

5 Helpful Public Speaking Tips for the Writer

Many writers tell us, "I'm a writer, not a speaker." If this describes you, let us offer a few tips from the stage to make your next book signing, author coffee, or speaking opportunity more comfortable

1. Get out from behind the podium. Most non-speakers want a podium to hold on to and even hide behind, but the podium is a barrier between you and your potential readers. It makes you look unapproachable, and it makes many look small. If you use a podium for notes, come from behind it often and stand in front of it with your audience. Make your point and then go back to your notes.

2. Speak slower and more clearly than you think sounds normal. Use pauses after making a strong or delicate point. We've all listened to speakers who speak so fast and without good diction and it frustrates us. Slow down, speak clearly, pause.

3. Use a microphone. Most new speakers don't like to use a microphone, but that screams amateur. Professionals use microphones. Arrive a little early to test it out. Have a friend sit in the back of the room and give you thumbs up when you've found that sweet spot where you are to hold the mic, stand near the mic, or where it ought to be on your lapel. Then practice your volume level so you know how soft is too soft.

4. Have an ending. Good speakers know how to end with a bow—not a literal one, but one that lets your audience know they've invested their time wisely in listening to you. Offer a challenge, end with a quote, ask a thought-provoking question, or share a story. If you close with prayer, be certain the prayer is a real prayer and not an opportunity to hammer your message home or make another point. These kinds of "prayers" rub audiences the wrong way.

5. If you suffer from nervous [dry mouth](#), get a product called Throatcoat: The Entertainer's Secret. It produces saliva when your mouth goes dry. A little goes a long way so don't overdo it, but after my embarrassing lip-smacking live television interview (long story) I learned about this product and it is great. No more lip smacking. You can find it on the Internet.