

Module 9: Presentation Skills and Public Speaking



GOALS

By the end of this module, participants should be able to understand:

- Strategies for becoming a better public speaker.
- Strategies for effective presentations.
- Strategies for calming nerves.



TIME

Total: 30 minutes



OVERVIEW

The focus of this session is to help people think more strategically about their public speaking and presentation skills in order to improve their overall effectiveness in relaying information to others about advocacy skills and the Common Core State Standards.

PTA leaders have the opportunity to share the PTA messages to many groups. Additionally, PTA leaders are called upon to use public speaking and presentation skills on a regular basis, even if the leaders are not comfortable speaking in public.



MATERIALS NEEDED

- Easel paper
- Masking tape
- Dark markers



HANDOUTS

- PowerPoint printout
- Presentation Checklist



EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Easel/flipchart
- If you have elected to develop your own PowerPoint presentation to suit your specific training audience for this module, you will need:
 - Computer with PowerPoint software
 - LCD projector
 - All cords and cable needed to connect computer with LCD projector, and extension cord to connect computer and LCD projector with electrical outlet
 - AV stand or tab (if you will be using PowerPoint in this module)
 - Portable speakers for videos



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Introduction

WELCOME TO MODULE 9: PRESENTATION SKILLS AND PUBLIC SPEAKING



SAY

By the end of this module you should understand:

- Strategies for becoming a better public speaker.
- Strategies for developing stronger presentations.
- Strategies for calming nerves.

Chances are that you will have to speak in public as part of your role with PTA. While this can seem intimidating, the benefits of being able to speak well outweigh any perceived fears.

In this session we are going to discuss strategies for becoming a better public speaker, delivering effective presentations and calming nerves that are associated with public speaking.

Even if you don't need to make regular presentations in front of a group, good public speaking skills are useful for all aspects of your life, work and home. For example, you might have to talk about your organization at a conference, make a speech after accepting an award or provide training for new PTA members. You might be asked to make a speech at a friend's wedding, give a eulogy for a loved one or inspire a group of PTA volunteers at a meeting. In short, being a good public speaker can enhance your reputation, boost your self-confidence, and open up countless opportunities.

However, while good public speaking skills can open doors, poor speaking skills can close them. For example, your boss might decide against promoting you after sitting through a poorly-delivered presentation. You might lose a valuable new PTA member by failing to connect with a prospect during a PTA sales pitch or you could make a poor impression with your new team because you trip over your words and don't look people in the eye.

Make sure that you learn how to speak well!



ASK

Who is afraid of public speaking? (Take a few minutes to discuss.)



SAY

Well, we are not alone! Some surveys and research results show that most people are terrified of speaking in front of a live audience, as you can see in this list of the top 10 fears globally!



DISPLAY ON A FLIPCHART OR POWERPOINT:

Top 10 Global Fears

1. Public speaking or stage fright
2. Death and end of life
3. Spiders and other arachnids creatures
4. Darkness and twilight
5. Heights, altitude or elevations
6. People or social situations
7. Flying in airplanes
8. Open spaces and squares
9. Natural thunder and lightning
10. Confined spaces or small rooms



SAY

Chances are that you will at some point have to speak in public as part of your role with PTA. While this can seem intimidating, the benefits of being able to speak well outweigh any perceived fears. To become a better speaker, use the following strategies:



DISPLAY ON A FLIP CHART OR POWERPOINT:

- Planning
- Practice
- Engaging Your audience
- Body Language
- Thinking Positively
- Calming Nerves



SAY

Planning — Make sure that you plan your communication appropriately to think about how you'll structure what you're going to say from your opening words all the way through to your closing statement.

Think about how important a book's first paragraph is; if it doesn't grab you, you're likely going to put it down. The same principle goes for public speaking: from the beginning, you need to intrigue your audience. You will notice that in each of the PTA modules we have included "attention grabbers" throughout the scripts. These can include quotes from famous people on the topic, statistics that emphasize your point or funny anecdotes that lighten the mood.

You also want to develop your closing remarks. What you leave your audience with should summarize what has been covered, the key point or points you want them to take away and stress any action you want them to take after the session.

Planning also helps you to think on your feet. This is especially important for unpredictable question and answer sessions or last-minute communications.

And finally, it is very important that you make presentations “your own” even if you have been provided with all the written tools including a script. If your audience does not feel like you are genuinely knowledgeable or excited about the topic, they will not engage with you or find your material valuable.

Practice

There's a good reason that we say, “Practice makes perfect!” You simply cannot be a confident, compelling speaker without practice.

To get practice, seek opportunities to speak in front of others. As a PTA member, you have the perfect audience in your PTA family. Your local PTA is a great place to develop your public speaking skills because you already know your audience, are familiar with the material and your surroundings and you should have a higher comfort level. The first step is by volunteering to speak at meetings.

