

# How to conquer the presenter's podium

by Mark Tyrrell

**Key psychological  
public speaking skills  
to get your message  
across fearlessly**

Steps 1 and 6 of **10 steps to  
powerful public speaking**



# How to conquer the presenter's podium

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Mark Tyrrell

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### **How to conquer the presenter's podium**

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## A word from the author

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Hi, I'm [Mark Tyrrell](#) of [Hypnosis Downloads](#), and I am the author of '[10 steps to powerful public speaking](#)'.

Public speaking is one of my favorite things in life. But it was not always so. Like many people, I had a battle at first to overcome my own fears.

There are two aspects to successful public speaking. One is dealing with your own emotional reactions. The other is getting beyond just 'passing on information' to transforming people's lives with your words.

We've assembled everything we know about how you get comfortable with any audience and how you take your presentations to the highest level, and combined it with cutting edge hypnosis sessions to create a program that will transform how you speak and present.

**How to conquer the presenter's podium** contains extracts from '[10 steps to powerful public speaking](#)' and shows that it really is possible for you to become the master of the microphone.

I hope this free excerpt from the course will show you just why you can look forward to being able to truly enjoy presenting – and enthralling your audience.

You can [read more about the full course here](#).

All the best

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark'.



## Where do you start?

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*Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning.* **Maya Angelou**

Talking to other people is a fundamental, amazing, wonderful part of being human.

All creatures communicate with others of their kind, of course, but how many other creatures on the planet devote hours of their time to ‘conversation’? Or sharing the knowledge held by one person with many others at the same time? Or trying to persuade others of the wondrousness of something that they know little about (and possibly care less)? Or engaging in public debate to try to determine the best course of action? Or just telling stories to entertain?

If you know any small children, you’ll know that infants start babbling to their parents very early on. Even though you don’t know if their noises ‘mean’ anything, you can clearly hear them modulating the sounds they make, even producing something we can only call a ‘tone of voice’ – just as if they are having a proper conversation, with pauses, emphasis, intonation and surprises. And there is no doubt whatever about their ability to get people’s attention.

So it’s not too far fetched to say that we are born to talk to other people.

Which makes it rather puzzling that so many people – if we are to believe the surveys – would rather die than stand up and speak in front of other people.

What can have happened to them since they were happily babbling infants?

## What shuts us up?

Well, a lot of people will have had experiences similar to mine. They got laughed at as children. Or put down. Or told that they were idiots and nobody would ever listen to them. Or told that they were getting far too big for their boots. Or were thrown into a situation they weren't prepared for, and found it extremely distressing.

These, if you like, are the *emotional* barriers that get set up between us and our natural talent and desire to talk to others about anything. If we talk about something and then are made to feel bad, in whatever way, it's easy to understand that we might become less and less keen to do that kind of talking...

But it's not only emotions that get in the way of speaking easily, confidently and effectively to anyone about anything.

In general, there is a sad lack of *training* in how to give a good talk. When you consider how important telling people about things is, this is quite astonishing. At some time in your life, no matter what walk of life you are in, you will find yourself having to explain, educate, entertain, excuse, edify, elucidate, elaborate (and that's just a few of the 'talking' words beginning with E!) to someone about something.

If your school or college or workplace training gave you some help in learning the skills you need for doing this well, you were lucky!

Many people find themselves having to figure it out for themselves, by trial and error. Trial and error is a very useful approach in some respects, of course, but it can be awfully slow, and lead you down a great many dead ends before you find a path that takes you through to where you want to be.

And speaking of that...

## Where *do* you want to be?

Speaking in public covers a vast range of situations.

You may have a burning desire to stand up in front of thousands and sway them with a powerful vision, or win their allegiance in an important struggle, or have them roaring with laughter.

You may want to teach people useful skills or share vital knowledge, in a way that will empower the people you teach.

You may be a recently promoted manager with new team responsibilities, wanting to be able to call them together to nurture team identity and establish team goals.

You may need to be able to present clear, coherent and informative reports to senior managers and directors so that they can make important business decisions.

You may want to be able to participate in community meetings, school boards, voluntary organizations, or any other non-familiar environment or audience and feel comfortable saying whatever you need to say.

You may find yourself invited to speak at a wedding, or at a funeral, or at some other important social event.

Wouldn't it be great if you could do all or any of these things?

And that's why we've put together the **10 steps to powerful public speaking** course.

## Interested? Read on!

**How to conquer the presenter's podium** aims to give you a real taste of what's in the [full 10 step course](#).

And not just a few paragraphs.

As well as this introduction, you have

- the **full** Step 1 – **Public speaking confidence**
- the **full** Step 6 – **Speak clearly**

including all exercises, listening assignments\*, details of supplementary material and easy to use Progress Checkers to help you see how things are changing for you

- PLUS Annex A and Annex B from the course
- AND the **full** text of the article '*Achieving your potential*'.

