



Prepare to Speak Professionally

Level 5 Project



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TOASTMASTERS
PATHWAYS
— learning experience —

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Prepare to Speak Professionally

About Prepare to Speak Professionally

Most of us have experienced outstanding professional speakers. They can be found serving as event hosts or emcees, leading an educational or training seminar, or delivering a keynote address. They are highly poised and confident.

Some Toastmasters envision building the expertise to go from speaking at club meetings to speaking professionally. This project is an introduction to the skills needed to make that transition.

In this project, you will learn how to determine your area of expertise, define the attributes of professional speakers, understand what your audience expects from you, know how to connect with them, and incorporate stories and anecdotes that support and enhance your message. You will also learn how to market yourself as a professional-level speaker.

Resources

The following is a list of resources available in your digital project on Base Camp. Some of these resources, such as evaluations, are also available on the Resources section on Base Camp.

Project Checklist

Evaluation Resource

Speech Outline Worksheet

Introduction and Assignment

Introduction

Superior public speakers are characterized by expertise in a specific topic and a style of delivering their message that engages their audience from their opening comments to their closing statement.

Your Assignment

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to practice developing and presenting a longer speech.

Overview: Write and present an 18- to 22-minute keynote-style speech. Exemplify the point of view or message you would convey as a professional-level speaker. You may choose to use visual aids if they fit your speech and your style. Your speech may be humorous, informational, or any style that appeals to you and supports your speech content. If you receive advance approval from the Vice President Education, you may present your speech to a non-Toastmasters group.

Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



Video: Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



Interactive Activity: Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



Resource: Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.



Weblink: Return to your digital project when you see this icon to link to a website or Base Camp location.

For all assignment details and requirements, review the [Project Checklist](#).

Learning in Prepare to Speak Professionally



Assess and Reflect

To assess and track your knowledge, complete the activity below by listing what you already know and what you wonder about the topic today. Add up to five items to each list. After you complete your project, you will have an opportunity to review your answers and add what you have learned.

Know

For example: I know how to market myself as a professional-level speaker.

Wonder

For example: I wonder how I can provide my audience with a meaningful message.

Competencies

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Define the attributes of a professional speaker.
- Determine your area of expertise.
- Understand what your audience expects from you.
- Tailor your speech to reflect your understanding of the audience.
- Incorporate stories and anecdotes to support your message.
- Develop a connection with the audience.
- Understand how to market yourself as a professional-level speaker.

Attributes of Professional Speakers

Every professional speaker is unique, but it is possible to identify a set of attributes exhibited by all speakers working at this level.

Take time to understand each attribute and how you embody it in your public speaking. Identify your strengths and weaknesses in each area. As you gain experience and improve your skills, you may achieve the skills to speak at a professional level—whether you receive payment for your services or not.

Credibility and Experience

A professional speaker can come from any background. Some develop the skills and experience over years while others are thrust into the spotlight by a life experience. Regardless of how they begin, all successful professional speakers have experience and credibility in common.

Expertise

Every speaker brings some level of knowledge to their choice of topic. Expertise can be academic or come from life experience. Speakers who cover topics based on their life experience will often support their point of view with facts based on research to add credibility.

Strong Message

The very best speakers have a clear, strong message. It is easier to develop a strong message when you have a powerful connection to your topic. Your message is at the heart of every speech, whether you speak to inform, excite, teach, motivate, or simply entertain your audience. A message that resonates will help you connect with your audience.

Connection

The ability to connect with an audience is foundational to any speaker's success. Part of building a positive connection with an audience is internal to the speaker. An engaging personality, an open and welcoming demeanor, and a voice that carries well are all positive qualities that help a speaker connect with an audience.

Impactful Topic

The choice of topic, message, and delivery also impact a speaker's ability to connect. Being comfortable with your topic and understanding the type of audience you are speaking to will contribute to your ability to make a strong and effective connection with audience members.

Confidence

Success for professional speakers is built on a strong base of confidence. Confidence builds from a speaker's knowledge, a well-prepared speech with a strong message, an understanding of the audience, and trust in their ability to speak publicly.

Knowing that you are prepared will help you approach any speech, regardless of audience size or venue, with a higher level of confidence.

Apply the Attributes of Professional Speakers

Use Your Story to Build a Professional Level Speech

The first step in developing a career as a professional speaker is to identify the life experience you would like to share. Your experience may be derived from: a single, powerful event; years of education; time spent in a field or endeavor, as an employee, leader, or a volunteer. The origin of your experience is not as important as the knowledge you gained.

