or career experience
- Prior presentations they have seen
- Word of mouth about your presentations
- Published reviews
- Website
- Personal experience with them



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No matter how often you speak or how well known you are, who you are and how you present will never be a one-for-one match to what people think of you from all of the above sources. So, do everything you can to set your presentation up for success. That begins with the invitation. Their expectations of you and your presentation are already forming. Make sure those inviting you know what they're getting and that you are preparing for:

- The right audience
- The right setting
- The right theme
- The right presentation for all of the above

Expert Tip: If you're ready to take the step of being paid for your presentation, remember that your time has value, so charge a reasonable fee. I still give free presentations each year (and often), but I do so for a reason, and with the explicit understanding that it is accomplishing a greater purpose. I have also found, as a general rule, that those who pay me treat me better than those who do not. They have invested in the audience (notice: *not me*) and want it to go as well as possible. Ask to be paid. Just be fair. Be kind. Your time is valuable. Free is never free, and just because you enjoy speaking, do it well, or are new to it is no reason to give your time away. And the best way to be invited to speak, or speak again, is to give more value than your host expects. Give them your best, and follow up with gratitude. Your next speech always comes from how well you did on the last one.

No matter how big or small your presentation is, and whether you are paid or not, here is my secret to success. Ask your host to fill in the blanks of the following prompts. This helps narrow their focus and helps me prepare the exact presentation that is appropriate and delivers on the needed topic. I send these prompts to all my potential hosts early in the preparation phase.



1. At the end of my presentation, the audience will have learned:
_____.
2. The next day, someone in the audience will tell a friend or spouse that one thing that stuck with him or her from the presentation was: _____.
3. You would invite me to speak again when, after I give this presentation, audience members evaluate it and tell you they:
_____.
4. (Optional: Since I try to build humor into almost everything, I also include the following prompt.) On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is a funeral director and 10 is Dave Chappelle, the humor in this presentation should be a (circle one):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A good leader will tell you that any successful effort begins with the end in mind. Imagine how well your presentation will be received when you help your host focus on their goal. You can begin your research, writing, and everything else knowing what your ultimate aim will be. How they will evaluate you should help inform how you prepare.

Hunt, Gather, Cook, and Serve

Remember too, as you write your speech, that you have three roles.

- **Hunter/Gatherer:** You go into the field and find information. You gather facts, insights, and data. You find new and interesting ideas.
- **Cook:** You make sense of what you found. You combine some of what you gathered into something new and novel. You don't just give the audience a plate of carrots, a plate of lettuce, and a plate of green peppers. You combine them, add your special dressing, and give them a salad.

Expert Tip: Most speakers present audiences with assorted facts and ideas and ask them to sort it out. Like newspaper editors of old, you review sources and present them in an organized, compelling way.



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- **Waiter:** After you've been to the field and assembled the presentation in the kitchen, you bring your creation to the audience where they are and present it to them. You place themes and ideas in a planned order, design the presentation so all parts flow, and present a delightful, total experience rather than a collection of disparate ideas and notions.

Expert Tip: There are always going to be people in the room with greater expertise than me. When I speak with that in mind, my presentation is a little humbler, and much stronger.

Write Well

As you prepare, especially if you are new to public speaking, start with a fully scripted speech. Practice delivering it in front of a mirror, reading it word for word. As you get better, let your experience in practice sessions help you identify and select themes and passages that can be reduced to bullet points.

Once you've progressed to bullet points, present these to family and friends to help you become more comfortable and to get insights and recommendations from them. As you practice, focus on eliminating as much reading as possible. Ultimately, you want to present with no script, notes, or bullet points in front of you. Your goal is to make the speech look more like a conversation and less like a recitation.

The Secret: When possible, make a presentation interactive. One person speaking for too long can be tedious. Interact with the audience, and your presentation will be better.

Just like a conversation, make as many presentations as possible interactive. While some presentations don't lend themselves to an interactive format, most do or could. So, plan early for interactivity. From your initial research to the final draft, look for opportunities to make the presentation interactive.