I believe you'll find them invaluable.

## Mark

*\* **Note** If you purchase any of the linked course downloads in order to do the assignments and then decide to take the full course, the price of the course will be discounted. To do this, you just need to [login here](#) (or [create an account](#) with the email address you used to purchase) and your discount will automatically appear in your purchase history.*



## Public speaking confidence

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This is Step 1 of [10 steps to powerful public speaking](#).



*All you need is something to say, and a burning desire to say it... it doesn't matter where your hands are.* **Lou Holtz**, American football coach and motivational speaker

I've seen all kinds of public speakers over the years. I've watched presenters who could bore you senseless from the word go, put you to sleep quicker than a general anesthetic. That's at one end of the spectrum.

But I've also had the unforgettable experience of having my life changed by *amazing* public presenters, individuals who intrigue, inspire, memorably teach, entertain and make you feel they're talking directly to your heart and mind.

These are the few who help you not just understand but 'see' what they say. They lead you along a wonderful path full of amazing views and delightful discoveries. They stimulate your imagination and change the way you see yourself and the world.

This course is all about the *difference* between these two types of public speakers and how to truly become the best kind of speaker *you* can be.

Now whether you plan

- to be a great orator who can sway thousands with your words
- to be a teacher or lecturer comfortable with large groups of learners
- to be able to give clear, incisive, interesting, useful presentations at work

- to be a dynamic after-dinner speaker who gets invited again and again
- to be able to give a good best man's speech or eulogy, or
- any combination of the above

there is so much more to this than merely overcoming fear and anxiety when speaking.

But let's step back here.

Why do presentations, anyway? Why not just send out a round robin email containing all our thoughts on the topic to all the delegates, so they don't even have to go to all the trouble of actually attending our live event? (Ha! Think how that would go down at a wedding!)

## The magic of your live presentation

A live event is where the magic happens. You can, of course, get a moment of magical insight just reading an inspiring text, but the spoken word, the *presence* of people, makes a remarkable difference. And sometimes that difference is everything.

When we listen to spoken words addressed directly to us, we witness and share in the creation of something that did not exist until that moment. When a speaker and an audience get together, it's a *personal* encounter. They *see* the speaker. They *hear* the speaker. They can *talk back* to the speaker. You don't get that reading an email.

Unless the presenter is just churning out a 'same old same old' speech they've given a hundred times before, then they will be finding new ideas, discovering new ways to express those ideas and responding in real time to the mood and even the faces of their audience.

Reading is a fixed medium; the spoken word is fluid. When the public presenter tells a story (and, in a way, all public presentation is story telling), their voice fills the room and has a observable effect on their listeners. It's as if an invisible energetic creative current passes between and weaves connections among all those present. This is why it can feel so great both to have given a wonderful presentation oneself and to have been in the audience of great public speaking.

So excellent public speaking isn't just about overcoming fear and being super confident in front of others. It's about using your creative powers to the maximum –even if you are presenting what might be considered a 'dull' subject. It's about creating an atmosphere, creating an environment where truly rich experience can take place.

To get started, you really do need a foundation of strong self confidence.

## The magic of self confident presentations

You can't see it, you can't touch it, but there's no mistaking its presence. I'm talking about self confidence. *Having* it can turn a pauper into a king. *Not* having it can render a king into a pauper.

Developing self confidence is a vital first step towards brilliant presentation, and not just because it makes *you* feel better.

Why? Because self confidence is *infectious*.



*Self confidence is powerful and your audience will respond to it*

People *feel* your confidence and they respond to that confidence, in itself. Confident people spread inspiration just by being in the same room. Confidence makes your message more compelling. Conversely, if you seem timid and lacking in confidence, then your message will seem dubious to your listeners – even if it's the best material there is.

Your audience won't have confidence in your subject matter – *even if it's the most important and useful topic ever* – if you don't present with confidence.

In the first instance, that confidence comes from how well you have prepared (see *Annex A – The basics of good public speaking*). But there is more to it.

## An inspiring moment

Quite some years ago I was waiting in a hall with two hundred other people for a speaker to start his presentation. I remember looking round and wondering to myself how on earth anyone could have the guts to talk to so many people all at once.

Then I spotted the speaker chatting to one of the event organizers across the room and instantly knew it was going to be a great presentation. He simply exuded good will, humor, deep calm – the absolute epitome of confidence. He looked for all the world as though he was actually relishing the prospect of the upcoming talk – something that, way back then, would have filled me personally with utter terror.

Right there and then I vowed that some day I was going feel just as at ease as he did then with presenting to an audience of hundreds.

