
A BRIEF GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

Speaking well in public is a very valuable and difficult skill. There is no substitute for practice but some of the tips and ideas below will help you be confident at the Summit.

Whenever you have to speak in public remember: everyone who does it is nervous no matter how experienced they are, the audience will always forgive you for making a mistake, and be yourself; there is no “right” way of speaking or giving a speech!

Speaking Out

Whatever you are speaking about, it is essential that you structure your points well, so that your audience can clearly follow the issues you address.

Make sure you don't try to cram in too much; the sessions during the Commonwealth Youth Summit are quite short and there will be lots of different opinions. Keep your comments to less than three minutes.

Delivery

Good delivery is absolutely vital. Unfortunately if your audience is distracted by odd mannerisms or turned off by a dull delivery then they will be less likely to hear your message.

Verbal

Think about the acoustics of the room – for example; lots of people or furniture will absorb the sound of your voice and large halls which echo mean you need to speak even slower than normal.

★ **Rate:** Are you speaking too quickly? A good thing to ask yourself is “Am I speaking too slowly?” If you think the answer is “Yes” then you are probably speaking at the right rate.

★ **Pauses:** Do you use pauses to add impact to your speech or do you simply race through it?

★ **Variety:** Do you vary your voice? Does the pitch of your voice rise during questions? Does the volume of your voice decrease when you are describing a quiet moment? You will do this all the time while speaking, try saying the word “really” as a question, a statement and as a sarcastic remark – same word but three different ways to use your voice.

★ **Pronunciation/ Articulation:** Don't try to use words because they are long and sound clever if you wouldn't normally do so. Odd words which don't fit with the rest of your speech sound out of place rather than making you sound smart.

★ **Language:** Is your language appropriate? Avoid slang terms that may not be understood by your audience.

Non-verbal

★ **Gestures:** Do you use gesture effectively? Do you over gesture?

★ **Movement:** Do you move around too much when you speak? Some movement is natural when you speak but pacing or swaying become distracting.

★ **Eye contact:** Do you maintain good eye contact? Using small notes helps to make sure you don't hold anything in front of your face and make sure you look at your audience.

Finally

All speeches do a combination of three things: entertain, inform and persuade. Getting the right balance between these three aims depends on the purpose of your speech. Make sure you know what you are trying to achieve before you start.