When you are planning to deliver a presentation or a prepared speech, create it as early as possible. The earlier you put it together, the more time you'll have to practice. This is not the time to wait until the last minute!

Practice it plenty of times alone, using the resources you'll rely on at the event, and, as you practice, tweak your words until they flow smoothly and easily. Then, if appropriate, do a practice run in front of a small audience: this will help you calm your fears and make you feel more comfortable with the material. Your audience can also give you useful feedback, both on your material and on your performance.

Whenever possible, record your presentations and speeches. You can improve your speaking skills dramatically by watching yourself later, and then working on improving in areas that did not go well. As you watch, notice any verbal stalls, such as “um” or “like”, and practice replacing those verbal stalls with brief pauses. Look at your body language: are you swaying, leaning on the podium or leaning heavily on one leg? Are you looking at the audience? Did you smile? Did you speak clearly at all times? Pay attention to your gestures. Do they appear natural or forced? Make sure that people can see them, especially if you're standing behind a podium.

Last, look at how you handled interruptions, such as a sneeze or a question that you weren't prepared for. Does your face show surprise, hesitation, or annoyance? If so, practice managing interruptions like these smoothly so that you're even better next time.

Engaging Your Audience

When you speak, try to engage your audience. This makes you feel less isolated as a speaker and keeps everyone involved with your message. If appropriate, ask leading questions targeted to individuals or groups, and encourage people to participate and ask questions.

Keep in mind that some words reduce your power as a speaker. Think about how these sentences sound:

"I just want to add that I think we really need the Common Core State Standards."

"I just think this plan is a good one."

Phrases such as "Just" and "I think" limit your authority and conviction. Don't use them.

"I believe in the Common Core State Standards because they are clearer and more focused."

"I am confident that this plan will increase enrollment and allow our members stronger advocacy efforts."

Notice the increase in authority and conviction?

A similar word is "actually." When you use "actually," it conveys a sense of submissiveness or even surprise.

"Actually, I'd like to add that we were under budget last year."

By removing actually your message is clear, concise and stresses confidence:

"We were under budget last year."

Also, pay attention to how you're speaking. If you're nervous, you might talk quickly. This increases the chances that you'll trip over your words or say something you don't mean. Force yourself to slow down by breathing deeply. Don't be afraid to gather your thoughts; pauses are an important part of conversation, and they make you sound confident, natural, and authentic.

Finally, avoid reading word-for-word from your notes. When you read, you are not looking at your audience so you will not be seen as an engaging speaker. Additionally, when you try to read from your notes and look up occasionally, you appear awkward and come across as less confident.

Instead, make a list of important points on index cards and use bullet points. For instance for this workshop, I know I need to cover each of the strategies: planning, practice, engaging your audience, body language, thinking positively, and calming nerves.

Here is a sample index card that allows you to engage with your audience:



DISPLAY ON A FLIP CHART OR POWERPOINT:

Planning

- Attention grabbers
- Closing summation
- Plan for Q&A
- Making it your own



SAY

Body Language

Your body language will give your audience constant, subtle clues about your inner state. If you're nervous or if you don't believe in what you're saying, the audience will know by how you present yourself. Research has shown that up to 94% of communication is non-verbal!



ASK

What are some examples of non-verbal communication that you have seen during presentations? (Discuss both positive and negative examples.)

Examples:

Pay attention to your body language: stand up straight, take deep breaths, look people in the eye and smile. Don't lean on one leg or use gestures that feel unnatural. Don't cross your arms.



SAY

Many people prefer to speak behind a podium when giving presentations. While podiums can be useful for holding notes, they put a barrier between you and the audience. They can also become a "crutch," giving you a hiding place from the dozens or hundreds of eyes that are on you.

Instead of standing behind a podium, walk around and use gestures to engage the audience. This movement and energy will also come through in your voice, making it more active and passionate.

Don't forget to SMILE! When you smile, your audience is more inclined to forgive nervousness and they will be rooting for you.

Think Positively — Positive thinking can make a huge difference to the success of your communication because it helps you feel more confident.

Fear makes it all too easy to slip into a cycle of negative self-talk, especially right before you speak.

Self-sabotaging thoughts such as, “I’ll never be good at this!” or “I’m going to fall flat on my face!” lower your confidence and increase the chances that you won’t achieve what you’re truly capable of.

Use affirmations and visualization to raise your confidence. This is especially important right before your speech or presentation. Visualize giving a successful presentation, and imagine how you’ll feel once it’s over and when you’ve made a positive difference for others. Use positive affirmations such as, “I am the local expert on this topic!” or “I am going to do well!”

Don’t forget to smile!