Let me tell you, it's a truly wonderful feeling to know you've inspired other people with your words, to feel hundreds of people focusing intently on everything you say, to hear thunderous laughter at your well crafted quips and to feel so completely comfortable that speaking publicly feels like the most natural thing in the world.

People don't just randomly get it into their heads one day that they will take up public speaking. Generally, someone inspires us. And we call upon that inspiration.

### Exercise • Speaking heroes

Think about speakers and presenters – in any kind of context – who have impressed and/or inspired you.

Who has given you a **real sense of their confidence**?

Who **inspires** you to some day be just as compelling as they are?

Make a list of

- their names
- what you heard them speaking about and
- what in particular **impressed** or **interested** you about them.

If you haven't yet found anyone to inspire you, visit the [TED website](#) and look who's talking there.

Now before we go any further it's vital to explode one very common self confidence myth.

## Myth: A confident speaker always expects (and gets) success

Here's the thing, something you really *must* understand about self confidence.

Self confident people are **not always certain** they will be successful.

Self confident people **do not assume** their audience will love them or what they have to say.

That is not what true self confidence is about (although positive thinking certainly does play a part).

Truly self confident people are simply **not afraid of things not going well.**

Of course, they want their talk to go down a storm and, because they are confident, it's more likely to do just that, but their real skill here is to be able to easily relax with the thought that it might not go that well, and to know that if it doesn't they can handle that too.

*That* is the essence of true confidence.

Not being afraid of falling flat on your face is a real strength. Unless you are ready to fail, you will never be ready to succeed. But self confident speakers make this easy for themselves by redefining in their own minds just what success and failure actually mean.

## Another trick of the truly confident

Confident people are less likely than others to be perfectionists. Their standards may be of the highest, but they are happy to be reasonably flexible because they don't see everything in all-or-nothing, black-and-white terms.

For example, when I've coached people in public speaking, I've noticed that at first they often talk in very black-and-white ways about 'failure' or 'success', as if these things were absolutes.

They might say something like: *"I'm terrified my talk will bomb!"* or *"I just want it to go perfectly!"*

Their first step to truly self confident public speaking is to stop thinking like this.

They need to know that success and failure are *relative terms*. If you are speaking to 100 people and 50 of them love your talk, 30 like it, 18 are neutral and 2 absolutely hate it, is this a success or a failure?

I'd call it a *relative* success.

Whether people like your talk is often down to them rather than you. *You can't control everything.* Most of your talk can be clear and interesting with little pockets of less clear or less interesting bits. This is a *relative* success.

Speech, unless you are some kind of pre-programmed robot, is full of pauses, moments of forgetting what you were going to say, snippets of repetition. Some of this in your public presentation can actually be a good thing. Why? Because it makes you human! (You'll note that 'being human' gets mentioned in *Annex A – The basics of good public speaking.*)

So a little bit of 'failure' can actually equal 'success'.

### ■ Exercise • The joys of relativity

Black-and-white thinking, seeing everything in absolute terms, is not usually something we do consciously. We fall into the habit of it, without even noticing.

Check your flexibility levels.

Identify **five 'perfect' events** you participated in and write them down.

Identify **five 'disastrous' events** and write them down.

Beside each item in the first list, note a couple of **less than perfect** aspects of the occasion.

For the second list, note a couple of things that actually **went quite well**.

This will help you start to think more flexibly about what 'success' and 'failure' really mean.

Remember, presentations are very rarely 'complete disasters' **or** 'absolutely loved by everybody who attends them'. Confidence isn't about self delusion, it's about realism.

## Let self confidence come

"You can't hurry love" it says in the song, and you can't hurry confidence either.

Confidence will come once you discover that talking to a group of people – or even a crowd – doesn't have to be any more intimidating than chatting with your best pal over a coffee or a beer.

In fact, this is exactly the approach Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Group, takes. And he recommends it to others too:

*Picture yourself in a living room having a chat with your friends. You would be relaxed and comfortable talking to them. The same applies when public speaking. Try to forget there are hundreds of people watching you and get your point across in the same way you would to your friend. (1)*

You reach that level of presentation confidence by being brave enough to *start* talking in public. Experience makes you truly confident.

But in doing this course you have a huge advantage.

### **The hypnosis advantage**

We regularly use hypnosis to help people experience presenting confidently in their minds *before* they do it for real. This means that when you eventually come to do it for real, *you've already done it*. Your subconscious mind is imprinted with a perfectly genuine, albeit hypnotic, recollection of naturally confident presentation.

This is great way to refine your instinctive confidence. And this is what you are going to find as you undertake your first hypnosis assignment.

The world *needs* better public speakers because, believe me, there aren't that many truly great ones! But one day you can join the ranks of the few if you persevere.