I also encourage an audience to ask questions and even challenge me during the presentation, which is the ultimate interactivity. As you will see below, I do not take questions at the end. That is not interactivity. The audience can ask me anything they want anytime during the presentation.

The Secret: Never take questions at the end. It is almost sacrilegious to suggest this. I want you to be a great speaker, not an average one. You have worked hard to give a stellar presentation. When you take questions at the end, you are turning over the vital, planned, coordinated ending to someone else to give *their ending* to your presentation. You are inviting—actually encouraging—a random person to replace your conclusion with theirs. Not everyone is concerned with helping you end well. Some questions will be from people who came in late, while some will come from those who like to play “stump the speaker.” No matter which it is, people will be packing and shuffling as you awkwardly await the next question until finally the room empties or the last question is asked. Tell the person introducing you and remind the audience during your presentation that you will be available after the presentation or by email or text for any questions. You’ve earned the right to have the last word, so don’t give it away. I encourage the audience to ask questions during the presentation, which helps them and helps me. It also shows me where I can adjust if I need to give the presentation again.

Prepare in Threes

I usually prepare and present speeches in three parts. As I research, I group ideas into major themes or concepts and then break each down into three pieces. Here is how it looks in research, preparation, and delivery.



Speech Title

Main Theme One

Introduction to whole presentation

- Broad overview of why this topic matters—and hints of what’s to come
- Some facts supporting this broad overview
- A summary of the broad overview

Main Theme Two

First Important Concept

- Introduction of first important concept
- Data supporting first important concept
- Analysis/application of first important concept and why it matters

Second Important Concept

- Introduction of second important concept
- Data supporting second important concept
- Analysis/application of second important concept and why it matters

Third Important Concept

- Introduction of third important concept
- Data supporting third important concept
- Analysis/application of third important concept and why it matters

Main Theme Three

Summary of whole presentation

- Broad overview of everything that’s been presented
- Combine data and analyses of prior sections as action points
- Summarize with one or two sentences and then thank the audience



The above template is a starting point. Use it, amend it, and make it your own. Dividing anything into three parts seems to be the easiest way for people to grasp and understand new information. It also makes organization easier. A speech teacher once taught me the following:

- Tell them what you're going to say.
- Say it.
- Remind them of what you said.

Once you have a framework, you can add the themes, thoughts, and data in a way that makes sense. During your practice sessions, concentrate on:

- Flow: Make sure themes and ideas flow together logically and naturally. One topic or concept leads to another.
- Transitions: Ensure they are seamless and do not slow delivery.
- Wording: Choose words, phrases, and titles that support your main points and do not detract.
- Story: No matter what topic you're presenting, make sure your presentation has a beginning, middle, and end. (Even if a speech is only two minutes long, it still must have these three elements.)
 - The beginning gives the audience an overview and gives them a broad idea of what to expect from your presentation. It tells them what they are about to hear.
 - The middle delivers. It is the “meat” of your presentation and delivers on the promise laid out in the beginning.
 - The end summarizes and rewards. It reminds the audience of what it heard. The end leaves audience members knowing they can exit the room understanding or applying what they've learned and use it going forward.

This beginning, middle, and end framework points to the eloquence of the three-part structure of speechwriting. Additionally, when you can give each section of your speech its own beginning, middle, and end, you have prepared a great presentation.



Write to the Audience

A speech has three parts:

- The speaker
- The speech
- The audience

All three are important. As you write your speech and prepare to give your presentation, think about your subject. Think about how you will present it. However, always consider who the audience will be. Who is the audience?

- Is it men, women, or both?
- What are their ages?
- Are they sophisticated or casual attendees?
- What expectations do they have of you?
- What will they be doing before and after your presentation?

As you prepare, be aware of the above, and write accordingly. To build credibility and maintain interest, remember the following rules:

- Facts show scholarship.
- Humor builds affinity.
- Stories hold attention.
- Quotes give credibility.

The Secret: A 30-minute speech is never just half an hour. It is 30 minutes times the number of people in the room. If there are 50 people in the room, you have given a speech worth 25 hours of people's lives. That makes even a brief presentation important.