DISPLAY ON A FLIPCHART OR POWERPOINT:

“The way you overcome fear and shyness is to become so wrapped up in something that you forget to be afraid!” - Lady Bird Johnson



SAY

Cope With Your Nerves



ASK

How often have you listened to or watched a speaker who really messed up?



SAY:

Chances are the answer is “not very often.” When we have to speak in front of others, we can envision terrible things happening. We imagine forgetting every point we want to make, passing out from our nervousness, or doing so horribly that we will never be asked to speak again. But those things almost never happen! We build them up in our minds and end up more nervous than we need to be.

Make an effort to stop thinking about yourself, your nervousness, and your fear. Instead, focus on your audience: what you’re saying is “about them.” Remember that you’re trying to help or educate your audience in some way, and your message is more important than your fear. Concentrate on the audience’s wants and needs, instead of your own.

Crowds are more intimidating than individuals, so think of your speech as a conversation that you’re having with one person. Although your audience may be 100 people, focus on one person at a time, and talk to that person as if he or she is the only one in the room. You should seek several people within the audience to focus on, ideally strategically located around the room.



DISPLAY ON A FLIPCHART OR POWERPOINT:

Steps for Conquering Your Presentation Nerves

- Step 1 – Know your audience
- Step 2 – Know your material
- Step 3 – Structure your presentation
- Step 4 – Calm yourself from the inside



SAY

Notice we didn't say to get rid of your nervousness. This is because presenting is not a natural activity. Even the most practiced presenters get a bit nervous. The point is this: your nervous energy can be used to your advantage. When you are in a heightened state from the adrenaline that is being pumped into your body, you can use that energy to communicate enthusiastically, convincingly, and passionately. The key is to decrease your level of nervousness so you can use your energy on these positive activities, not on trying to control your nerves. The more uncertain you are, the more nervous you will be.

Step 1 — Know Your Audience: If you are asked to speak to a group, make sure to take time to find out a few things beforehand:

- Ask who will be in the audience? (Are they parents, teachers, members of the business community, school board members, etc.)
- What do they already know about the topic? Are they experts on the topic? Will this be brand new information?
- Is there a meeting or event planned before and/or after your talk? What other topics will be discussed? What is the agenda for the meeting? How much time do you have?

The more confident you are that you are presenting useful and interesting material for your audience, the less nervous you will be overall. A great tip is to greet audience members at the door and do a quick survey of why they are there and what they expect. This really helps you build a rapport with the group.

Step 2 — Know Your Material: Nothing is worse for nerves than trying to give a presentation on a topic that you do not know! Our modules will provide you with information and tools for each of the topics; however, it is on you to make sure that you take time to read the material and become familiar with each topic. Remember: Your audience will ask you questions and will look to you as the expert.

Another important point to remember is that you cannot possibly cover everything you know in your presentation. That would probably be long and boring. So select the most pertinent points from your subject base and then supplement with other material if time allows. A great tip is to make your material interesting and memorable, include occasional questions to the audience to encourage audience participation. This enhances the learning experience and gives you a break from presenting. It also allows you deliver your information in a more conversational manner, which is often more believable.

Step 3 — Structure Your Presentation: A common technique for trying to calm nervousness is memorizing what you intend to say; however, all this does is make your delivery sound like it is coming from a robot. If you miss a word or draw a blank, your whole presentation is thrown off and then your nervousness gets worse. It is far better to structure your presentation so that you give yourself clues to what is coming next.

- Have a set of key phrases listed on a cue card.
- Refer to these phrases to trigger your mind as to what is coming up next.
- If you're using slides, use these key phrases in your transitions.

This approach helps you control your own uncertainty about whether you will remember what you want to say and the order you want to say it.

Step 4 — Calm Yourself from the Inside: Nervousness causes physiological reactions, which are mostly attributed to the increase of adrenaline in your system. You can counteract these effects with a few simple techniques:

Practice deep breathing – Adrenalin causes you to breathe shallowly. By breathing deeply your brain will get the oxygen it needs and the slower pace will trick your body into believing you are calmer. It also helps with voice quivers, which can occur when your breathing is irregular.

Drink water – Adrenalin can cause a dry mouth, which in turn leads to getting tongue-tied. Have a glass of water handy. Take sips occasionally, especially when you want to emphasize a point.

Smile – This is a natural relaxant that sends positive chemicals through your body.

Use visualization techniques – Imagine that you are delivering your presentation to an audience that is interested, enthused, smiling, and reacting positively. Cement this positive image in your mind and recall it right before you are ready to go on.

