

Common Mistakes When Public Speaking 11 to 15

11 Failing to Start Strong

Starting strong is very important and you should grab your audience's attention within the first 30 to 60 seconds, so they know exactly why they are there and why they are listening to you. Milo Frank suggested that you only have 30 seconds in which to engage your audience. Simply put, the first thing that you say is one of the most likely things to be remembered by the audience. This is called the rule of "Primacy". So, this is not the time to do the traditional introduction, this not the time for housekeeping, this is not the time for pleasantries. But it is the time for powerful statistics, quotations and imagery; and it is the time to grab attention and capture the audience.

12 Giving Too Much Information

In public speaking less is often more and an audience loves a speaker that can get the key message across without too much information. This is also known as the Keep It Simple (KIS) principal. Generally I recommend that 3 or 4 points is sufficient for any speech, regardless of the length. The human mind can only absorb 4 or 5 chunks of information at a time, so KIS and give them 3 or 4 chunks of information at most. Don't do PowerPoint slides with 10 points per slide and 30 slides – this is death by PowerPoint and information overload combined.

13 Having no call to action at the end

I often see speakers start strong, give their 3 or 4 points and then they simply stop talking. I then go away and think, that was interesting, but I don't do anything different and I don't change my behavior. What is your call to action? What do you want the audience to do at the end of you speech. So make you last words count and let the audience know exactly what you are asking them to do next

14 Standing behind the lectern for the entire presentation

It is much more effective to speak from the centre of the stage than behind a podium or lectern. So always at some stage in your presentation, come to centre stage, be open and vulnerable for all to see and connect with the audience. The centre stage is the most powerful position on the stage for creating learning and building rapport with the audience. Even if you are using PowerPoint or other audio visuals, it is always possible to take centre stage at some stage during the presentation. Standing behind lecterns, podiums and tables is really a way of providing a security blanket or a barrier to protect just a little from the audience.

15 Acting like an expert and assuming guru status

One of the biggest destroyers of rapport and audience trust is the speaker who not only is the expert (this is fine) but acts like the expert, acts like the guru and has little respect for the audience's knowledge. The best thing to do is act humble, be genuine and always assume that there will be someone in the audience who knows as much as you in some aspects of your speaking topic and there may even be someone who knows more than you on your entire topic. So be humble, don't wear your guru's hat and be open to suggestions, ideas and other ways of thinking, even if you are the expert.