## Assignment

### Public speaking confidence

Download [Public speaking confidence](#) and listen to your download

- every day
- at least once a day
- for 7 days
- or until you notice at least half of the progress indicators shown below

### Progress indicators

- you start to truly understand what self confidence is
- you get used to relaxing listening to the download
- you notice the old fear feelings fading into the background
- you begin to picture yourself truly relaxed and confident speaking in public
- you find you have started to look forward to opportunities to speak in front of others

## Supplementary material

### Related downloads available to purchase

[Boost your self confidence](#) An excellent tool for general confidence building

### Recommended FREE articles

[How to build self confidence](#)



## Public speaking confidence – Progress Checker

*Print as many copies of this checker as you need. Complete one before you listen to the download, and another at the end of each week that you continue to listen to it.*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### How true are these statements of you?

*Circle or check your answer*

I think I really understand what self confidence is

Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .

I am used to relaxing and calming down

Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .

The old feelings of fear are becoming fainter and weaker

Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .

I can really see myself speaking calmly and confidently in front of an audience

Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .

I look forward to having opportunities to speak in public

Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .

## Speak clearly

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This is Step 6 of [10 steps to powerful public speaking](#).



*Speak properly, and in as few words as you can, but always plainly; for the end of speech is not ostentation, but to be understood.* **William Penn**

Speaking clearly and *using language well* is vital if you want to take your public oration as far as you are capable. Managing your emotions when you are presenting is fundamental to remaining clear – not just in the *way* you speak, but also in the *thinking* that lies behind your words.

You should be a delight to listen to primarily because of *what* you say, but also because of *how* you say it. The delivery system through which you convey your content should itself make the content more palatable.

And that last sentence brings us to something very important: you can *be clearer when you use metaphor*. So even before we look at diction and language, I'm going to dig a bit more into metaphor.

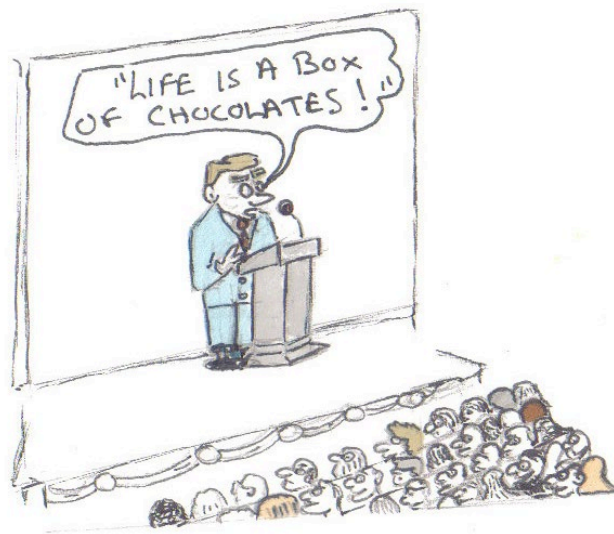
### The wonderful power of metaphor

*In my day we didn't use metaphor; we never used to beat about the bush!*  
British TV personality Hughie Green

Metaphor is everywhere.

Metaphors are an intrinsic part of the way human beings understand and share experience. Our dreams are a series of metaphors, and metaphor is far more widespread in our waking lives than we usually realize. For example, every single word you ever use that 'names' something is really a *metaphor* – which means the word 'dog' isn't the dog itself, but a *parallel representation of a dog*.

Technically, a metaphor talks of one thing in terms of another. For example, the statement: "*Her eyes were sparkling jewels*" is metaphorical. We all understand that her eyes aren't really jewels, they're eyes. But talking of them as 'sparkling jewels' gives a vivid sense of what her eyes are like.



*Metaphor is a powerful and memorable way to communicate*

An analogy, on the other hand (sorry about that metaphor!), is when you liken two patterns of experience to each other on the basis of their similarities, either to make what you say more dramatic or easier to understand.

For example, someone who is describing what it's like to feel nervous might say

*It felt like my stomach had a knot in it!*

Everybody knows what a tightly knotted rope is like, and from that they can easily imagine the kind of sensations a nervous person can feel in their gut.

Of course, it's just a short step from that analogy to a full metaphor:

*My stomach was all in knots!*

## Take two steps

Metaphors and analogies are great ways to make complex information clearer in the minds of people listening to you. What I tend to do is

- describe what I want to talk about directly

and then

- use metaphor or analogy to help make the pattern stick in the mind.

For example, I might first talk at some length about what exactly happens during a panic attack. When I have covered all the essentials, I might go on to liken a panic attack to a 'faulty car alarm' that keeps 'going off' when there's no need.

If I was talking about how the immune system works, I might use the analogy or metaphors of an 'invading army', and the need to 'mobilize the protective forces' of the body, or to deploy T-cell 'snipers' to go round 'mopping up' the pathogens, and so on.

Some metaphors do get over used and tired, so if you can construct some new ones of your own, all the better.

