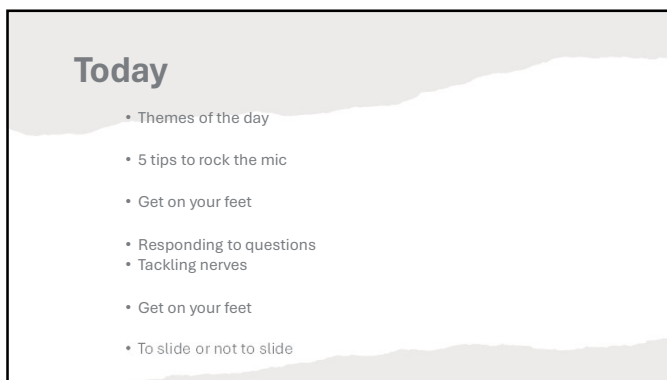




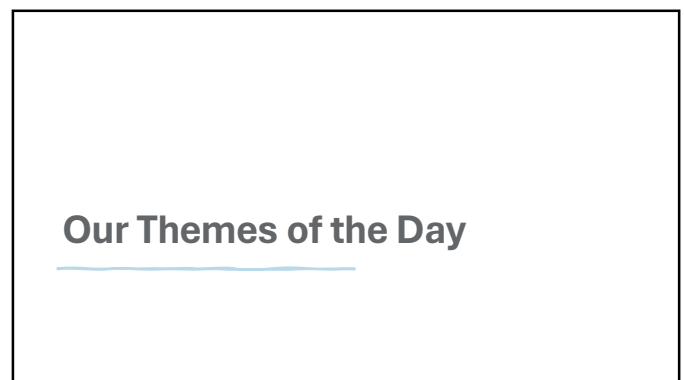
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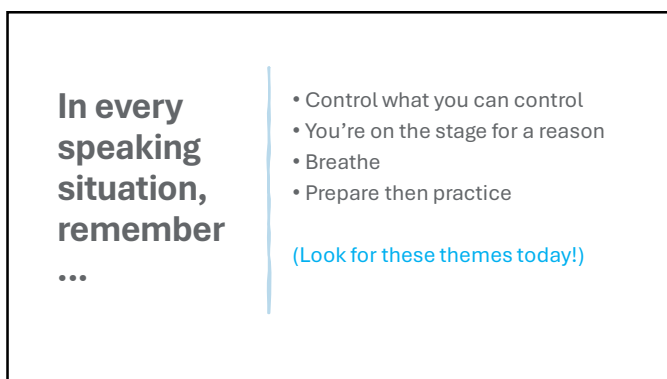
2



3



4



5



6

You're speaking for a reason

Someone recognized you have something to offer:

- Expertise
- Leadership
- Insight
- Context
- Humor
- Experience
- Vision
- Stories

7

Breathe

Don't fear the verbal white space

Why?

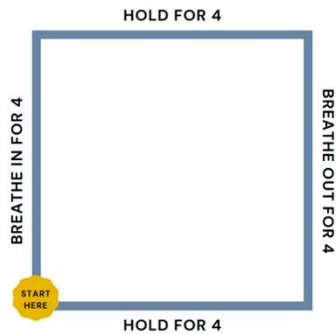
- Diffuses aggressive questions
- Clears a speaker's head
- Slows down a conversation

How?

- Pause
- Take a breath
- Let your words sink in

8

Breathe



9

Prepare

ADVICE

The 50-25-25 Rule for Speech Preparation

- Spend 50% of your preparation time on thinking, planning, brainstorming, researching, and outlining.
- Use 25% of your time for writing the speech.
- Dedicate the final 25% to practicing the delivery.
- Prioritize thinking and planning before writing to avoid aimless content creation.

