



How to improve a speech in 5 minutes: A cheat's guide

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from a TEDMED Speaker Coach

How to improve your speech - so you don't crash and burn - in 5 minutes.

Very, very few speeches are successes. The rest are either survived or are full blown cringe-worthy disasters. This is a crib sheet for those put on the spot at short notice and the others too lazy to prepare.



1. First ask yourself: Why are you standing up and putting yourself through this? Do you want to inform or persuade? What must you achieve? What defines success? Answer these questions first and it will focus your thoughts and your words.

2. If persuasion is your goal, compare the current with the desired future and use “we”.

3. If you want to inform, identify and tell one “take away”.

4. Use fresh (i.e. unused) examples and avoid tired metaphors.

5. Use language you would in a 1-2-1. With a friend.

6. Use short sentences and words. Max 15 words per sentence and 2 syllables per word. (A tip: Maximum means you can use less!!!!)

7. Narrow your message to 3 points. They won't remember any more anyway. And you probably can't either!

8. Identify and repeat the few words that summarise your message.

9. Never, ever, speak for more than 20 minutes. 5 is better. 3 even better.

10. Breathe slowly and deeply from your belly.

11. Speak slowly and confidently. It is almost impossible to speak too slowly. And even

if you aren't confident - just pretend you are!

12. Stand up straight and smile.



About Peter Botting

Strategy, storytelling and speaker coaching from a TEDMED speaker coach.

Peter has been a storytelling coach for 24 years - working with politicians, political campaigns, business leaders and non-profits. Helping them to stop underselling, identify and articulate their story and then tell it effectively.

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