## An important caveat

It's not necessary to constantly liken everything you mention to something else, or to turn everything into metaphors. This would quickly become tedious. However, where you feel that a metaphor or an analogy will either

- *clarify* your message or
- make your message more entertaining and *memorable*

then consider using a colorful simile or an unusual metaphorical expression to help you get over what you really want to communicate. When you use metaphors skillfully, you paint pictures in the minds of your listeners (to use another metaphor) – and they remember them.

## Exercise • The spice of life

Know that famous metaphor “All the world’s a stage”? It might be something of a cliché now, but one person dreamed it up – William Shakespeare. His vivid image draws attention to how much what we call ‘life’ is like ‘acting’.

**Start at the top.** Think about the whole typical human experience of life (just as Shakespeare did). **Invent two or three metaphors** of your own to express something of what that experience is like. (This is not a competition – the aim is to get your creative mind working for you.)

Take some **ordinary aspects** of life and work and **create metaphors** for them. For example

- commuting every day  
(for example: *I don my matador’s cloak and set out to battle the bulls on the bus*)
- getting told off by someone ‘in authority’
- falling in love/out of love
- owning a pet  
(for example: *My house is ruled by a tyrant*)
- trying to explain something to someone who just doesn’t understand you
- getting drunk
- moving into a new neighborhood
- finding out you are completely wrong about something you firmly believed
- winning the lottery (okay, that’s not so ‘ordinary’)
- any other life experience

Make your metaphors as vivid as you can, and aim to invent at least two for each experience.

**A metaphor a day** will transform what you say.

## The wonderful power of story telling

We all love stories, whether we get our story fix from movies, novels, gossip or watching the news. We love *narrative*.

I will often begin and finish a talk with simple stories or anecdotes. Sometimes, the story might be a metaphor to illustrate neatly the *pattern* of other parts of my presentation. At other times it might simply be a true story to show the applicability or universality of what I was talking about.

Stories are wonderful because they *teach* at the same time as they *entertain*.

For thousands of years of human history, public speakers were mainly ‘story tellers’. Listen to good story tellers and practice telling stories yourself to make your presentations more compelling. People will often later remember the points you made through the stories you told when they have forgotten what else you said.

Remember, you want to appeal to a person’s subconscious mind as well as their conscious brain. In fact, you might even think of your speech in its entirety as a kind of story or journey in which you paint pictures, inspire the imaginations and fascinatingly inform the minds of your audience.

If you are unfamiliar with using stories as illustrations or to make a point, search out some of the classic material that's very widely available – the old fables and fairy tales, the wisdom literature of different cultures – and immerse yourself in some of it. Read them for the pure pleasure of it. And also look for stories that 'resonate' with you, or that are relevant in some way to the things you plan to talk about or make presentations on.

Practice, practice, practice telling stories.

But what about how you speak and the kinds of words you use?

## One word at a time

When I used to get anxious when public speaking (thank goodness those days are long gone!) I would find myself getting breathless. I would have to stop, and consciously slow down and *take one word at a time*.

It's as if I would start off running full pelt – and then all the words would tumble over one another.

So my message here to you is... ***clearly enunciate every word***.

This may seem like a very obvious and simple point, but it's amazing how many people disregard its importance, and mumble and jumble their words.

Really practice making each word clear. It's not that you always have to speak very slowly, but that, whether you slow down to draw your audience in or speed up a little to get them thinking faster, all your communication should be clear.

Look online for exercises to improve your diction.

*Listen* to people with great speaking voices (like the late great actor Richard Burton), people who really have a mastery of the spoken word. Listening to lots of people who speak really well will help instill the patterns of good speech in you.

So my **three top tips for clarity** when speaking are:

- make each word **crystal clear**, even when you are speaking faster
- **avoid jargon** where you can
- **use shorter, simpler words** rather than long ones (trying to impress people with big words often backfires! (1)).

The English writer C.S. Lewis had this to say about big words:

*Don't use words too big for the subject. Don't say 'infinitely' when you mean 'very'; otherwise you'll have no word left when you want to talk about something really infinite.*

### ■ Exercise • Just to be clear

When you are rehearsing for a speech, also specifically practice clearly **explaining selected ideas** from the subject matter in your speech.

Ask your practice audience for **feedback**.

How easy was it to **understand** you?

Was what you said **clear**?

How useful did they find any **metaphors** you used?

Use this feedback to polish up your speech.

Check the ground rules we've laid out in *Annex A - The basics of good public speaking*, and consider asking your real audience for feedback too - see *Annex B - Sample feedback form*.

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## Notes

- (1) Oppenheimer, D.M. (2006). ['Consequences of Erudite Vernacular Utilized Irrespective of Necessity: Problems with using long words needlessly.'](#) *Applied Cognitive Psychology*. 20 (2): 139–156. The study found that using long words unnecessarily detracts from a reader's evaluation of a piece of writing. "People can rate something as very intelligent if it has long words in it, but if you use simpler language, they rank it as even more intelligent." According to Oppenheimer.