Snipped from a post by former Obama speechwriter, Terry Szuplat, from his book



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Prepare

No one way or right/wrong way to do this

- Write out text
- Bullets
- Slides
- Notecards

11

Practice tips

- Memorize the open and close – or at least the gist
- Rehearse with a partner whenever possible
 - Let the practice partner know what you need them to look for
 - Throw in curve balls
- Set up a phone and record yourself
- Run through the presentation in a mirror or record yourself in an empty Zoom

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Rock the Mic to Own the Room: What you can control – 5 tips

13

Rock the Mic to Own the Room

What you can control

1. Know your audience
2. Keep the message simple
3. Avoid jargon/acronyms
4. Build a narrative
5. Don't fear verbal white space

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Rock the Mic: Tip 1

Know Your Audience



A presentation is for the benefit of the audience, not the speaker

- Remember, you're on the stage for a reason



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Rock the Mic: Tip 2

Keep the Message Simple

The screenshot shows the Merriam-Webster Dictionary website. The search bar at the top contains the word 'bafflegab'. The word is defined as a noun: 'baf-lee-gab' (phonetic) and 'ba-fel-gab' (phonetic). The definition is: 'incomprehensible or pretentious language, especially bureaucratic jargon'. A red arrow points to the word 'bafflegab' in the definition section.

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Rock the Mic: Tip 2

Keep the Message Simple

- Stick to 2 – 3 points
- Tell 'em what you're going to say, say it, tell 'em what you said
- Use shorter/fewer words

Instead of	Try this
utilize	use
ascertain	learn
attempt	try
demonstrate	show
in a timely manner	on time
obtain	get
pertaining to	about
for the duration of	during
witnessed	saw
commence	start

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Rock the Mic: Tip 3

Avoid Jargon, Abbreviations, Acronyms

- You know why you have an MRI or where the UFO might have landed.
- But most people think a TIF is a minor argument, or millage is a misspelling of the distance between two points.

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Rock the Mic: Tip 4
Build a Strong Narrative

- You be you
 - Speak from what you know
- Tell stories overlaid with numbers/data
 - Stories can be as short as a sentence or two
 - Data = quantifying your story

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Rock the Mic: Tip 5
Remember Words and Tone Matter

- Keep in mind that words matter
 - Avoid using negatives, loaded words or unintended phrasing
 - We aren't breaking the law (NO)
 - We did everything according to the law and procedures (YES)
- Be aware of upspeak
 - Declarative sentence that sounds like a question

20

Rock the Mic: Tip 5
Remember Words and Tone Matter

- Keep grammar and word usage in mind
 - She's going with Mary and me (not I)
 - When vs. whenever
 - *The game will begin Friday evening when the clock strikes 7 pm.*
- Avoid use of "soft words"
 - I think, I might, maybe, just

21

Rock the Mic: Tip 5
Remember Words and Tone Matter

- Maintain calm and empathetic tone when appropriate
 - Avoid the trite like "thoughts and prayers"
- Use active voice statements
 - Instead of "Mistakes were made." Try "We made mistakes."
 - Instead of "The situation will be resolved." Try "We are working to resolve the situation promptly."

22

Get on your Feet

23

Choose One

2-minute power round

- 1 – Explain a complicated county issue in a way your grandmother would understand
- 2 – Describe something you've learned from making a mistake
- 3 – Describe something unusual about your path to public service that your colleagues probably don't already know
- 4 – Tell a friend over coffee about a complex project/issue/situation your county is working on

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Responding to Questions

Managing what you can't control

25

Responding to Questions

And remember ...
verbal white space,
prepare and practice

- Listen closely
- Answer only the question asked and bridge back to your response
- Remember words and tone matter
- Bridging – phrasing to get back to your message
- Mirroring – repeating back the question

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Responding to Questions

Bridging

“Thank you for bringing that up, however, it's also important to emphasize...”

“That is an important point, and it also speaks to a bigger issue which is...”

“That is one way to think about it. Another way is...”

“That is not my area of expertise, but I can tell you...”

“It's our policy not to discuss XYZ, but what I can tell you is...”

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Responding to
Questions

Mirroring

“What color is the sky?”

“The sky is blue.”

