

SPEAK & WRITE LIKE A LEADER

OLYMPIA
COMMUNICATORS
GROUP

YOU CAN GRAB LISTENERS' ATTENTION IN 30 seconds or less, before you say your name. Open presentations with a Greeting, Question, and a Promise and make your audience eager to listen.

GREETING

Open with a *friendly face* and *direct eye contact* on one pair of eyes, and with high energy say, **GOOD MORNING** (afternoon, evening). Follow with a line to get them used to your voice: *Thank you for being here today. Thank you for inviting me today. It's great to be back in your (city, neighborhood).*

QUESTION

Open presentations with a **question**. Questions create a quest. Try one of these three.

1. **Direct**—*How many of you...?* For sensitive Q's: *How many of you know someone who...?*
2. **Framed**—Put a frame around the issue: *The question before us today is, how can we...?*
3. **Fact/Story Q**: Start with a fact or tell a brief story and follow with a direct or framed question.

PROMISE

"Promise Lines" have two parts: a *preview* of what you will present and a *promise* of what they'll gain. **Today I will...** *introduce, explain, explore, show, give, share* [avoid the lazy phrase "talk about"] ... **3** (use a number with countable information) name the information...

so that you will... [use the word *understand* if you can: *understand* means to stand under, to support] (promise *benefits* they will gain by listening or by participating; two benefits are better than just one).

Example: police officer talking to worried neighbors.

Good evening. Thank you for being here. I've got a question for you. How many of you know someone who's had their house broken into? Tonight, I'd like to share with you 3 easy ways to protect your house, so that you'll understand what burglars are looking for and you'll be able to make your house so safe, you can go away on vacation and just relax.

NAME & CREDENTIALS

Say your name here (or after the question), *not* at the start of your talk. Give *credentials* that qualify you to speak. Add things you have in *common* with audience. Or say: **What I really do in my job is, I help people....** (*I help people find good jobs*). Tell them *when* you'll take questions (during or after).

OUR VOICE IS A HOLOGRAM OF WHO WE are. To sound confident, decisive, professional, try these 4 natural ways to speak American English.

1. Speak in short phrases

Avoid long rambling sentences. A phrase is a group of words that express an idea (a thought-unit). Aim for from 2–14 words; the best average is 7 words.

2. Followed by short pauses

A Chinese proverb says: "*When the words end, the meaning flows on.*" Pause after phrases for part of a second to let your ideas sink in and be absorbed.



Where would you pause in Kennedy's opening?

We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom—symbolizing an end as well as a beginning—signifying renewal as well as change.

3. DROP your pitch firmly on endings

The key to great speaking is **pitch**. Go down in pitch (musical note) on the final syllable of all phrases and sentences. English is a staircase language: words go down on endings. Develop the habit of dropping pitch at the ends of *everything* you say, even most *questions*. To sound even better: *round* the pitch down on endings.



Probably 90% of yes/no questions should end down:

Are you O^K?

or

Are you O^K?

Say your name professionally as broadcasters:

I'm Michael Busch mohle. I'm Sue Richards. I'm Sally Anderson.

4. Pitch UP to communicate meaning

We speak not to recite words, but to communicate ideas. To convey ideas, **emphasize** the key idea in each sentence or phrase (usually one or two words). To hear the power of emphasis, stress each word:

Homer doesn't kiss his wife.

To emphasize, *raise your pitch on the accented syllable* of the key word. The higher you go up on the key syllable, the more dynamic you'll sound.

Here's a voice warm-up exercise.

Practice saying the alphabet A through Z in your car with full volume to open up the lower range of your voice and sound decisive:



WRITE

BEFORE SENDING EMAIL OR ANY WRITTEN document consider your purpose:

- 1) What do you want the reader to **know** (be aware of or understand), or to **do** (an action to take)?
- 2) After reading your email, how do you want the reader to **feel**? Three basic tips follow.

1. Write to ONE reader . . . Always

Stop writing to groups or teams: groups don't read. Reading is a private act performed by one person at a time. When you write, you are writing to **only one person** even if 1,000 people read it. Therefore, it's never *Dear Friends*, but *Dear Friend*. Not *Dear Customers*, but *Dear Customer*. Never write *Hi All*, because "all" doesn't read. Just write *Hi*.

You can address email to a team, but word it as if writing to one team member: *I'm sending this to you, and other members of the team*. Write the body of email to one person. All communication is one-to-one communication. Write email as you'd write a love letter. In a love letter, would you write the words *all of you*, or *many of you*, or *some of you*? I hope not. Don't turn the reader into a herd. Write to one person.

2. Put "YOU" in sentence one

To connect immediately with the reader: include the word "you" or "your" in the first sentence of nearly everything you write. Five examples:

- 1) *Thank you for.... Thanks for your....*
- 2) *I could really use your advice.*
- 3) *Your ideas in today's meeting were helpful.*
- 4) *Your ad on the Internet caught my eye. Or. I was excited to see your ad for a....*
- 5) *In this report, you will find....*

Note: This is the friendly "you," not a "blaming" you: *What's wrong with you? You are an idiot*. Also: To build relationships, add a sentence that is a sincere, honest compliment: *I always look forward to reading what you've written*.

3. Get your message in 3 sentences

In your first 2 or 3 sentences, let the reader know immediately your message: either what you want him to *know* or what you want her to *do*. Busy readers want to know immediately what you want, or what this is about. Then, use the rest of the email or an attachment, to explain, elaborate, justify, give specs, or persuade.

4. Reply to angry email by phone

A person sending angry email is suffering (he didn't get what he wanted). He needs understanding, not retaliation. Phone or visit, play innocent and say: *I just got your email, please help me understand what is happening*. People are differently in person.

If you must write a response, write in Word. Spill your guts. Let it rest over coffee, lunch, overnight. Time is a great editor. Do you still want to send this? Ask yourself: **What will my response DO to my future working relationship with this person?** One bad email can end a relationship **People remember us for how we make them feel**.

Note: Never write anything *negative* in email, especially about *people*. It could ruin your career. As a saying goes: *If you can't say something nice about someone, at least say something vague*.

(However, one old newspaper editor used to respond to his hate mail like this: *"Dear Mr. Jones, Just wanted you to know that some moron has been sending me vicious, racist messages and signing your name to them."*)

6. Keep endings quick and clean

- Instead of the wordy line: *If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me*, why not simply: *Questions? Call me*.
- Instead of ending with words commonly used in letters, be creative. In the United States we have ten paid holidays and 4 seasons. E.g., I've written, *Warm wishes from chilly Seattle. Happy New Year*.
- No naked "Thank you's." Include what the "thank you" is for: *Thank you for looking into this. Thanks for your attention. Thank you for responding quickly*.
- Include your *phone number* in the email so that the reader has two ways to reach you instead of one—unless you don't want to be reached by phone.

To Write a Speech

If you write a speech word-for-word, don't write paragraphs. Write short phrases, line-by-line. Average 150 to 175 words per minute. Each line ends with a pause and breath. Here is Kennedy's opening sentence from his inaugural speech:

We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom symbolizing an end as well as a beginning signifying renewal as well as change.