## Assignment

### Speak clearly

Download [Speak clearly](#) and listen to your download

- every day
- at least once a day
- for 7 days
- or until you notice at least half of the progress indicators shown below

### Progress indicators

- you feel you can **put your point across more clearly, interestingly and concisely** in everyday conversations
- you find **other people are more responsive** to what you say
- you notice that you are **speaking much more clearly** generally
- you really start to **enjoy** (or enjoy even more) speaking to people
- you **find new ways** to describe even quite complex ideas metaphorically, making it easier for others to understand

## Supplementary material

### Related downloads available to purchase

[Be comfortable with silence](#) Strange to say, being great at public speaking means you need to be comfortable with silence. Yes, even when you are presenting to hundreds!

[Express your opinion](#) You will be clearer when you have a clearer sense of what you want to say and why you want to say it.

### Recommended FREE articles

[Speak clearly](#)

[Public speaking \(or 'how to enjoy presentations'\)](#) One of my best, if I may say...



## Speak clearly – Progress Checker

*Print as many copies of this checker as you need. Complete one before you listen to the download, and another at the end of each week that you continue to listen to it.*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### How true are these statements of you?

*Circle or check your answer*

I can say what I want clearly and concisely when I'm talking to people

**Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .**

I notice that other people are more responsive to what I am saying

**Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .**

I seem to be speaking much more clearly generally

**Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .**

I am enjoying speaking to people more

**Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .**

I'm getting the hang of inventing and using metaphors to help people 'get' what I am saying

**Slightly . . . . Partly . . . . Fairly . . . . Mostly . . . . Totally . . . .**

## Basics for good public speaking

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*This is Annex A of [10 steps to powerful public speaking](#).*

No matter what kind of speech or presentation you are making, or to whom, there are a few simple rules that will help ensure you give the best performance possible.

### Know your material

This is the first essential. Outline what you want to say, as bullet points, or a Mind Map (see Step 9). Every item you include should make a **clear** and **essential** contribution to the whole.

Use your outline to develop what you will actually say.

A simple structure to work round is:

**Introduction** – introduce yourself and tell them what you’re going to tell them.

**Exposition** – tell them what you’ve come to tell them

**Conclusion** – summarize – tell them what you’ve told them.

Use clear, simple language and avoid jargon wherever possible.

It is imperative that you **know your material really thoroughly**, and are completely comfortable with it.

This takes a lot longer than you would think, especially when you are new to public speaking. Don’t leave it too late.

Rehearse. Rehearse. Rehearse.

### Use visual aids

People like to have something to look at. Use slides, or flip charts, when you can, but keep them simple and clear. As with your outline, each visual must **contribute**.

## Know your audience

Understand what kind of audience you will be talking to. Be prepared to adapt your material and/or your style of presentation to the audience. One size does not fit all.

## Know your venue

Wherever possible, check out the venue before you give your presentation. Sometimes you have to take what you're given, other times you can change things to enhance your delivery or your audience's experience, such as rearranging the seating.

## Know your equipment

Make sure you can **easily operate** and adjust any equipment – microphone, projector, computer, or whatever. Easels and flipcharts can trip the unwary. So can trailing cables.

## Know what to do if it goes wrong

Things can go wrong even if you have checked all the above. **Have a plan** for how you will proceed if the microphone doesn't work, your slides cannot be shown, or some mix up has occurred.

## Be brief and clear

Keep strictly within your time, and finish a little ahead if you can. Better to leave people wanting more than longing for you to shut up.

## Give handouts at the end

If you intend to provide handouts to take away (in general, these should be summary notes, not your full text), give them out **after you have finished** unless you specifically need your audience to refer to certain information while you are speaking..

## Be ready for anything

**Work out strategies** to deal with the expected and the unexpected. You will be much calmer if you have prepared for these eventualities.

If you arrive late – apologize, explain what might have to be omitted, or cut short, start.

If you lose your place – acknowledge it (people like to know you're human), ask for time, check your notes if necessary, when you're ready, continue.

What questions might you be asked? What will you do about questions you can't answer? (See Step 8)

How will you handle any unpleasantness? (See Step 8)

## Enjoy yourself!

When you have prepared well, you can relax and give yourself over to the experience.

## Sample feedback form

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*This is Annex B of [10 steps to powerful public speaking](#).*

The people best placed to tell you how your speech came over are your audience. Their feedback can help you improve your presentations.

Use the sample text below to develop your own feedback form to give to some members of your audience so that you can evaluate your performance. Remember, feedback is only useful if you use it!

