2. Practice, Practice, Practice:

As the popular saying goes, practice makes perfect. While you don't have to aim for 'perfect,' delivering a presentation that actually meets your goals should be at the top of your list. There's no definite number on how many times you should practice your presentation. But practicing once or twice probably won't suffice.



3. Know Your Audience:

Knowing who you're speaking to, will help you deliver a presentation that will resonate with your audience. Find something that's common with your audience and mention that in your presentation. You may not know your audience on an individual level (this will be impossible if you're presenting to hundreds or thousands of people), but finding common ground is certainly possible.



4. Arrive Early at the Location:

Coming to your presentation prepared is one of the best ways to ensure your presentation's success. You'll be able to survey the location, double and triple check all equipment you're going to use and make sure everything's working perfectly. You can even try squeezing in one last practice, if possible.



5. Think Positively:

Thinking positively can go a long way in helping you overcome presentation fear. If you think your presentation's going to be a disaster, then it is going to be a disaster. However, if you think it's going to be a smashing success, then you're going to do your absolute best to make sure that happens. When you're optimistic, you tend to project your optimism while you're presenting.



6. Make Eye Contact:

No one wants to sit through a presentation where the presenter is fixated on his or her shoes, his computer screen, or anywhere else but the audience. The truth is most of us would think the presenter is being disrespectful. If you don't want your audience to think of you that way, then you should start working on making eye contact with the crowd.



7. Have a Sense of Humor?

Having a sense of humor is great. Learning how to put that to good use in your presentations is even better. No one wants to sit through a dry and boring presentation. Even if you're presenting a serious subject matter, saying a well-timed joke can help break the ice. What's even better is that when you know who your audience is, you'll be able to think of jokes that they'll find funny.



8. Be Flexible:

A key to flexibility when delivering a presentation is the ability to read your audience. You must have a pulse on how they are engaging and connecting with you in order to know how you should interact. Remember, a great presentation should feel like a conversation. And great conversations go both ways.



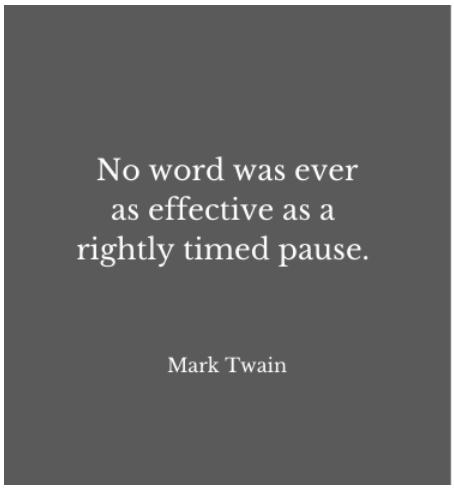
9. Be Confident:

When you're a nervous wreck on stage, your audience is not going to believe a word you say. In fact, they probably will tune you out shortly after you open your mouth. If you want your audience to give you the time of day, then you're going to have to work hard for it.



10. Don't Be Afraid to Pause Every Now and Then:

Don't you just love dramatic pauses? That moment of silence right before the presenter delivers a punchline? You can practically feel the anticipation building up inside you, and your thoughts turn towards guessing what the presenter is going to say.





11. Engage With Your Audience:

Your audience is going to be spending their time listening to you. Make it worth their while. Respect them and address them as fellow human beings. Don't disrespect them by ignoring them and not engaging with them. When you engage with your audience, you not only gain their attention, but you also help ensure they understand your message perfectly. After all, if they get nothing from your presentation, then they might as well have been absent from your presentation.





12. Stop Making Excuses:

When you're already making excuses long before you've even given your presentation, then you're setting yourself up for failure. You're not giving yourself a chance to succeed. If you truly want to impress your audience, then you're going to give it all you've got. You're going to throw those excuses out the window. You're going to prepare for your presentation, you'll study the materials, you'll make an effort to know more about your audience, and you'll keep on practicing.



13. Study Other Presenters:

Try your best to attend as many live presentations as possible. However, if you can't, there are plenty of recorded presentations on YouTube. Write down what you like and what you don't like. Study the presenters' body language, their speech, and their presentation slides. What's the crowd's reaction? Are they enjoying it? How do you feel? Do you think you can do it better? Knowing the answers to these questions will help you improve your presentation skills greatly.



Presentation Self-Assessment

Title:				
	☺	☯	?	**Comments**
*** Topic/Content** Interesting? New? Suitable for audience? Content depth?				
***Introduction** Attention-getting? Background/ context given? **Clear idea?** Prediction (outline)? Importance given?				
***Body Structure/flow** Logical organization? Clear transitions? Clearly emphasized points? Research support?				
***Conclusion** Clear summary? Memorable?				
***Eyes and Face** Contact with all members? Friendly?				
***Gestures and Body** Hands free & expressive? Relaxed body?				
***Visual Aids** Useful? Well designed?				
***Voice** Clear? Volume? Variation?				
***Pace/Speed** Not too fast or slow? Useful Pauses? No loooong pauses?				
*** Question Time** Remained calm? Answered accurately, concisely?				
What aspects do you most want to improve for your next presentation? Why?				

Content	Structure	Visual	Voice	TOTAL
				/

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

- ✓ Select a topic of your own choice and list the relevant pieces of information. Analyze your list and prepare an outline for oral presentation.
- ✓ Prepare a five-minute oral presentation based on your results and recommendations of the written report.
- ✓ Prepare a three-minute extemporaneous presentation on a concept in your area of specialization. Presume that your audiences are not familiar with the concept.
- ✓ Prepare a seven-minute extemporaneous presentation describing how to carry out a procedure in your area of specialization. Presume that your listeners are unfamiliar with the procedure.

Final Words

Improving your presentation skills is not going to happen overnight. It's going to take a lot of hard work and effort from you. Follow the tricks we've outlined in this book and you'll be well on your way to being a presenter your audiences will love!



Recommended Books:

- Glickstein, Lee. Be Heard Now! New York: Broadway Books, 1998.
- Hendricks, Dr. William et al. Secrets of Power Presentations. Franklin Lakes, N.J.: Career Press, 1996.
- Slutsky, Jeff and Anu, Michael. The Toastmasters International Guide to Successful Speaking. Chicago: Dearborn Financial Publishing, 1997.
- Wilder Claudyne and Jennifer Rotondo. Point, Click & Wow! A Quick Guide to Brilliant Laptop Presentations. 2nd Edition. Hoboken, N.J.: Jossey-Bass, 2002.
- Rodenburg, Patsy. The Right to Speak: working with the voice. London: Methuen, 1992.
- Bull, Peter. "What does gesture and to the spoken word? In Barlow, H. et al. Images and Understanding. Cambridge: CUP, 1990. (INT 9.54)

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