

A useful guide for pastors, group leaders, coaches, & storytellers

You're On!

101 Tips to improve your public speaking skills

Ruth Stotter



“Many tips for speakers, storytellers and my fellow pastors in a concise, readable, and direct format. I wish I had this book decades sooner!”

—Mark Berry, pastor and healing arts therapist

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Your spirit of humility, balanced with your entertainment are as important as the content of your talk. Your audience cannot have a good time if you are in agony or if you do not sound interested in what you are saying. Help them by having fun while sharing your expertise.

Keep in mind that if you are trying to persuade your audience to adopt or change a belief this is directly related to their liking and trusting you. Remember, your audience wants to like you and your speech or story.

Contents

- Chapter 1 How to Begin 11
- Chapter 2 Writing Your First Draft 14
- Chapter 3 Creating A Speaker's File 17
- Chapter 4 Incorporating Stories and Anecdotes into
Your Talk 19
- Chapter 5 Revising Your First Draft 23
- Chapter 6 The First Three Minutes 30
- Chapter 7 How To End Your Talk 33
- Chapter 8 Rehearsing 35
- Chapter 9 Using Repetition 45
- Chapter 10 Humor 47
- Chapter 11 Suspense 51
- Chapter 12 Pause 53
- Chapter 13 Your Voice 55
- Chapter 14 Sound Effects 59
- Chapter 15 Facial Expressions and Body
Language 60
- Chapter 16 Special Vocal Techniques 64

Chapter 17	Using Props	71
Chapter 18	Getting Feedback—Critiqued	72
Chapter 19	If You Want Audience Participation	75
Chapter 20	If You Are Being Introduced	77
Chapter 21	Handouts	79
Chapter 22	Home Preparations	80
Chapter 23	Stage Fright	82
Chapter 24	Setting Up Your Performance Space	86
Chapter 25	Using a Microphone	89
Chapter 26	Warm-Ups	91
Chapter 27	You're On!	
	Delivering Your Speech or Story	97
Chapter 28	Things to Avoid	102
Chapter 29	After Your Speech or Story	104
Chapter 30	Audience Questions	107
Chapter 31	Contracts	109
Chapter 32	Keynoting	111
Chapter 33	Sources for Mini-Stories	116
	RECOMMENDED READING	118

Obatala, Lord of the universe, decided to test the wisdom of Orulu, and ordered him to prepare the finest food he could think of, so Orulu prepared ox tongue. When Obatala asked, “Why is this the finest food?” Orulu answered, “What can be more important than the tongue? With the tongue we teach good manners and virtue, we talk of great matters, and praise those who are deserving.”

The next day Obatala said to Orulu, “Today I want you to fix the worst food that you can think of.”

Again, Orulu prepared ox tongue, Obatala was shocked. “Orulu, how is it possible for the best to also be the worst?” Orulu answered, “I told you that the tongue is the best, but it can also be the worst. The tongue can slander, destroy good reputations, and ruin whole nations.” Obatala marveled at Orulu’s wisdom.

—Adapted from a Cuban tale reported by
Ramon Guirar



CHAPTER 1

How to Begin



Make a folder in which to keep the following information about your event:

- ~ The name, e-mail address, and phone number of your contact person
- ~ Map, GPS address, or directions to the place where you will be speaking and the telephone number at that location
- ~ The scheduled time for your talk to begin
- ~ The allotted time for your talk
- ~ Your contract (if you have one)
- ~ A description of what you will wear, as you do not want to be stressed on the day of your talk with selecting clean, comfortable, and attractive clothing. (Also note if you will be wearing a lavalier microphone (see TIP 80))



Make a list answering the following questions:

- ~ Why are you making this talk?
- ~ Who is your audience?
- ~ Why were you asked?
- ~ What points do you hope to make?
- ~ What obstacles do you foresee in accomplishing your goals?
- ~ If you hope to persuade people to change their opinions or to see an event or issue from a different perspective, what preconceived ideas might people have?

Be honest as you list your ideas, feelings, and thoughts. For example, if you are new in the community and hope to make a good impression, new friends, or network in your career, put these things on your list. Above all, you want to demonstrate sensitivity to your audience, as well as provide relevant facts and a satisfying listener experience.



Put these lists away for at least one day. Then review, adding new ideas and thoughts. By answering these questions in writing, rather than just thinking about them, you have already begun the speech writing or storytelling process.

CHAPTER 2

Writing Your First Draft



As you write your first draft, remember that it is a rough draft. Don't try to make it perfect. It is easier to delete material than to develop new ideas. Write down everything you think might be of interest or applicable. Then prioritize this draft with colored highlighter, using one color to mark items that you feel are most important, another color for lesser important items, and a third for the least important items.



Do your research. Even if you thoroughly know and understand your topic, double check the accuracy of

your information and seek out up-to-date facts and quotations. Check the pronunciation of unusual words.



If appropriate, incorporate local names, streets, personalities, or other information that link you to the group you are addressing. Humor can be an excellent attention-confirming tool, as a part of your opening.

Example:

A speaker addressing a state poultry organization opened her speech by telling her audience that her grandfather, who lived well into his eighties, had eaten a hard-boiled egg every morning of his life. She said that she received a standing ovation before she even began her talk!





Sincerity is persuasive. Don't say anything that you don't believe. Avoid stories or anecdotes that you don't personally enjoy, even if they support your point.



As you write your story or talk, remember that you will be “telling” it in oral language. Spoken language does not use the same rules of grammar as written speech. You do not need to always speak in complete sentences. You can repeat a word or phrase for emphasis, for poetics, for humor, or to build tension.

Example: Barbara always wore purple. Purple blazers. Purple hats. Even purple shoes. Sometimes, bright purple. Sometimes, soft lavender. From head to toe—purple. She was known as the “purple lady.”