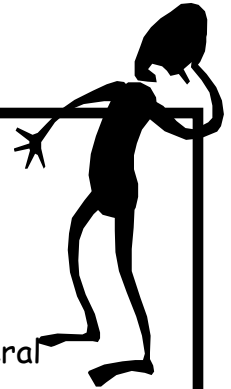


UCA Writing Center



How can I deal with Speech Anxiety?



Take precautions to prevent problems ahead of time.

- Practice, practice, practice! Rehearse aloud, and be sure to use several different wordings to give yourself flexibility.
- Use legible notes, well spaced for each reference; number your pages.
- Be familiar with the setting—size of room, closeness of audience, amplification equipment—so you're not surprised. Stand up at the front of the room as people file in.
- While practicing, focus on your ideas—what you'll be saying first, second, third etc.—rather than your fears of "how you're doing."
- During practice, remind yourself of things you're doing very well—marshalling materials, varying your gestures, and so on.

Search and destroy your hidden fears.

- Information: What's your shakiest piece of information or least well-supported claim? Can you improve it?
- Audience: Who's going to be there? Whom do you most dread facing? Why? Can you overcome that dread through better preparation? Through convincing yourself that the dread is unfounded?
- Visualization: You can visualize yourself giving a successful speech?
- Questioning: What's the one question you hope no one will ask? How will you answer it?
- Appearance: Are you worried about looking young? Inexperienced? Poorly or inappropriately dress? Awkward? How can you compensate for those worries in what you do, wear, or say?

- Disasters: What's the worst thing that could go wrong during a speech? What can you do to prevent it?
- End of career: What's the worst thing that could happen to you as a result of this speech? Will it happen? Is it really the end of the world?

Prepare yourself physically to speak.

- As your time to speak nears, take several deep breaths, holding them and then slowly releasing them.
- If your mouth has a tendency to dry, keep a glass of water handy; drink a little before and after your speech.
- Just before you rise to speak tense the muscles in your legs, arms, chest, stomach, buttocks, and face. Tense muscles must relax for a while after forced tension.
- Just before you utter your first word, take one last deep breath and perhaps tense your hands and arms if you can do so unobtrusively.
- And remember, the act of speaking will drain off excess energy within a minute or two, especially if you remember to move during the introduction of the speech. You won't be as nervous once you've gotten into the heart of your speech as you will be when you first begin.