Stand and Deliver

You've talked with your host, you've written your presentation, and now it's time to shine. Most presenters never take the following steps, or if they do, they devote little attention to them. Here are some expert tips to help you wow your audience, even if you've never spoken to anyone before.



The day before you speak (or at least well before you speak), ask your host to let you see the room where you'll be speaking. If possible, talk with the person responsible for the audio/visual equipment when you tour the room.

- Test the microphone.
 - Can you be heard?
 - Will you have a lapel mic (called a lavalier), a handheld mic, or no mic at all?
 - ◆ Is there microphone feedback?
 - ◆ What volume setting is best for you?
 - ◆ Is the microphone corded or fully charged? If charged, are there spare batteries?
- If you're using Microsoft PowerPoint or Mac Keynote:
 - Do you need to bring your computer, or will you be able to use theirs?
 - Run through key slides to make sure they look appropriate and work on the projector and screen (and audio system).
 - Put a backup copy of your materials on a thumb drive just in case.
 - Will the windows or lighting in the room let in too much light?

The Secret: Don't let all your preparation and work be ruined by a broken microphone or missing equipment, such as curtains to darken the room for PowerPoint.

If you're using PowerPoint, ensure the file containing your slides has been preloaded onto the machine you're using so the audience does not have to wait for you to begin.

- Who will introduce you? Does he or she have a copy of your introduction? See page 29 for a sample of one.
- Do a final check.
 - Will the AC be set at a good temperature for the audience?
 - Will there be distractions (such as school bells or other nearby sessions ending in the middle of yours)?



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- Will there be too many chairs (a large room with only a few attendees is usually awkward) or not enough?
- If you have handouts, are there enough copies, and are they there and ready?
- If you have visual aids, where can you store and display them?
- If there are written evaluations, are there enough?
- Will there be a bottle of water for you at the podium?

Good to Great

Here are some quick, general ideas that often transform an average speech and an average speaker into a memorable presentation and a stellar speaker.

- Never say, “We are low on time.” Don’t tell an audience you’re rushing to meet a deadline. If you’re running out of time, simply adjust. While you may say, “We are low on time,” what the audience hears is “I did not prepare well” or “I’m inexperienced and don’t know how to time a speech.” When you tell an audience you’re running out of time:
 - Everyone will check their watches or phones, breaking momentum and flow, which never helps. Some people will just get up and leave.
 - Telling people you’re out of time *does nothing to help the presentation*. It only reminds people that the presentation is not coming out as intended.
 - It’s always better to convey less information well than to present more information poorly, so don’t feel badly about skipping material to end on time.
 - To avoid this, prepare, prepare, and prepare. For new and even experienced speakers, plan for a speech that is five to 10 minutes shorter than the allotted time. This gives you a cushion, and rarely will an audience complain when you end early.



- A novice speaker who respects an audience's time will be better received than an “expert” speaker who does not.
- Finally, it is always better to leave an audience wanting more rather than wishing they could leave a prolonged presentation. Rushing or going long rarely accomplishes anything good.
- Never say, “You may not be able to see this in the back.” If you have a visual aid or an image that cannot be seen by everyone, it should be seen by no one.
 - If you have something small, take a photo of it, and enlarge it using the projector. Some people in the audience may not be able to see the coin you're holding up, but everyone will be able to see the image of it on the big screen.
 - See the PowerPoint tips (page 23) for designing a slideshow to reach the whole audience, not just the front row.
- Serve your audience: Take questions *during* your presentation (as much as your presentation and audience size allow). As you begin, let your audience know you will take questions along the way. Remind the audience that you're easy to contact and will also stick around to answer questions one-on-one.
 - Use questions to help you refine your speech for the next time you give it. If you see audiences stuck on the same concept or repeating the same questions, you can update your speech to smooth out these rough spots.

As You Stop Speaking

- End on time. People always appreciate punctuality. Always.
 - This is true, even if you didn't begin on time. I have found that many hosts schedule speakers and events too tightly, and rarely do I have the opportunity to begin on time. Even so, I do my best to end on time, or at a time appropriate to the pace of the day—in coordination with my host.
 - Thank your audience and your host from the podium. No matter how good your presentation is, it would not exist if they weren't there. Always thank the people who made it possible.



