

The Eloquent Woman's Checklist for the Whole Speaker

Too many of my trainees **focus on preparing the speech and not the speaker**...or, if they focus on preparing themselves, they zero in on just one aspect of what they need to do. But **to succeed as a speaker, you need to prepare the whole speaker for your presentation**, not just one or two parts of yourself. That's true whether you are addressing a small meeting or a large assembly. Here's a checklist I like to use to make sure my own preparations are complete before I speak. How many of these preparations are on *your* checklist?

Intent

- Do I know what the audience wants from me? Is that what I'm going to give them? Do my goals match theirs?
- If not, why am I speaking to them? How will I reach them?
- What do I want to get out of this speaking experience?
- What do I need to learn from the audience? How will I find out?
- Do I intend to engage the audience? Do I just want them to listen? Do I intend them to act on something?

Content

- What do I need to include or exclude to meet my intentions and those of the audience?
- How can I put my facts across persuasively? What are my data, ideas, proofs, examples?
- What emotion or personal experience can I add to the mix?
- Is there content the audience can contribute? Am I comfortable with them sharing their insights?

Mind

- Am I focused and ready? Do I feel prepared?
- If not, what am I anxious about? What's the worst thing that could happen? How will I deal with it?
- What are 3 successful things I've done before that I can use again this time?
- What are 3 things I'd like to improve this time, based on previous speaking experiences?
- How and where will I fit those into my presentation?
- Am I prepared with breathing exercises or other ways to stay calm?
- What will help me relax and focus?

Body

- Have I taken care of the basics? Am I rested, fed, hydrated, stretched out, relaxed?
- Do I need to spend 10 minutes before the speech attending to breathing and stretching?
- Am I wearing clothes and shoes that are comfortable enough to help me stand and move as needed?
- If I don't feel well, what do I need to change to get through my speech successfully?
- Have I thought about how I will gesture, move, sit or stand during the course of the presentation?
- Are those movements planned or random?
- Do my movements help underscore my points?
- Is my posture straight but relaxed? Are my shoulders hunched? Am I centered at my core?
- Am I inadvertently clenching anything--teeth, hands, shoulders, neck? Why?

Audience interactions

- Can I be comfortable handling Q&A without feeling challenged whenever a question is asked? Have I reviewed the [17 reasons to welcome audience questions](#)?
- Have I thought through events that may challenge all my assumptions about this speech? Do I know what I'll say and do if no one agrees with me, or if someone gets angry?
- Am I ready to roll with whatever situation arrives, with calm and good humor?
- Or am I going to get impatient and angry?

Wardrobe

- Are my clothes clean, pressed and mended? Do they fit me?
- Will my wardrobe allow me (if needed) to do things like crawl under a table to plug in a cord or reach high to point at a chart? Have I rehearsed my movements while wearing my intended outfit?
- Am I using color to my advantage? Will it help me stand out in the setting?
- Is there anything about my outfit that will distract me? Distract my audience?
- If I plan to gesture, have I removed rings and bracelets?
- If I'm standing behind a lectern, have I focused attention near my face?
- What from my outfit will be seen in that setting?

Technology and the unexpected

- Do I know how my own technology works?
- Do I have any adapters, cords or batteries I may need?
- Am I making the mistake of assuming there will be technical help?
- Can I give my presentation even if all the technology fails? Can I speak without my slides?
- Do I have plans B, C and D ready?
- Have I seen the room and available technology ahead of time, or do I need to show up early to do that?
- Is the room too hot, cold or noisy? Have I asked the facility staff for help fixing that before my talk?

Extra questions for introverts

- Can I "[fake it until I make it](#)" when it comes to projecting confidence?
- Should I welcome others talking so I don't always have to?
- Have I considered the [advantages that introverts have because of the way they "think first, talk later?"](#)
- Can I [find out what I need to learn from the audience](#) in a way that makes me comfortable? Do I need to greet them at the door so I don't meet them all at once?
- Will I feel more comfortable during Q&A if I can walk up to the questioner, so it feels like I'm speaking one-on-one? Will that be possible, given the room setup? Can I make that happen?
- Do I know how to use [time-buying phrases](#) and an [active listening stance](#) during Q&A so I have a little time to think about my answer?
- Should I plan to spend more time talking to audience members one-on-one after my talk, rather than take most questions from the stage, if that would feel more comfortable?
- Have I planned some down time after the presentation, so that I can regroup and recover without others around?