

Tackling Nerves

SC Association of Counties | Institute of Government

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Own your space

- Stay grounded the first 30 – 60 seconds
 - Move to the chosen spot on stage where you will begin and stay there 30 -60 seconds
 - Allows you to get mentally settled in the space, with the lights, etc.
 - Square your stance to start
- Gesture strategically
 - When practicing, identify where gestures can be best used – don't wait until you're on stage and just gesture when you feel it.
 - 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
- Make a lectern work when necessary
 - Know it's there
 - Rest hands on sides
 - Avoid tapping or hitting the platform
 - Check out size in advance

Appearance counts

- Make sure your collar and tie are straight
 - Look in the mirror or ask someone. Don't assume because it was straight when you got dressed that it's still OK.
- Avoid big/loud/jangly jewelry
 - Jangly earrings, necklaces and bracelets can often be heard through a mic
- Sit on the “tail” of a suit jacket to avoid shoulders slipping up around your ears.
- Find a spot to attach a lavalier mic and battery pack
 - A lavalier mic works best when attached to a collar or lapel right at the collarbone
 - The battery pack usually has a clip that will attach to a belt or pants/skirt waist
 - Last resort: drop the pack in a pocket

- Always assume the mic is hot (especially if you go to the bathroom)
- Make sure socks and dresses/skirts are long enough if you're sitting in a chair or on a stool.
- Wear comfortable shoes
 - Comfort is important if you're on your feet for an extended period of time
 - New shoes might squeak which can be a distraction to the audience
- Avoid loud or small patterns for TV
 - Herring bone print or small checks can get "swimmy" on camera
 - White tops can cause "white balance" problems for the camera
 - Blacks can cause you to blur into the background
 - Blues and pastels typically work well on TV
 - Boring, simple clothes are the safest bet

Understand staging

- Chairs/stools
 - Check chair height to make sure feet touch the floor or knees aren't showing, socks are covering ankles, suit jackets aren't hunched up at the neck, buttons are closed, ties are straight
 - Sit on suit jacket tail to ensure the jacket shoulders don't ride up
- Lectern
 - Make sure the standing mic hits just below the mouth
 - Ensure you can be seen from behind the lectern
- Lighting
 - Some types of lights can reflect on glasses that don't have non-glare glass
 - Lighting can often keep people on the stage from seeing the audience in a large, professionally lit space
- Recording
 - Find out how your microphone will be set up so your movement doesn't impede recording audio
 - If questions are allowed, repeat the question so the recording audio is sure to pick it up
 - Make sure the person getting the mic to participants knows the plan to have everyone speak from the mic as some people think they can speak loud enough to be heard by everyone

Prepare then Practice

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, Say it Well.

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

Contact: Reba Campbell | reba@themedwaygroup.com | 803.587.0246

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