Prepare for Success

Preparing for a speech has two basic components:

- Preparation of the material
- Preparation of the delivery

Each is about as important as the other. And like all things in public speaking, each is fairly straightforward. The secret to mastering both is preparation.

The success of the speaker when giving a speech or presentation is directly linked to the amount of preparation devoted to it.

Material Preparation

Preparing your speech's material is what most people think of when they think about public speaking. It is the homework. It is researching and studying the subject matter and writing your speech. Because each presentation and situation is different, your preparation will be as unique as your subject. However, there are some common components that need to be addressed, no matter what the subject.

“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.” —*Alexander Graham Bell*

How should I start to prepare?

Research your material. Study books, articles, blogs, and videos that will enlighten you on the subject you are presenting. Ask experts on the topic for advice and insight.

How do I know I'm preparing well?

As you prepare, your findings should point you to new material or sources you had not considered. Investigate those. Sometimes, the best material is discovered this way.

The Secret:

- Know your material.
- Appreciate your audience.
- Remove barriers and distractions that may keep the audience from getting the message.



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What words should I use when speaking?

Write to be heard, not read. When writing your presentation, use short, understandable words. When you use a word, phrase, or jargon the audience can't hear, doesn't understand, or has to process in any way, that causes a momentary pause as the audience members figure it out. Even a half-second break means the audience has missed your next word completely!

Write so your words flow into sentences, with sentences that blend into themes that wrap seamlessly into a total presentation. Impress the audience with your knowledge and delivery, not your vast vocabulary.

Expert Tip: If you have a four-syllable word in your presentation, ask yourself if it can be replaced with a couple of other, simpler words. You could write a technically masterful presentation with precise, elaborate wording. But if no one hears it, what good is it?

How do I know when I'm done preparing?

Truthfully, you never stop preparing. I often read the newspaper just before I speak to make sure nothing in the news has changed or added to the topic I'm presenting. I have added to presentations moments before speaking. However, you will know you are mostly prepared when your research starts to point to sources and information you have already covered. When your research begins pointing back to information you've already found, you're close to being done.

What can I do to add some special touches?

Use an unexpected source. When giving a scientific thesis, quote Dr. Seuss. When people expect to hear themes about fundraisers, throw in a quote from a donor. Include brief, personal stories and photos to help the audience relate to you and your message.

Delivery Preparation

Most speakers spend most of their time on material preparation instead of delivery. They research, write, and perhaps rewrite up until the last moment but fail to address the second—but equally important—part of public speaking: preparing for delivery.

**Material preparation is the what.****Delivery preparation is the how.**

Your how should be as good as your what, and neither is served well when one has a disproportionate amount of preparation devoted to it. Material preparation deals with facts. Delivery is the way you convey those facts to an audience.

We aren't feeding data to computers. We are delivering information to people. How we do it is as important as what we deliver.

Since most speakers devote little or even no time to considering the delivery of their presentations, this is an area where you can shine—and shine brightly. Here are the questions smart speakers ask. When you consider these as you prepare, you will set yourself apart from and above the rest.

Who is the audience?

Who is likely to attend? Are they experienced, beginners, or a mixture? If it's a mixture or mostly beginners, you will need to prepare more broadly and keep themes basic. However, throw in a couple of complex ideas to keep the experts engaged. If your audience is made up of experts, prepare by determining which area they need to hear most about. Is it new research, a new angle on an old idea, or something else? No matter who's in your audience, make it your mission to give most of them something they've never heard before but will be glad to be hearing now.

Is my presentation part of a larger event?

What is the theme of the event? Are speakers expected to write to the theme? Flow and tempo are important to your success. Make sure your presentation fits the overall theme. Audiences appreciate continuity, and preparing with the theme in mind shows your presentation is not canned and was designed for them and no one else.

Expert Tip: I try to include photos of the city (or even hotel or host location) where I'm speaking as a background for other images I use. I want to subtly cue the audience that I took time to respect the location of my presentation.



