



JOAG Tip of the Month July 2019

Tips For Improving Your Presentation Skills

Glossophobia, also known as *speaking anxiety*, is defined as the fear of speaking in public. The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that glossophobia affects as much as 73% of the population. Many have claimed that the fear of public speaking is the most common phobia ahead of death, spiders, or heights.

At almost every job interview, the interviewer evaluates your communication skills. This includes both written and oral presentation skills. The ability to effectively communicate to an audience is a key driver for your career success.

Regardless of where you fall on the spectrum of public speaking anxiety, everyone can use some tips for improving their presentation skills, which we present in this month's tip.

Research: As a presenter, you are likely expected to be an expert on the subject of discussion. Research helps to master key elements of the topic. Additionally, research helps you bridge knowledge gaps, builds confidence, and prepares you for questions.

Organize your material for optimal impact: You can increase impact by arranging information in sequential order, in order of escalating importance, or from simple to complex. Also, develop objectives for your presentation and make sure your final product meets those objectives.

Use graphics and visual aids: It's been said that pictures are worth a thousand words and visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in your brain than text. Using visuals in your presentation is an asset that shouldn't be underutilized.

Understand your audience: It is good practice to tailor the presentation to your audience's needs and wants. Try to deliver the presentation in the format and style that is easiest for your audience to understand.

Rehearse repeatedly: If possible, rehearse in front of someone who can provide you with feedback. Dress

rehearsals in the space where you will be presenting is also encouraged. Rehearsals help ensure you are presenting within the allotted time and allow you to practice pronouncing difficult words ahead of time.

Tell stories: You can draw your audience in by telling a story. It makes your presentation more engaging, memorable, and interesting. At the very least, develop a strong opening and ending for your talk. You can add a note of humor if appropriate.

Arrive early: Allow plenty of travel time to arrive early and find your presentation area. You can familiarize yourself with the room, lighting, and technical equipment. Your chance of technical difficulties right before your presentation will be reduced and additional anxiety avoided.

Relax, breathe, and enjoy: You may deliver your presentation better if you maintain a relaxed posture. Remember to pace yourself and don't talk too fast. Be sure to maintain a steady and deep breath. If your mouth gets dry during the talk, have water handy to drink.

Mind your body language: Your body language tells a lot about you and the audience is also watching your non-verbal language. Use your voice effectively, pay attention to your pitch and tone. Avoid appearing nervous, pacing through the stage, or putting hands in your pocket. Make eye contact. Deliver your presentation with confidence.

Don'ts: Avoid memorizing your presentation or presenting in a robotic style. Don't be long winded. Don't put too much information on one slide. Avoid grammatical and spelling errors.

References: John Montopoli, Public Speaking Anxiety And Fear of Brain Freezes, accessed on 04/25/19 at <https://nationalsocialanxietycenter.com/2017/02/20/public-speaking-and-fear-of-brain-freezes/> | Dalli Simmons, Five steps To Delivering An Effective Presentation accessed on 4/25/19 at <http://www.exec-comm.com/articles/Five-Steps-Delivering-Presentation.pdf> | 10 Steps to Delivering a successful Presentation accessed on 4/19/19 at <http://ecosprez.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/eBook-10-Steps-to-Delivering-a-Successful-Presentation.pdf> | Top Tips for Effective Presentation accessed on 4/22/19 at <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/present/presentation-tips.html> | Communication Skills: Polishing Your Public Speaking Style accessed on 4/22/19 at <https://playbook.amanet.org/training-articles-communication-skills-public-speaking/>