### **Title of presentation/talk**

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Please take a few moments to tell us what you thought of this presentation

I could clearly hear and understand everything that was said

Strongly disagree . . . . Disagree . . . . Neutral . . . . Agree . . . . Strongly agree . . . .

The speaker treated the audience with respect and cordiality

Strongly disagree . . . . Disagree . . . . Neutral . . . . Agree . . . . Strongly agree . . . .

The pace and length of the talk was appropriate to the subject

Strongly disagree . . . . Disagree . . . . Neutral . . . . Agree . . . . Strongly agree . . . .

The speaker explained a complex topic clearly and simply

Strongly disagree . . . . Disagree . . . . Neutral . . . . Agree . . . . Strongly agree . . . .

The speaker covered the subject effectively

Strongly disagree . . . . Disagree . . . . Neutral . . . . Agree . . . . Strongly agree . . . .

The audio-visual material was clear and helpful

Strongly disagree . . . . Disagree . . . . Neutral . . . . Agree . . . . Strongly agree . . . .

The handouts are clear and useful

Strongly disagree . . . . Disagree . . . . Neutral . . . . Agree . . . . Strongly agree . . . .

I particularly liked \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One thing that could have been improved was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you

## Article • Achieving your potential

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### 7 tips to help you become who you really are

*“You are not meant for crawling, so don’t. You have wings. Learn to use them, and fly.” ~ Mevlana Jelalu’ddin Rumi, 13th century*

Having left school at 14 to work as a bellboy at the Mount Wilson Hotel, Milton Humason was later taken on as a mule driver, transporting astronomical equipment up to the famous observatory. He then managed to become a janitor at the observatory, where he worked with Edwin Hubble. Humason asked another astronomer to teach him mathematics in his spare time. Gradually, he learned about the photographic equipment used by the astronomers for delving into the nature of the stars. He rose to the role of photographic assistant, then assistant astronomer. When Hubble discovered the existence of other galaxies beyond our Milky Way and the expansion of the universe, he was keen to assign some of the glory to Humason.

He’d been a lowly mule driver - he helped us know our place in the universe.

He had been the right person at the right place in the right time; an important point, this.

### **We all have varying potential**

To achieve its potential - some might call it ‘destiny’ - a blade of grass needs to be in the right place (decent soil) at the right time (not during a drought). This is what a blade of grass or a flower can do. Plant a person in the earth and pour water on him, and he won’t grow because it is not the right potential for him.

There is such a thing as personal predisposition. The idea that ‘you can be anything you want to be’ flies in the face of observation and is a trap. Why? Because the world has sprinkled within it different types of people - and that’s a good thing. Our blade of grass isn’t going to do well in a math class, however ‘positively’ we think about that.

## The 'anyone can be anything' trap

To believe that everyone can be anything they choose is like saying that the 'ugly duckling' could have become a genuine duckling had he tried hard enough, instead of the swan that he truly was. We are not all going to run as fast as Usain Bolt or penetrate the secrets of the universe with the deftness of Einstein (or Hubble) or fulfill the ideal of socially defined standards of physical beauty.

No, the real secrets to achieving your potential are much more interesting than the 'all you have to do is believe' propaganda that we've been fed in recent years (which, paradoxically, may block us from personal fulfillment).

To achieve your potential, you need to develop a sense of what *you* are naturally like so that you can focus in areas that accord with your innate interests, nature, and strengths. This prevents you wasting time by trying to be a duckling when you are really a swan.

Having said that, I don't want to limit you by describing what 'potential' might mean too narrowly. Who knows the extent of what is possible for men and women in a spiritual sense? But for the purposes of this piece, it's useful to define 'potential' as constructive progression to fulfilling your innate abilities, gifts, and talents.

## What's your specific potential?

When we talk of 'achieving potential', it's easy to be so vague as to what these words mean as to render our discussions meaningless. People might nod sagely at one another without having the slightest idea as to what 'potential' might actually mean for practical purposes. So my first tip on achieving potential is to define our use of the word.

### Tip 1: Achieve your potential by knowing in which direction you travel

Ideas around potential need to be specific. Rather than thinking: "I want to achieve my potential!" - which sounds worthy, but is so vague as to leave you glued to the starting blocks of life, think rather: "I want to become the greatest hypnotherapist/sculptor/writer/ \_\_\_\_\_ I can become!"

The words 'achieving potential' are merely fluff unless they are attached to specifics!

### Tip 2: Learn to disregard popular opinion

Ever heard of the 'Bannister Effect'? Before 6 May 1954, it was thought 'impossible' to run a mile under four minutes. But on that date, Roger Bannister ran a mile in three minutes and 59.4 seconds. He wasn't really supposed to do that. However, it wasn't the physical barrier, but the *psychological* one we refer to when we describe the 'Bannister Effect'. In the 12 months after his historic run, 37 more runners broke the four-minute mile, and in the 12 months after *that*, another 300 did it. All athletes who presumably could have run that fast before Bannister's run!