28

Anticipating questions

•**Basic fact-finding** (clarifying details)

•**Accountability** (pushing for responsibility)

•**Human interest** (focusing on impact)

•**Forward-looking** (what happens next)

29

Tackling Nerves

Things you can control

30

Tackling Nerves



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Tip 1 Tackling Nerves Own Your Space

- **Breathe**
- Check out the staging in advance
- Stay grounded for your first minute of speaking
 - Weight evenly distributed
 - Good posture
- Gesture and use facial expressions

32

Tackling Nerves Own Your Space

- Making a lectern work for you
- Podium = elevated platform or stage
 - Lectern = the stand on the podium

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Tackling Nerves Own Your Space

- Making a lectern work for you**
- Know what's there
 - Tabletop vs lav mic
 - Height
 - Rest hands on sides
 - Avoid tapping or hitting the platform
 - Check out size and shape in advance
 - Mic type

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Tackling Nerves Own Your Space

Gestures

- Be purposeful: create a visual
- Hands by your side
 - Avoid fig leaf, crossing arms, tented fingers, hands in pockets or parade rest
 - Keep hands open
- Be aware of your habits
- Eye contact

35

Tip 2 Tackling Nerves Stage Logistics

- Mic types – handheld (individual or shared), lavalier (clip-on with battery pack), tabletop (individual or shared)
- **Lectern** – height, bulk, mic location, shelf
- Staging – steps, lighting (audience, stage, lectern)
- Types of seating - director chair, stool, low comfy chair, etc
- Hot mic
- Place for notes
- Recording and mic for questions

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Tip 3
Tackling Nerves

Appearance Counts

- Wear comfortable shoes
- Avoid shiny or loud/jangly jewelry
- Make sure your tie and collar are straight
- Sit on your suit jacket tail
- Check for reflection on glasses
- Make sure socks and dresses/skirts are long enough
- Branded clothes?

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Tackling Nerves

Appearance Counts

Patterns and colors

Avoid

- White or black
 - White "glares"
 - Black sucks up the light
- Small patterns and herringbones

Try

- Blues and pastels typically work well on TV
- Boring, simple rules

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Tackling Nerves

Appearance Counts

A word about lavalier mics

- Keep hair away from mic
- Avoid loud, jangly jewelry
- Remember the mic is always hot (i.e. turn it off if you go to the bathroom ☺)
- Wear something the battery pack can attach to



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Tip 4
Tackling Nerves

Prepare Then Practice

•50/25/25 rule

- Practice with a person
- Eat at least 2 hours in advance
- Have a water bottle nearby if possible

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Get Back on your Feet

Turning weak responses into strong responses

41

Scenario 1: Water Contamination

Crisis: Routine water testing has revealed unsafe levels of bacteria in the county's main water supply. Residents are being asked to boil water until further notice.

Reporter Question: When did the county first learn that the water was unsafe to drink? (fact finding question)

42

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43

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- Weak Answer: "Uh, I think it was sometime last week, but I don't have the exact date. We're still figuring that out."
- Strong Answer: "We received test results showing elevated bacteria levels late yesterday afternoon. By 6 p.m., our public works team and emergency management began coordinating the boil water advisory you saw issued this morning." (fact finding question)

44

Scenario 2: Severe Weather Damage

Crisis: A line of severe storms has caused widespread power outages, road blockages, and structural damage to county facilities

Reporter Question: Why didn't the county open emergency shelters sooner, knowing storms were coming?

45

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46

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Reporter Question: Why didn't the county open emergency shelters sooner, knowing storms were coming?

- Weak Answer: "Well, we didn't think it would be that bad. People should've been more prepared."
- Strong Answer: "We activated shelters as soon as the National Weather Service issued a severe storm warning for our area. We understand some residents felt the notice was short, and we're reviewing our communication systems to ensure earlier alerts in the future."

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Scenario 3: Jail Escape

Crisis: Two inmates escaped overnight from the county detention center. One has been captured, but the other is still at large.

Reporter Question: Is understaffing at the jail partly to blame for this escape?

48

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49

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Reporter Question: Is understaffing at the jail partly to blame for this escape?

- Weak Answer: "No, that's not true. The staff is doing fine. This was just a random incident."
- Strong Answer: "Like many counties, we have faced staffing challenges, but this escape was due to a specific breach of procedure. We've already added patrol shifts and are evaluating security upgrades to ensure this does not happen again."

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Scenario 4: Cyberattack on County Systems

Crisis: A ransomware attack has shut down county computer systems, halting property tax payments, building permits, and court filings.

Reporter Question: Did the county ignore earlier warnings or recommendations to upgrade cybersecurity?

51

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52

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- Weak Answer: "I don't know anything about warnings. This is happening everywhere — there's not much we could've done."
- Strong Answer: "We follow state and federal cybersecurity guidelines and conduct regular system updates. This was a sophisticated attack that targeted municipalities nationwide. Still, we take responsibility, and we are already working with law enforcement and cybersecurity experts to strengthen our defenses moving forward."