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Who is speaking before me?

This is more important than most speakers realize. The person or people who spoke or the event that occurred just before your presentation has a big influence on your success. I once spoke to 500 people about a complicated, technical subject directly after a couple had described how they raised and cared for their (now adult) daughter with Down syndrome who had survived cancer twice. The audience was weeping, emotionally exhausted, and in no mood to hear about the technical subject I was sharing with them. Although I think I made it fun, interesting, and easy to understand, the audience was drained and unreceptive to any message they might hear. Do everything you can to make sure the event before you sets you up for success, not failure.

What is the audience doing before, during, and after my presentation?

Will the audience be eating? Will they board a bus for a tour of Walt Disney World five minutes after I speak? When possible, try to not speak directly after a meal or before an event that might be a distraction. If you must speak during a challenging time slot, be aware of any possible distractions when writing your presentation, and play to a distraction rather than try to overpower it. And never go long when people are waiting to go to Disney World.

The More You Prepare, the Better the Presentation

When you've prepared well, the actual delivery becomes anticlimactic. Even so, it is still important to be mindful of some of the variables that will affect the delivery of your well-crafted message. I can usually predict how well my speech will go by how the preparation went.



The Point in PowerPoint

In the last few years, a phrase has made it into our vocabulary: “Death by PowerPoint.” Countless well-meaning speakers have killed audiences with this otherwise great software. I suppose I have dispatched more than my share of audiences through the years. However, we can save presentations and avoid bad reviews by using PowerPoint as the amazing tool it is. Here are some tips:

- **PowerPoint is here to stay:** We are visual creatures. People want to see as well as hear. Some people cannot learn well if they cannot also see what they’re trying to learn, so study PowerPoint and always improve your PowerPoint skills.
- **Seven words:** Try to have seven or fewer words on each screen. A fantastic speaker once told me, “PowerPoint slides are free, so use plenty.” Don’t try to put too much on one slide. Rather, spread them out, give them room. Break one word-heavy slide into multiple lighter ones. Rarely should one slide have more than seven words on it.
- **PowerPoint supplements, not replaces, you:** Many speakers put PowerPoint on the screen and then simply read their slides. If you can read the PowerPoint and it represents most of your presentation, you likely have a poor presentation. *You may have a great handout you’ve just read*, but people came for the presentation, not to hear you read a handout.

Want another reason not to share your PowerPoint? I once saw two people at a conference leave with a handout of the presentation they’d attended. They then delivered the presentation to a new audience. Although well-intended, it was a disservice to the two people, their audience, and the original author.



How to Give a Great Speech or Presentation

- **Never share your PowerPoint:** If your PowerPoint can be shared, your presentation is weak. I design my PowerPoint presentations so they contain only half of the information. It supports me. I don't support it. Half of all the information comes from my mouth, body language, and interaction with the audience, not what's projected onto the screen. Consider this: If you receive a script to an episode of your favorite television show, is it really a good substitute? When a handout is requested, I prepare one based on my presentation. It is never the presentation itself.
- **Pictures and movies:** We live in a world where iPhones takes billions of photos and movies every day. There are almost 400 iPhones¹ sold every minute worldwide (let alone other makes of phones). People expect photos, movies, and charts. They give "presentations" every day on social media and expect such visuals in more formal presentations. Use pictures, movies, and other visuals as much as possible, but be respectful of copyrights and ownership. It is always best to use your own imagery anyway.
- **Transitions:** Think salt and pepper. A little goes a long way. Too much and you choke out the flavor. Use plain, simple transitions. And like "salt and pepper," the "dissolve" is my favorite, most basic transition. Like seasonings, you want transitions to dissolve into the whole presentation and not be noticeable on their own.

The Secret: PowerPoint transitions are like special effects in movies. They work best when you don't notice them at all.

