

Make an Impact!



*Stand and Deliver
with Confidence and
Credibility*

By Barbara Roche, M.S.

Welcome!

Wouldn't it be great if we could pop a pill, flip a switch, or tap an app to effortlessly deliver a powerful presentation?

There is no such thing as an effortless preparation process that wows an audience. And yet, we all want our audience to think we were born with natural wit, grace and panache.

The following pages focus on the skills I work on with every client. In this e-book, you will learn tips and tricks for mastering the platform skills of powerful public speaking.

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Hooray! Public Speaking is a top-ranked hard skill!

The most recent survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) found that verbal communication skills ranked #1 on the list of what employers are looking for in the ideal job candidate. Employers rated verbal communication skills above teamwork, decision-making and problem-solving.

About Barbara

Barbara is Founder and Managing Partner of Barbara Roche & Associates and SpeakWell Partners where she splits her time between executive coaching/leadership development and designing and facilitating workplace learning programs.

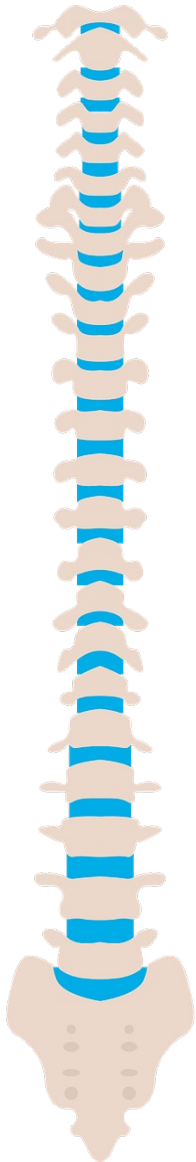
Prior to the pandemic, Barbara taught leadership communication at The Wharton School of Business. She is a certified facilitator with the NeuroLeadership Institute in New York. She holds a Master's in Psychology from Northeastern University and is a proud member of Red Sox Nation.





#1

posture is power



You haven't even opened your mouth to speak the words you have prepared and perhaps even practiced, and your audience already has an impression of you. Do they think you are confident and commanding or a timid church mouse? Or perhaps bored and listless? Your body language sends messages before you utter your first word. And it all starts with your posture. Turns out, your mother was right: you should stand up straight.

The following steps from the National Posture Institute are a guide.

1. **Stand Tall:** Visualize the vertebral column lengthening and growing taller
2. **Hold Chest High:** Visualize lifting your sternum, lowering the shoulders and elongating the neck
3. **Retract Scapulae:** Visualize holding a pencil between the shoulder blades and keeping it there
4. **Contract Abdominals:** Visualize drawing the belly button toward the spine and lifting it up an inch or two by contracting the core muscles

When we coach our presenters, we include a few more tips:

For men: Try to avoid too wide of a stance unless you want to look like a macho athletic coach. Try not to pace back and forth with your head down. And keep your hands out of your pockets. We'll talk about hand positions in Chapter 3.

For women: Avoid wearing heels so high that your hips and lower back pitch forward. Be sure to keep your chin in a neutral position. Don't cross your feet. Keep them directly under your shoulders for the most confident stance.

For everyone: Never lock your knees. That's what causes brides, grooms, and cadets to topple over!

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A good stance and posture reflect
a proper state of mind.

- Morihei Ueshiba



#2

what is your voice saying?

Are you an uptalker? The technical term is “misplaced upward inflection.” We’re referring to the tendency to make everything sound like a question. Here’s an example: “One time? At Outback? I ate an entire Bloomin’ Onion? All by myself.”

Other “disfluencies” include volume (too soft/too loud) too nasal, too breathy – the list goes on. Here are a few tips for getting rid of any bad vocal habits:

Word choice. Think about – heck, even write down – what you’re going to say so that you can avoid words that normally trip you up in everyday conversation.

Sentence structure. Craft sentences that are far from your everyday speaking pattern (which are usually a bunch of very short clauses strung together).