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To Slide or Not to Slide?

Things you can control

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To Slide or Not to Slide Use Slides Strategically

- Are you comfortable enough with your presentation that you could give it without the slides?
- How familiar is your audience with your topic?
- How can your deck reinforce your brand?
- What are your audience's expectations?

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To Slide or Not to Slide

Focus on the Audience

- Let the slides support the presentation, not BE the presentation
- Avoid the temptation to read slides
- Keep eyes on the audience, not the slides
- Have a Plan B if technology doesn't work

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- Remember the people in the back of the room



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To Slide or Not to Slide

Build Concise Slides

- Limit text
- Use key phrases and include only essential information.
- Maintain parallel construction
- Create deck from handout notes, not the other way around
- Use single slide/single idea approach
- Remember white space is a positive.

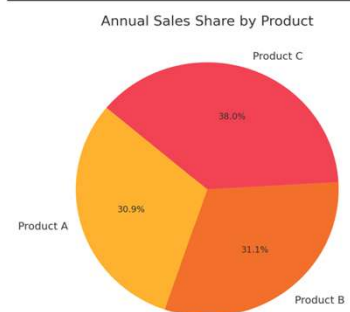
58

- Save detailed spreadsheets and graphs for handout. Instead of this:

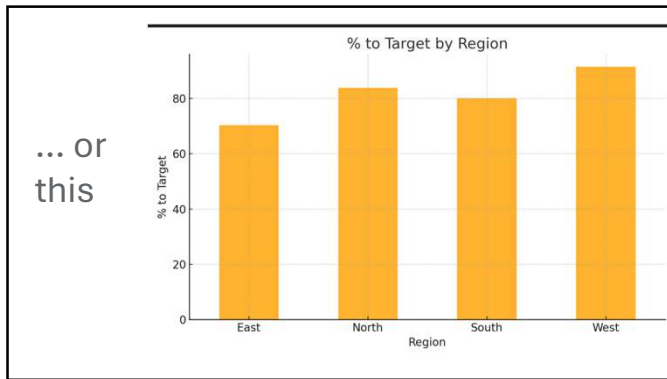
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Region	Product	Q1 Sales	Q2 Sales	Q3 Sales	Q4 Sales	% Growth	Year-End Target	% to Target
2	North	Product A	12270	5860	10390	18418	50.11	61964	75.75
3	North	Product B	16284	10734	11265	5466	-66.43	54426	80.38
4	North	Product C	10578	19423	16636	16363	54.69	66023	95.42
5	South	Product A	13322	6685	5769	15583	16.97	52433	78.88
6	South	Product B	10311	10051	11420	6184	-40.03	69769	54.42
7	South	Product C	17309	11396	18035	16096	-7.01	58666	107.11
8	East	Product A	14274	7558	12849	7047	-50.63	52747	79.11
9	East	Product B	14167	14998	5189	7734	-45.41	53005	79.4
10	East	Product C	9658	6899	12734	6267	-35.11	67912	52.36
11	West	Product A	16394	8556	8890	13838	-15.59	64502	73.92
12	West	Product B	10393	15627	13792	15555	49.67	60253	91.89
13	West	Product C	13433	15233	16016	12513	-6.85	52612	108.71

59

Try this



60



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To Slide or Not to Slide

Pay Attention to Readability

- Maintain consistent fonts, color, design
- Only acronyms/abbreviations if commonly known
- Avoid italic, script, underlining, drop shadow
- No font size smaller than 24 pt. (*this is 28 pt*)

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To Slide or Not to Slide

Use Images Strategically

- Use graphics that directly support your message
- Avoid pixilated and blurry images
- Focus on your message, not technology of images (no dancing emoticons)
- Credit the source as needed
- Get releases for photos as needed

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Favorites on my bookshelf

I'm Speaking – Jessica Doyle-Mekkes
 Say It Well – Terry Szuplat (podcast *The Crux* is a great interview with him)
 Speak up with Confidence – Jack Valenti
 Speaking in Public - Reid Buckley
 Supercommunicators – Charles Duhigg

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Questions?

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