¹ expandedramblings.com/index.php/iphone-statistics/



- **The remote:** If your budget allows it, buy and bring your own remote control to use to toggle through your slides. You want to feel comfortable and have your presentation be fluid. If you have to learn in the moment where the buttons are on the remote, your presentation might suffer. Also, don't draw attention to the remote by pointing it at the screen. Practice keeping the remote at your side, pointed at the ground, or in the general direction of *the computer*.
- **Body language:** Find a posture that works for you. You are not a soldier at attention, nor should you imitate Shaggy's crashed look from "Scooby-Doo." Find a happy medium that shows you're comfortable with the material but also professional and respectful of the audience and their time. Keep your hands away from and out of your pockets (and remove all change and keys so you don't rattle when you move).
- **The podium:** Use the podium to hold your notes or computer, not as a shield from the audience. Don't hug or grasp the podium like you're about to take it for a test drive. Stand up straight, walk around the podium, and treat the audience like guests in your kitchen.
- **Phone:** Your audience should have their phones turned off. So should you.
- **Watch:** If you have a smartwatch, silence it. If you have a traditional watch, take it off and place it on the podium or in your bag. Resist the temptation to look at your watch during the presentation.
- **Timing:** PowerPoint and Keynote both have timers that show the time and, generally, time remaining in your presentation. Position your computer so you can see it and the audience can't. Rather than having someone interrupt you with hand signals, signs, or waving arms, just rely on the big, easy-to-see timer right in front of you.

The Secret: An infrequent speaker reveals himself when pointing the remote at the screen. The sensor is on the computer and rarely near the screen.



How to Give a Great Speech or Presentation

Ideally, you will not use PowerPoint at all, like many people. PowerPoint, with its charts, tiny words, endless bullet points, and reproductions of documents, is ineffective. The best PowerPoints use few words—or better yet, no words. Challenge yourself to use only pictures or images. While I admit I still use words, I use them sparingly and make sure each counts. My goal is to reduce words and increase imagery with each new presentation.

For some excellent examples of using PowerPoint effectively, search the internet for TED presentations or others in the exciting new movement called PechaKucha. No matter what you do with PowerPoint (or Keynote, what I use), make sure every image, every word, and everything you say carries your message forward and is necessary and important to the success of the presentation.



Putting It Together

There is no greater feeling than connecting with an audience. There is something special about giving a group of people the gift of something new, exciting, or interesting. When you speak, you give them that gift, and they give you appreciation, joy, and gratitude in return.

Practice the ideas in this booklet, and as you do, make notes of what works for you and what doesn't work as well. Every presentation is as unique as its speaker. And no speaker today is the same as yesterday.

Even when we give the same presentation twice on the same day, it is never the same. The audience changes, the mood changes, the tempo changes, and the events before or after the speech change. Therein lies the constant excitement and challenge of public speaking.

It's Your Turn

A speech or presentation only needs a speaker, material, and an audience. There are no limits or minimums on the length or number of people who hear it. Here are 10 tips to be the best presenter you can possibly be:

1. Speak only on subjects that you are knowledgeable and passionate about.
2. Research your material, and prepare thoroughly.
3. Gain clear insight into the goals and expectations of your host and the audience.
4. Remove obstacles. Ensure the microphone, room, computer, and projector are as ready as you are for your presentation.
5. Keep it simple. A straightforward message conveyed well beats a complex message delivered poorly every time.
6. Use PowerPoint effectively and as the tool it is. It never replaces you.
7. Embrace your audience. Write to them and for them.



How to Give a Great Speech or Presentation

8. Appreciate your audience. They have given you the gift of time in exchange for your gift of an excellent presentation.
9. Welcome the opportunity. There are few things as rewarding as connecting with an audience ... and moving them from where they were to where they needed to be.
10. After you speak, go back to No. 1. Always try to improve and remind yourself of the joys of speaking. That way, you and your material never grow old.

It is my hope that this book has helped you become a better speaker. Whether you're a seasoned professional or about to speak for the first time, perhaps you have found a new idea, added comfort, or a spark to motivate you to speak again. If these tips have helped you, let me know. And if you have a question or recommendation, send me an email. Just as I am always trying to improve my speaking, I am eager to improve my thoughts and skills with regard to teaching speaking. Have fun, help others, and enjoy one of the greatest experiences possible: connecting with an audience by giving a great speech or presentation.