Slow down. Adding in more pauses and slowing your rate of speech will help you become aware of when to drop your intonation down, or, what’s known in the communication biz as “staying in the pocket.”

Record yourself. Download a recording app on your phone. Hit record, and start speaking about a very familiar topic, like what you had for breakfast. Then play it back to see if you can hear the up-talk.

Read aloud. Seriously, this is one of the best tips. We guarantee you will not up-talk. You will only raise your inflection when it is important to convey the meaning of the sentence. Try it when you get to page 12.

Vocal variety helps a speaker capture and maintain the attention of the audience. Taylor Mali sums it up beautifully in this classic [poetry slam](#).



Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning.

- Maya Angelou



Calling All Soft Talkers!

The only way you can be sure you are speaking at the right volume is to get comfortable with the sensation that you are yelling. If it sounds too loud in your head, chances are it's loud enough for the audience.

what to do with your hands?

Gestures

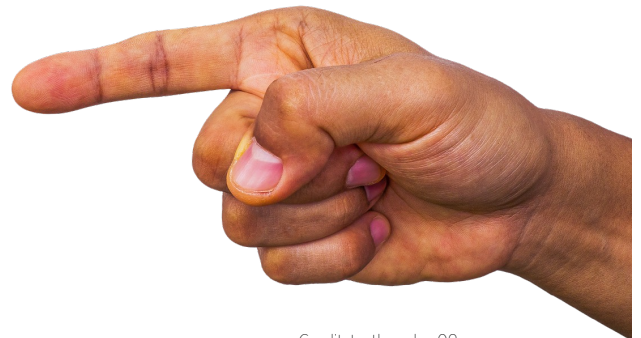
If you want to connect with your audience, and leave a lasting impression, gestures are one leg of a three-legged stool. Without them, the impact of your words and your voice will be diminished. Great speakers communicate visually as well as verbally. Here are three surefire techniques to help you use your hands and your body for maximum impact:

Home Base: Find a comfortable position for your quiet, resting hands near your belt line. This is the ideal spot for resting hands – what body language experts call the base position – because it is neither too close to your chest (which can signal fear) nor too close to your groin (which can signal defensiveness). Keep your hands lightly connected and relaxed, which signals calm confidence.

Gesturing Box: The ideal range of authentic gestures is just outside and above your shoulders and no lower than your hips. Keep your gestures in this box when you speak. Don't bounce your hands. Your goal is to enhance your words, not detract from them.

Energy Release: Keep one important thing in mind: your energy has to go somewhere. Whether it's nervous energy or positive energy, if your hands are locked in a "fig leaf" or some other fixed and rigid position, the energy will come out in some other way. Using your hands effectively will channel that energy to the right place. Otherwise, it's going to ooze out in your stance and you will rock and sway. Your audience will wonder if you need to use the restroom.

One more thing: Never point! Use open palms instead.
A head nod can work, too!



Credit: truthseeker08

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If it's a good movie, the sound could go off and the audience would still have a perfectly clear idea of what's going on.

- Alfred Hitchcock



the sound of silence

Pacing

Just because you can think faster than you can speak does not give you permission to race through your presentation. Your audience cannot track with your key messages, and rarely are they willing to apply mental effort to keep up with you. Instead, they will reach for their phones or tablets, and, game over. You could have the most compelling information to share, but if you speak too quickly (or too slowly for that matter) you might as well be sowing seeds on asphalt. Here's a fun party game to practice your pacing:

Find a Word document with about 145 words – the rate at which most people can maintain their attention and remember what was said. If you want to start now, use the excerpt below.

1. Set the stopwatch on your smartphone to 1:00.
2. Stand up and find a tall, lifted, professional posture. Press the start button and begin reading. Use your best oratorical voice.
3. When the buzzer sounds, check to see where you are in the delivery. Do you still have text to read? Then try a quicker pace. Did you finish too early? Then you need to slow down and insert longer pauses. A little early or a little late is fine. This is just a guideline.