Everyone has a story to tell. Once you identify the experiences that have meaning to you, you have your story and your first area of expertise. Credibility comes from the authenticity you bring to the story. When you speak about an experience—professional, educational, or personal—and share how it contributed to you as a person, or your understanding of the world, you establish your credibility.

Expertise

When you have examined your life experiences and decided on the essence of the story you want to tell, the next step is adding expertise. If your intent is to speak about your academic or professional background, your expertise is built into the learning you have already completed.

Take a moment to list your academic or professional knowledge and skills. The time to determine how to individualize the topics to you and your experiences will come later.

Build Your Expertise

When your speech covers a topic that is drawn primarily from your personal experience, it is important to include research to support your point of view. For example, your topic may be about a medical condition you or a family member has experienced. To support your personal story and provide a framework for the information you share, developing a practical level of knowledge about the medical condition will help to validate your position.

Your research can be as simple as sharing statistics, learning academic definitions, or familiarizing yourself with the most recent research on topics you discuss.

Your Unique Perspective

As you start the work of defining your message, look at the unique perspective you bring to your chosen subject.

Just as every person has a story to tell, all of us have a unique view of stories that have been told before. Even if you are planning to present on groundbreaking science that no one has ever discussed before, the science is only part of the message. The rest of your story has to do with your perspective.

Demonstrate your passion for your topic. Enthusiasm is contagious and can help you lead an audience on the journey you have designed.

Audience Demographics

Understanding your audience can have a powerful impact. Before every presentation, take time to research your audience's demographics. Demographics include age, gender, cultural background, political or religious affiliation, ethnicity, ability, economic status, and employment status.

Understanding where your audience came from and who they are can help you build rapport and communicate your message in a way that has meaning to that particular group.

For example, if you're talking to an audience composed mainly of younger professionals who are just starting their careers, your recollections from your career or volunteer experience could help you make a connection. If you know that the group is predominantly made up of parents and you have children, incorporating a few of your parenting experiences can make you more relatable, regardless of your topic.

Confidence

Preparation is a fundamental building block of confidence. Another is public speaking skill. Even with both of these in place, some speakers feel a lack of confidence on stage. To remedy this, focus on posture, tone, and vocal quality.

How to Achieve Professional-Level Skills

Write a Compelling Speech

Create a speech opening that is exciting and prepares the audience for your message. In the body of your speech, include stories and anecdotes from your life that reveal who you are as a person and how the audience can identify with you. Finish your speech with a memorable conclusion and a strong appeal for action.

You may find it helpful to develop a speech for an hour-long keynote address and, from that, create shorter speeches by subtracting content to accommodate any timeframe.



Use the Speech Outline Worksheet to develop your speech.

Practice

The best way to develop your professional speaking skills is to practice at every available opportunity. Take advantage of all opportunities for public speaking within your club. If another club, community organization, or your place of business is in need of a speaker, volunteer your services.

Create a strong, well-written speech that can be adjusted based on the timeframe, audience, or setting.

Reaching professional-level speaking skills is dependent on your willingness to contribute time and effort. You can enhance and nurture your skills by using them.

Tailor Your Message

Practice your public speaking by addressing unfamiliar audiences. This gives you the chance to adjust your message and tailor it to each individual group. Always ask for feedback so that you can continue to improve.

Part of your practice needs to involve giving your presentation to audiences of varying sizes. The number of people in an audience affects your delivery. Volume, visual aids, and audience engagement may change based on the assembly in the room. Look for speaking opportunities in Toastmasters that offer the opportunity to address larger audiences, as well as a variety of delivery settings and methods.

Collect Feedback

You may want to practice and deliver the same presentation many times. If possible, ask for feedback about specific areas, such as how to strengthen the conclusion of your speech. By isolating different areas of your presentation and incorporating constructive feedback, you build a speech that is polished and professional.

Your goal as a professional-level speaker is to capture your audience's attention and deliver your message in a way that is memorable. Presenting your speech multiple times and incorporating constructive feedback each time will help you strengthen your presentation, making the achievement of that goal possible.

Meet Audience Expectations

Speaking to an Unfamiliar Audience

When you are invited to speak to a new group, clarify as much information up front as possible.

Know Your Timeframe

Confirm the length of your speech and any other expectations of your role as speaker. These might include introducing other speakers, accommodating a flexible timeframe, or adjusting your speech based on changes to the schedule.