Appendix A

Sample Speaker Biography

Keep a one-page sheet that is your biography and introduction saved on your computer. Also, have a printed backup with you when you're about to speak. The printed one is "just in case" your host forgets to print it or bring it to the event where you're speaking.

I call my sheet, "About Your Speaker, Wayne Olson," and I encourage you to create a similar sheet and title. Keep it to one page and save it on your computer where it's easy to find. I am asked for mine several times a week.

This sheet serves as your biography, but it's also an introduction. Write the most important information at the top, with the least important (or least relevant) information at the end.

If the introduction needs to be short, the person introducing you can stop reading after the first paragraph. For a longer introduction, he or she can just keep reading.

Here are some tips for yours. Write it so it:

- Contains all your pertinent information (that an audience would want to know before you speak)
- Gives you credibility on your general knowledge as well as the information specific to the topic of the speech or presentation
- Can be read out loud directly from the podium, word for word. Often, your introducer will not have time to edit it. So, with the sheet in hand, your host or the person introducing you can read this and introduce you easily.
- Is organized with the most pertinent information at the beginning, continuing down to the least important. This way, the person introducing you can give a brief or full introduction by simply choosing where to stop when they read it.



Here is how I wrote mine:

About Your Speaker, Wayne Olson

send
hi-res
pic

Wayne is the president of Wayne Olson Consulting LLC, where he advises corporations and charities on fundraising, sales, customer service, and building stronger relationships with customers and constituents. He is a leading expert on planned giving and donor relations. He is an attorney with more than 20 years' experience in the nonprofit sector, has worked with donors on tens of millions of dollars in donations, and has helped countless nonprofits build effective and dynamic planned-giving programs.

He is a sought-after trainer and speaker on motivation, sales, leadership, and employee morale. He provides training through seminars, retreats, and ongoing consultation. In 2014, *FundRaising Success* magazine honored him with the “Most Inspirational Speaker of the Year” award. His most requested topic is presentations on customer or donor relations from a Disney point of view.

He is the author of three books including *The Disney Difference*, which shows how to apply Disney-like principles to fundraising and to improve your organization.

Hundreds of charities depend on Wayne to broaden and grow their fundraising. They use his writing on their websites and in their magazines, brochures, and newsletters. He has been published in many periodicals including *Planned Giving Today*, *Advancing Philanthropy*, and *256 Magazine* and has twice been featured in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. He has also hosted a radio program, “Charity Matters.”

Wayne has spoken at AFP International’s conferences, NASA, AFP Congress in Toronto, Space and Missile Defense Working Group, Synovus Bank, Leadership Huntsville, Rotary conferences, Nonprofit University, National Philanthropy Day, and many more.



Wayne has served on the boards of three charitable organizations and volunteers for several more. He earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Florida and his law degree from Stetson University's College of Law. He is an Eagle Scout and the father of two Eagle Scouts.

Please join me in welcoming Wayne as we hear: _____
(title of speech).

To contact Wayne:

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wayne@wayneolson.com • wayneolson.com
(256) 725-3333 (office)



Appendix B

Speechwriting Checklist

1. Have I considered all available sources for information?
 - a. Magazine articles
 - b. Books
 - c. Scholarly publications
 - d. Industry publications (e.g., *Advancing Philanthropy*, the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, and *Giving USA*)
 - e. Websites (Crescendo Interactive, afpglobal.org, ACGA-web.org, etc.)
2. Have I reviewed materials I have read or written before?
3. Have I interviewed experts who can add information or guide me?
4. Have I checked with my host for expectations?
 - a. Who will be in the audience?
 - b. What is the theme?
 - c. What does the host want the takeaway idea to be?
 - d. What action(s) or idea(s) should be the result?
 - e. What events will be before and after my presentation?
 - f. Who will introduce me, and does he or she have the introduction?
 - g. What follow-up will be required or desired?



