

Data dumping

Avoid bombarding your audience with stats and numbers. Instead, project an infographic for them to look at while you explain its findings and relevancy to the topic.

Examples:

✗ “Here’s a graph that shows that.”

✓ “As you can see, the “x” axis corresponds to the star's brightness of while the “y” axis corresponds to mass. By the line you see here, we know that more massive stars give off more light.”

Extremely formal language

When planning your speech, don't aim to speak in an overly formal tone or use words that you wouldn't use in everyday conversation. Keep it casual, relatable, and speak to the audience like you would a group of friends.

Examples:

✗ “Many pundits speculate that the mass of information can be rather misleading and contradictory in nature; however, I am not of that lot. The manner in which we inspect the collected data makes a noteworthy impact. Thus, I have rendered a formula.”

✓ “There’s a lot of people in my field of work who look at all this data and think that scientists are trying to mislead them. But I’m not one of them. All I’m saying is that how we look at the data matters. So that’s why I’ve created my own system.”

Writing every word verbatim

You don't want to have your head buried in your notes during the speech, so keep your sub-points brief whenever possible. Use keywords to spark your memory while on stage to make your delivery sound more natural and in-the-moment. And don't forget to practice!

Examples:

✗ “I’m not here today to tell you about climate change. We’ve all seen the stats and we all know that shifts in policy are extremely necessary.”

✓ “Climate change - policies ineffective.”

Abrupt introductions and conclusions

Avoid jumping right into a topic without introducing yourself and other background information that might be necessary for them to understand the purpose of your speech. Just the same, avoid suddenly ending your speech and, instead, leave them with something memorable.

Examples:

Introduction

X “You don’t need to know my name, you just need to know why it’s important to spay and neuter your pets.”

✓ “My name is Angela Borren and I’m the founder of Pets Thrive animal shelter, veterinary clinic, and adoption center. I’m here to talk to you about how spaying and neutering your pet can be not just good for your pet and your family, but your entire community.”

Conclusion

X “Well, that’s all I’ve got!”

✓ “I hope you walk away with more information about how to keep your pets safe and decrease animal suffering in our community. Whenever you see a stray cat or dog, think of Athena and her journey from an unhealthy stray to a thriving lap dog. By the way, here’s a photo of Athena now... happily chewing her birthday bone. Thank you for your time and attention.”

Self judgment or depreciation

Don't talk about how you're not a good public speaker or how inadequate your presentation is. This will lessen your credibility and might cue some people to tune out.

X “Sorry, I’m pretty uncomfortable on stages but I’ll try to keep it together.”

✓ “I hope that my passion for this project inspires you to take action as well.”