Here are a few more calming presentation tips:

- Press and massage your forehead to energize the front of the brain and speech center.
- Just before you start talking, pause, make eye contact, and smile. This last moment of peace is very relaxing and gives you time to adjust to being the center of attention.
- Speak more slowly than you would in a conversation, and leave longer pauses between sentences. This slower pace will calm you down, and it will also make you easier to hear, especially at the back of a large room.
- Move around during your presentation. This will expend some of your nervous energy.
- Remember that the audience is there to get some information and it is your job to put it across to them.

When it comes to presenting, nerves are inevitable. Letting them get the better of you is not. You need to develop a strategy for taking the focus off your nervousness and putting that energy to positive use. By controlling as much of the uncertainty as you can, you increase your confidence in your ability to deliver an excellent presentation. This confidence then counteracts your nerves, and you create a positive cycle for yourself.

Nerves are not your enemy and you don't have to fear public speaking. For your next presentation, be knowledgeable, be well-practiced and prepared, and try out some physical relaxation techniques. Amaze yourself and impress your audience with your calm and cool delivery of a great presentation.

HANDOUTS

Planning

How much does your audience know about the presentation's subject? (Make sure that your presentation matches their knowledge level – don't make it too complicated or too simple for their needs.)

Where and how will you present (indoors, outdoors, standing, sitting)? Will this affect how you need to prepare?

What is going on before and after your presentation? Do you need to adjust your presentation?

How long do you have? Will your presentation fit in the time allotted?

Are you knowledgeable enough about the topic that you're covering in your presentation? If not, how will you build this knowledge?

Can you visit the presentation room beforehand to get a feel for it?

Does the presentation room have everything that you need? (For example, electrical supply, Internet access, projector screen, and so on.) Do you need to bring your own equipment? (You should always bring your own equipment even if you don't use it, as a back-up)

Do you want to inspire your audience to act? If so, how are you going to do this?

Are you presenting as part of a team? How will you divide up the presentation?

Have you scheduled planning and practice time well in advance?

Have you prepared an evaluation?

Do you need to provide your own handouts and evaluations? How many copies do you need? If someone else is making them, how will you get them the material?

How will you know they are ready?

Content

Does your introduction grab your audience's attention? And does it need to explain your objectives?

Do you follow this by clearly defining the points of the presentation?

Are the main points in a logical sequence?

Do these points flow well?

Do the main points need support from visual aids or props?

Is your presentation too complex? (It's easy to go overboard, especially when you want to impress - remember, keep it simple and focused.)

Does your presentation contain any jargon or acronyms? (These can be confusing for many people, so make sure that you define or eliminate jargon/acronyms from your presentation.)

Does your presentation's conclusion summarize the presentation clearly and concisely?

Is the conclusion strong?

Have you tied the conclusion to the introduction?

Have you practiced your presentation standing (or sitting, if applicable), paying close attention to your body language and posture?

Have you rehearsed often enough to be able to speak smoothly and fluently?

Have you practiced your presentation in front of others? Your practice audience can give you valuable feedback about your presentation.

Power Point Presentation

Is the power point easy to read/view and easy to understand?
Is it tied into the points that you're trying to communicate?

Do your slides all look consistent?
Have you used the same fonts throughout? Are the slides easy to read? Can they be seen easily from all areas of the room?

Have you included too much wording? (Remember, slides are meant to support points or concepts, not replace them. So, no sentences or paragraphs!)

If you're representing an organization, do your visual aids and slides match your organization's branding?

Do you have all of the equipment you need? Laptop, projector, all cords needed to hook it all up? Do you have spare projector bulbs, just in case your existing bulbs blow? Do you have speakers if you plan to show a video?

Have you prepared contingency plans in case your audio/visual equipment fails? Do you have a printed copy so you can use it in the event Power point is not an option?

Be sure to save your presentation on your laptop, a USB drive and email it to yourself, just in case!

Even if all equipment is supposed to be provided; BRING YOUR OWN.
You never know!

The Day of your Presentation

Do you have your slides, notes, and other visual aids in the right order?

Are you dressed and groomed appropriately? (Make sure that this is in keeping with your audience's expectations.)

Have you left enough time for travel and setting up?

Have you checked your visual aids to ensure that they're working, and that you know how to use them?

REMEMBER: Did you provide a sign in sheet? Be sure to remind everyone to sign in. (Ideally, your sign in sheet includes printed name, email, phone number)

Do you know how to deal with nervousness? (Presentation nerves are very common, so learn how to manage presentation nerves to use that energy to your advantage.)

REMEMBER: Greet participants as they arrive if possible, helps to establish rapport.

REMEMBER: During your presentation, make and maintain eye contact with members of your audience?

Have you made sure that your audience understands everything that you've covered? (Invite them to ask questions if you're unsure.)

REMEMBER: Hand out evaluations Have you asked for feedback from your audience? Is there anything that you could learn, to improve your next presentation?

Do you need to follow up with any of your audience? Put a star by their name on your sign in sheet.