As you write the speech, ask yourself the following:

1. What is my main point?
 - a. What are the subpoints?
2. Do I use a three-part outline?
 - a. Do I begin by giving the audience an overview?
 - b. Do I give good “meat” in the middle?
 - c. Do I close by summarizing what they’ve heard and end by wrapping it up in a compelling way?
3. Any words need to be changed?
 - a. Are there long or sophisticated words that can be replaced with simpler ones?
 - b. Does each word move the audience forward?
 - i. If not, remove or amend it.
 - c. Is any word or concept a distraction or detour?
4. Have I made the presentation interactive (if appropriate)?
5. If my host also requests a handout, have I prepared it, and does it supplement my presentation as I want it to do?
6. Have I practiced?
 - a. In front of family?
 - b. Friends?
 - c. Co-workers?
 - d. A mirror?
 - e. A voice recording of my speech?



Appendix C

Day-of-Speech Checklist

1. Have I confirmed the room of the speech and checked it out!¹
 - a. Is there a podium, table, or rostrum?
 - b. Will people be able to see me?
 - c. Will people be able to hear me?
 - i. What kind of mic will I have?
 - ii. Is it charged and ready?
 - iii. Is it set for my voice?
2. If I am using PowerPoint or Keynote:
 - a. Is a computer there and ready, or do I bring my own?
 - b. Do the images fit on the screen?
 - i. Have I checked a text slide for fit?
 - ii. Have I checked a movie slide for fit?
 - iii. Have I checked at least five random slides to make sure they work?
 - iv. Is there an A/V person available if there are problems?
 - v. Are the video cables connected correctly?
 1. If adapters are needed, are they there, or do I need to bring my own?

¹ I saw someone recently walk into the wrong room and start to give a speech to an audience. She was in the wrong room with the wrong audience and had never checked to make sure she was in the right place.



How to Give a Great Speech or Presentation

3. Will I use a remote control?
 - a. Are they providing one, or do I bring my own?
 - b. Does it have batteries, or is it charged?
 - c. Have I practiced sufficiently so I'm comfortable?
4. Is the room ready?
 - a. Are there too many seats or not enough?
 - b. How is the AC temperature?
 - i. Remember, the temperature in an empty room changes quickly when lots of people enter.
 - c. Is the room dark or light enough for seeing a screen or reading (whichever is appropriate)?



Appendix D

PowerPoint (Keynote) Checklist

1. Is my PowerPoint formatted correctly?
 - a. Do they expect a widescreen or 2-by-3 format?
2. Have I used as many photos as possible?
3. Are there any words I can eliminate?
4. Are there any slides I can eliminate?
5. Are there any slides for which I could say, “You might not be able to see this”?
 - a. Change or delete these.
6. Are there any words or slides that can be replaced with a photo or image?



Bibliography and Resources for Further Reading

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Attend, as I do, presentations and sit in the back row. Notice what the speaker does that connects with the audience and what things could be improved.

To see examples of some of my presentations, please visit wayneolson.com.



AFP Webinars

2019

Speak! What to Say (and What Not to Say) and How to Say It!

<https://www.pathlms.com/afp/courses/10197/webinars/4807>

2018

10 Ways to Supercharge Your Storytelling

<https://www.pathlms.com/afp/courses/6126>

2017

Storyliving: Creating Transformational Donor Engagement Experiences to Inspire Major Gifts

<https://www.pathlms.com/afp/courses/6429/sections/9585>

2016

Storytelling for Fundraisers

<https://www.pathlms.com/afp/courses/6686/sections/9781>



About the Author

Wayne Olson is an attorney with more than two decades of fundraising experience and a specialization in planned giving. He has helped raise tens of millions of dollars in donations, often setting records where he has worked. He is the author of three books, writes for Crescendo Interactive, and has written for or been featured in several periodicals. He was awarded Most Inspirational Speaker of the Year by *FundRaising Success* magazine in 2014. Wayne speaks regularly to AFP conferences, AFP Icon, and countless national and regional conferences. To purchase Wayne's books, visit wayneolson.com or visit Amazon.com. You can reach Wayne at wayne@wayneolson.com.



Notes

A DONOR BILL OF RIGHTS

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Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)



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