Chances are you didn't uptalk at all, and your vocal delivery had natural intonation and variation. That's the beauty of this exercise. Here's the excerpt:

While there are many wonderful Fourth of July celebrations across the country, the city of Boston is hard to beat. Neil Diamond singing Sweet Caroline is pretty great. But the hands-down fan favorite is the Boston Pops rendition of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture – with its cannons and bells and crescendos – it gets your heart pumping and your synapses firing. By the end of the 17-minute piece, your blood is singing in your veins. Even without a conductor, synchronized fireworks, and perfect acoustics, we can all liven up our presentations no matter what the topic. First, look people in the eye and smile before you begin speaking. It's amazing how many speakers start with their head down. Then say something interesting to grab their attention – a compelling statistic, a question, or personal disclosure. You will now see all faces looking up at you with curiosity and interest. [\(145 words\)](#)

Silence is a Gift to Your Audience

The only thing more important than the pace at which you speak is the silent pause you insert between clauses, sentences and key messages. All audiences need time to process what they hear and the only way to let them do that is to stop talking. That's right, a speaker must stop talking. Pausing silently is a skill unto itself. When you add nervous energy, it becomes even more difficult. If you tend to race through your presentation, the place to start pausing is the end of each sentence.

“ When you speak,
respect the punctuation.

- Eden Merryshow, Actor,



engage to influence

Giacomo Rizzolatti, a neuroscientist at the University of Parma studying mind/body connections in monkeys, is one of a group of scientists to discover the concept of “mirror neurons.” In the laboratory, monkeys would mimic the movements of scientists when they were observed eating peanuts, ice cream, raisins - any food, really.

Fast forward a couple of decades and the data is clear: Humans have mirror neurons that are more highly evolved than those found in the lab monkeys, which scientists say is due to the role social skills played in our evolution.

We are capable of understanding behavior and emotions. Dr. Rizzolatti said, “Mirror neurons allow us to grasp the minds of others not through conceptual reasoning but through direct simulation. By feeling, not by thinking.” - [Source](#)

What does this mean for a speaker? A lot!

If all you want to do is tell your audience where they can find the best pizza, then you only need to say the name of the restaurant. Connection isn’t necessary. But...

If you want to persuade them, you must first engage them. If you want to move them to action, you must first make a connection. If you want them to vote for you, you have to find common ground. This is why Engagement/Connection is our last element. Without it, the other four will only get you so far. Speakers who establish a deeper connection with their listeners are the ones who hit home runs for themselves, their team, their organization.



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Eye contact is a psychological handshake. It makes the audience feel engaged, as if you were having a conversation with each of them.

- Gene Zelazney



rate your skills

Posture

My posture is confident and professional, and I move without distracting my audience.

Needs work _____ Acceptable _____ Good _____ Outstanding _____

Vocal Qualities

I use vocal inflection and vary my tone of voice to keep the attention of my audience.

Needs work _____ Acceptable _____ Good _____ Outstanding _____

Verbal Skills

I speak without word fillers and choose my words carefully.

Needs work _____ Acceptable _____ Good _____ Outstanding _____

Gestures

I use natural and relevant gestures that enhance my words and underscore my key points.

Needs work _____ Acceptable _____ Good _____ Outstanding _____

Pacing

I maintain a rate of speech that is easy to follow, and I am comfortable pausing silently between thoughts/sentences/message points.

Needs work _____ Acceptable _____ Good _____ Outstanding _____

Eye Contact

I make a genuine connection with my audience by making 2 to 3-second eye contact with audience members. I maintain a good balance of looking left, right, and center.

Needs work _____ Acceptable _____ Good _____ Outstanding _____

Overall Impression

I come across as professional and confident with a clear command of the subject matter. The overall impression of my verbal and non-verbal characteristics helps me achieve my objectives.

Needs work _____ Acceptable _____ Good _____ Outstanding _____

We're Here to Help

There's lots more! When you are ready to hit a home run with your next presentation, reach out and we'll schedule time to work together.

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