



The Speech Clinic®



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Be prepared!

To be prepared is the characteristic of the scout movement. Scouts are safe in their minds. They know how to survive in the wilderness in critical situations. They have learnt to be prepared for all contingencies. They have prepared for the unprepared!

A public appearance is a form of wilderness in which we have to learn to survive. The stress that we feel, the very moment we become aware that we are to deliver a presentation, comes from worries about the unexpected to happen (see Speaking Tips # 6). Consequently the art of succeeding is connected with the art of preparing, also for the unprepared. But certainly you cannot prepare for something that you don't know will happen, you may say. Well, of course you can! It is a matter of foreseeing which unexpected situations are most likely to happen, if any. Then prepare steps to adapt to or prevent the situation. Below you will find some examples of preparing questions which you should straighten out:

Logistics

How does the room look? What kind of seating? How about acoustics? Is all necessary equipment available, and does it work? Is the ventilation OK? Is lighting OK for my overheads or projector?

Audience

How many? How is the distribution according to sex? Education? Professional backgrounds? Religion? (Depending on the above) homogeneous or diversified audience? Will they be rested and alert/tired/ drowsy/hungry and irritated?

The Speech

Is my introduction such that it will catch the audience? Is the speech body spiced enough to be remembered? Is there a clear message in the conclusion? Do I know the conclusion by heart so that it can be thrown in earlier if time runs out? Do I know the content so well that I don't depend on a manuscript word by word? Have I prepared methods to activate the audience if needed?

Mentally and Physically

Have I visualised success? Have I replaced all negative thoughts with positive thoughts? Have I relaxed with stretching and breathing? Am I thoroughly rested? Do I wear clothes that suit my audience and the situation? Do I have rubber soles under my shoes to prevent clamping on a wooden floor?

Nowadays I never go to a dinner party without preparing a short speech in case I have the hostess on my right (Swedish custom that this person gives a speech of appreciation). Combining this with some of what has been discussed during dinner will make people think that everything said was spontaneously invented. It works so well that, I may be very disappointed when my preparation is wasted because I was placed somewhere else. But that's actually silly. That is like being a scout and disappointed when not being hit by a natural disaster.

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