Audience Expectations

Ask questions about the audience and consider any and all expectations audience members might have. Provide a description of your presentation to event organizers in advance to clarify any questions.

Know Your Objective

Clarify any specific purpose organizers have for the event and how your speech can help them achieve their goals. You may be asked to educate, provide information, persuade, or inspire. A strong message that meets the needs of your audience will also support event organizers.

Know Your Audience

Know your audience and why they are attending. For example, they may be there to gain more information about a topic or to be entertained. Review the information with the host or facilitator on the day of the event to confirm or adjust your understanding of the audience.

Consult Other Experts

If you know other speakers who have presented at the same event or who have knowledge about the usual audience demographics, confer with them in advance to help you prepare.

Market Yourself as a Professional-Level Speaker

Generate Opportunities

Once you have done the work to develop professional-level speaking skills, you need to generate opportunities to speak by marketing yourself.

There are many steps you can take to increase your visibility as a professional speaker.

Create a Website

A creative, well-maintained website can provide potential clients with all the information they need to hire you. Your website will be the first place many people go when they want to know more about you. Always include your contact information so your potential clients know how to best contact you. If possible, include:

- Video of one or more speeches that you delivered before a live audience.
- Positive testimonials from previous clients (remember to ask them for permission to use before doing so).

A well-organized, accessible catalogue of your skills and accomplishments makes the search-and-hire process much easier for potential clients.

Network

Network to connect with other professional speakers and potential clients. They may know of upcoming opportunities for professional speakers.

Fees for speakers differ greatly based on your geographic location, industry, or field for which you're hired to speak, and venue/audience size. If your area of expertise is in demand, this may increase the payment you can expect to receive. Do your research ahead of time in order to price your services reasonably. You can obtain this information by talking with clients who are hiring and colleagues who speak professionally. Industry standards for your area may also be posted online, so use these as a guide when establishing your fees.

Promote Your Skills

A well-organized, accessible catalogue of your skills and accomplishments makes the search-and-hire process much easier for potential clients.

Do Your Own Research

Conducting your own research for specific information that applies to your goals, topic, interests, and geographic area will help you develop a more effective point of view and speech. The stronger your understanding of your topic, market, and skills compared to others competing for the same speaking opportunities, the better able you will be to promote yourself. Knowledge is power and it will benefit you to be as knowledgeable as possible.

Review and Apply

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- How do you define the attributes of a professional speaker?
- What steps can you take to determine your area of expertise?
- How can you best understand what your audience expects from you?
- What is the value of tailoring your speech to reflect your understanding of the audience?
- Why is it important to incorporate stories and anecdotes to support your message?
- How can you develop a connection with the audience?
- What strategies can you use to market yourself as a professional-level speaker?

Complete Your Assignment



Project Checklist

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report. First, review your assignment.

This project includes:

- The Speech Outline Worksheet
- An 18- to 22-minute keynote-style speech

The following list includes tasks for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You can use the checklist here or complete the digital version in your project on Base Camp.

Identify the focus of your professional-level speech (refer to the project for more information on how to select the best topic for you).

Schedule your speech with the Vice President Education.

Write your speech.

Develop visual aids if you intend to use them.

Rehearse your speech.

If possible, schedule time to practice your speech in front of an audience.

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Evaluation Criteria



Review the criteria for the evaluation in this project. Your evaluator will use the following scale:

5 – Exemplary 4 – Excels 3 – Accomplished 2 – Emerging 1 – Developing

Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs
- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
- 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs
- 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice
- 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

Speech Content

- 5 – Content is exemplary and fully engages the audience throughout the extended speech
- 4 – Content is excellent and engages the audience throughout the extended speech
- 3 – Content is compelling enough to hold audience attention throughout the extended speech
- 2 – Content, though compelling, holds the attention of some audience members but not all throughout the extended speech
- 1 – Content holds the attention of few or no audience members throughout the extended speech

Complete Your Project



Once you have delivered your speech and received your evaluation, take a minute to review what you recorded under “Know” and “Wonder” in the Assess and Reflect section at the start of this project. Then add what you have learned while working through this project. Add up to five items.

Learned

For example: I learned to project expertise and credibility when speaking.

Before You Move On

Review Your Learning

Review all the material in this project.

Deliver Your Speech

Plan, practice, and deliver your speech.

Receive Your Evaluation

Receive your evaluation and complete any other tasks required by your club.

Assess and Reflect

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Congratulations!

If you have completed every task, CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed your Prepare to Speak Professionally project and you are ready to move on to your next project.



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