Learn to forget about what other people see as impressive, great, or even beyond the limits of what can be achieved. Focus on what you really feel you want to do and have potential for, and remember the Bannister effect and how it can be little more than a limiting popular delusion.

My next tip extends this idea.

### **Tip 3: Push the boundaries**

Remember it's not just your potential you need to consider, but the *potential of a situation*. All situations you enter have a potential that *you* can help realize. I'm not suggesting you start breaking laws, but if we are too eager to please others and 'fit in' with public expectations, then we'll never reveal or discover what a situation (be it a business venture, social gathering, or garden design) might actually yield. Play with ideas - push them to their extremes sometimes; go a little further to see what's possible. All progress is made by 'unreasonable' people.

### **Tip 4: Achieve your potential by cultivating curiosity and fascination**

When you are truly fascinated by something and intrigued by how far you can take it, you don't have to divert time or energy desperately 'believing in yourself', because your focus is not on you, anyway. For example:

Signs that say a writer has achieved their potential may be that:

- they get published
- they are widely read

You could argue that writing might be excellent and *not* widely read, but this is just for illustration. To have a chance of reaching their literary potential, our diligent writer needs to be able to forget about end results and focus down on the actual *writing*. If they spend all their time thinking about getting published and read or 'fulfilling their potential as a writer', then where is the focus and space in their mind for actually writing?

Get used to forgetting about 'fulfilling your potential' when you are actually engaged in doing what you do. Fulfillment of potential is a *by-product* of the right kind of effort and focus.

### **Tip 5: Remember: Right time and place**

At the start of this piece, when talking about former mule driver Milton Humason, I said that he was the right person in the right place at the right time.

It's a strange thought that the person with the greatest potential for computer programming may have lived thousands of years ago. We don't know. The woman with the greatest innate potential for brain surgery and research may be about to be born



into an as-yet-undiscovered tribe living in the Amazon rainforest. Time and place may work against people. But it's not just down to chance.

During the Renaissance, some people who showed potential in painting, sculpture, and architecture went to live in Florence, Italy - 'where it was at' at that time. With the Internet, we can find the right people and place (whether that's geographical or virtual) to help harness and develop our interests and skills. If you're the right person, then make a point of finding the right time and place to fulfill your potential. And if you are ahead of your time, then it's down to you to instigate new trends in thought or action. Someone had to start the Renaissance.

### **Tip 6: Clear your way for potential to grow**

We all have basic needs for water, food, and shelter. If these needs are not met, then all your focus will be on fulfilling these 'primal needs' at *the expense of your potential in other areas*.

You also have [emotional needs](#) that may be less easy for you to identify. For example, you and everyone alive have needs for human interaction, feelings of security, a sense of connection to community, a need to feel intimate with at least one other person, needs to feel interested and stimulated by life, and many others.

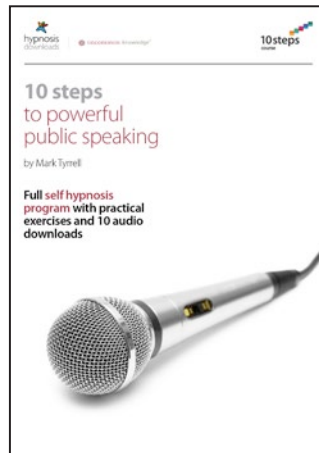
If you are chronically frightened and don't feel safe, or are constantly trying to get enough attention because your social life is off-balance, then energy you could be using for fulfilling your potential will have to be diverted (consciously or unconsciously) toward meeting these basic emotional needs. Your energy and time are finite. People may waste a whole lifetime in the search to satisfy one or more primal emotional need at the expense of potential progress in other areas.

Get what you need in terms of emotional fulfillment in order to free up space to focus elsewhere. Your whole life shouldn't merely be a search for emotional security or excitement or intimacy. These needs should be met so that you don't have to think about them all the time. And of course, realizing some of your potential will meet some emotional needs, as well.

### **Tip 7: Remember your potential may be infinite**

People talk about 'reaching their potential', but how many people tell you they have actually *reached* their potential? "Hi, my name's Bob. I've reached my full potential. That's it, I'm done now!"

Remember, all apparent fulfillment of potential is a step - not an ultimate destination. Too much self-satisfaction and the feeling that we know all there is to be known or can do all there is to be done may effectively leak away further progress. We are always learning, always developing, and always (if we are wise) working to realize our potential.



An in-depth 10 step course that uses hypnosis to program your unconscious mind to develop the psychological, emotional and practical skills of the best public speakers. [Find out more.](#)

## **10 steps to powerful public speaking**

*Full self hypnosis program with practical exercises and 10 audio downloads*

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