

## Chapter 1

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# Giving a Presentation or Speech

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Examining the contents of this book
  - ▶ Exploring what you need to know
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**W**hether you're giving your first presentation or your five hundredth, this book can show you how to improve your presentation and public speaking skills. The book is crammed full of practical ideas, techniques, and suggestions; beginners can benefit just from discovering and avoiding basic mistakes, and experienced presenters may appreciate the expert tips and techniques sprinkled throughout these pages. You don't need to read this book from cover to cover (of course, you can if you want to). You can skip chapters and even sections within chapters, focusing only on the material that suits your needs. So if you're looking for an idea of where to start or an idea of what chapters may benefit you the most, just check out the sections that follow to find out what each chapter has to offer.

## *Finding Out What You Need to Know*

Before you give your presentation, or even write it, you need to know a lot of basic information. Chapters 2 and 3 tell you how to get started researching the basics.

## *Getting down the preliminaries*

Getting asked to speak begins the process of making a lot of decisions. The first decision is exactly what to talk about. Even when you're assigned a topic, you generally still have room to shape it. How you decide on an angle depends on the audience – not just their age and gender, but also their education, attitudes, and much more. Chapter 2 tells you what you need to know and how to find it out.

## *Doing research*

No matter what you're talking about, you can improve your speech by doing a little research. We don't mean just locating facts and statistics. You can also find quotes, jokes, and stories to add colour to your speech or presentation. Chapter 3 puts a wealth of research tools and techniques at your disposal, such as using both local and specialist library resources, searching Web sites, and getting other people to do your research for you – for free.

## *Organising your presentation*

After you've got a topic and you've done some research, you need to get organised. To make your presentation flow, you can choose from several patterns: Problem and solution; past, present, and future; and cause and effect. Chapter 4 gives you lots of ideas for ways to organise your material and shows you how to create a useful presentation outline that conforms to your time limits.

# *Developing Your Presentation*

Speaking in front of others scares a lot of people. Many people see writing a speech as a hassle. And doing it right can take a lot of time. But calm down. This part of the book shows you everything you need to know to write a speech or presentation quickly and effectively.

## *Selecting the right material*

You've done research and you've got an outline. Now you need to put some meat on those bones. (Or leaves on those branches if you're a vegetarian.) If you're looking for the key to captivating an audience with statistics, quotes, stories, and examples, you're in luck. We unlock all kinds of potential presentation material in Chapter 5.

## *Starting and ending your speech*

Many people believe that you have to open with a joke, but asking a rhetorical question or using a quotation for the opening – or the conclusion – can involve the audience better. In Chapters 6 and 7, we discuss interesting ways to open and close your presentation, and we give you great ideas to make sure you and your audience reach your conclusion at the same time.

## *Polishing It Off*

Anyone can throw a presentation together, but you also need to make it memorable. If you need to find just that right turn of phrase, develop the winning argument, come up with the perfect example or anecdote that an audience will never forget, or get ideas on how to deliver your speech flawlessly even if you're nervous, Chapters 8 to 10 make polishing your speech and delivery much easier.

## *Making sure your presentation makes sense*

Obviously, your presentation makes perfect sense to you, but the test is whether it makes sense to your audience. If you'd rather not find out that crucial fact as you deliver it, visit Chapter 8 for ideas on how to put a little spit and polish on your presentation to make it stand out from the crowd.

## *Adding some style*

You don't have to be a poet or literary type to put a little richness into your presentation. Certain words and phrases can make more powerful statements than others – and you just have to pick the right ones. Chapter 9 shows you how to use rhetorical techniques to create some colourful lines and phrases to spice up your presentation.

## *Using visual aids*

A picture can paint a thousand words – so see Chapter 10 for everything you need to know to make your graphics look good and to avoid common mistakes. From PowerPoint to overheads to good old-fashioned flipcharts, you can find several great choices for displaying information during your speech or presentation.

# *Delivering a Presentation*

After you've created a brilliant, witty speech or presentation that captures your message exactly, you still have to perform it in front of an audience. So, if your goal is to receive a standing ovation, Chapters 11 to 14 may give you a chance for one.

## *Overcoming stage fright*

If you've gone to all the trouble to create a brilliant presentation, you don't want to ruin it by letting your nerves show up on the podium. If you need to calm your nerves at the outset or find some stress-busting techniques used by professional speakers, check out Chapter 11.

## *Talking with your body*

The way you move and make eye contact affects how your audience receives your message. To ensure that your verbal and non-verbal messages match, check out Chapter 12 and find out all the details on how to move, dress, make eye contact, deal with your hands and habits, and get your other body-language questions answered.

## *Taking questions*

Answering audience questions is an art in itself. What do you do if you don't know the answer? How do you respond to hostile questions? What if the questioners have no idea what they're talking about? Chapter 13 addresses all these issues and shows you how to anticipate questions, design perfect answers, and get an audience to ask questions.

## *Handling the audience*

Your presentation is fantastic but your audience is not: They're heckling you; they're falling asleep; they're leaving! Understanding how to read an audience is an essential skill for anyone who has to speak in public. You have to adapt quickly and know what you're adapting to. To discover how to deal with tough audiences, keep their attention, and get them involved, see Chapter 14.

## *Preparing for Special Speaking Situations*

Giving informal speeches, introducing other speakers, engaging in panel discussions, and handling international audiences are all common speaking situations, but they don't fit into the normal pattern of presenting at a conference or speaking at a meeting. Special meetings require special preparation, and Chapters 15 to 17 show you how to handle all these situations.

## *Speaking on the spot*

Being asked to get up and say a few words about something off-the-cuff is one of the most common, yet dreaded, speaking situations. The good news is that you won't have to spend a lot of time preparing your speech. Of course, that's also the bad news. Chapter 15 tells you how to anticipate those situations, plan for them, and give fabulous impromptu speeches.

## ***Introducing other speakers***

If you have to introduce a speaker at a meeting, conference, or convention, you probably wonder how big a deal to make of it. Should the introduction be long and flowery, be just a recitation of the speaker's resume, or involve a lot of research to find some 'inside' stories about the speaker? Find out how to handle your next introduction in Chapter 15.

## ***Speaking on panels or roundtables***

Some people think serving on a panel or roundtable is easy. They think they can just wing it because the other panelists can always pick up the slack. If you happen to be more of a slacker than a pick-up-the-slacker, just remember that the audience is going to *compare* you to those other panelists, so you'd better be good. Chapter 16 shows you how to stand out from the crowd when you're speaking on a panel or roundtable.

## ***Speaking at international meetings***

Today's global economy has increased the number of businesspeople who speak before international audiences. While language differences are a big challenge, cultural differences can be even bigger. Use Chapter 17 to prepare for your next international meeting so you can avoid embarrassing gaffes.

## ***The Part of Tens***

In this section, we show you how to make your presentation sparkle with humour – even if you can't tell a joke. The techniques are so simple that you'll wonder why you didn't use them before. We also point out what to check just before you speak and how to overcome last-minute nerves and the fear factor.