

## Polishing Public Speeches

Most of us, at one time or another, were exposed to public speaking through our education. It may have been a college course, or even a high school class. Perhaps the entire semester was comprised of a series of speeches, or perhaps only a single speech was required in a wider communications class.

Those courses taught us some of the basic principles of public speaking. We studied them, memorized them for testing, tried to make an effort at putting them to use during our unbearable classroom presentations and then moved on at term's end, happy to be free of public speaking again!

As working adults, however, we are beginning to realize that those skills we were supposed to learn might actually be valuable to us now. We can see that those who are able to make a favorable impression with their public speaking skills have greater opportunity for job advancement. We realize that great presenters have a wonderful marketing tool at their disposal. Many of us admire those who are able to stand up and eloquently present a viewpoint or idea in other non-business aspects of life.

Unfortunately, our skills remain limited. That brief bit of study did not really stick as much as we might now wish it had. Additionally, the course itself was probably limited in the first place. Let's be honest, classroom speeches in front of a bunch of terrified and frustrated kids really isn't the greatest laboratory for testing the principles of public speaking. Besides, the speeches themselves were probably quite a bit different from what we would be doing today if we had the skills.

So, here we are. We are wishing we would have taken more classes on public speaking and wishing we had paid more attention in the ones we did attend. We recognize that our skills are limited and that improving them would really offer an opportunity to improve the quality of our own life. However, reality is going to stop us from going back to school.

We do not have the time. Spending for the tuition seems outrageous. Studying for the coursework around the rest of busy lives does not seem pragmatic. Our history with public speaking classes leaves us doubting that attendance would really help that much, anyway. With no real alternative in sight, we are simply resigned to the prospect of having to work from a disadvantage from here on out. We will have to keep struggling without having that tool in our communication arsenal.

That commonly held opinion is as wrong as it is self-defeatist. It is possible to gain the public speaking skills we desire without returning to school. There is no need to make a long-term commitment to a classroom study program. You can learn how to give better speeches and to conquer speech anxiety without going through all of those hassles.

There are two keys to making this happen. First, you must have a sufficient level of dedication. You must be willing to learn and to make a strong effort at improving your skills. No one will supply a magic solution that will make you a top orator without effort and commitment on your part. Second, you must find a resource to help guide your study.

A good public speaking learning tool will include information on speech anxiety, the basic elements of constructing a speech, handy delivery tips and tricks, and some more advanced information and help about things like properly utilizing humor, statistics and visual aids in presentations. This guide does not need to be five hundred pages long and it certainly should not cost thousands of dollars. Find a resource that covers the necessities at a fair price and then put yourself to work mastering its lessons.

An investment in a good guide, combined with a willingness to learn a new skill (or to polish existing skills) is all that is necessary to develop top-notch public speaking skills.

Public speaking skills are a great way to improve one's position in the business world and can help improve one's overall life by enhancing self-confidence and buttressing other interpersonal communication skills. As much as everyone professes to hate speaking in public, all of us want to be good at it. Fortunately, that is possible for those willing to learn.

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### About the Author

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