



# How to guide: Public Speaking

There are several things to consider before you can excel in the art of public speaking. Follow these 12 steps and see a difference in how well you perform in front of an audience:

## 1. Prepare to succeed

The single most important thing you can do to make your presentation successful is to be prepared. That means making time for practice. Experts suggest that you spend half of your time preparing your speech and the other half of your time practicing!

## 2. Say it correctly

As a participant in the CPF Concours d'art oratoire, you will be judged on your use of the French language (vocabulary, grammar, and structure). The correct pronunciation and knowledge of these terms lends credibility to your presentation.

## 3. Overcome your anxiety

Almost every public speaker experiences some anxiety before addressing their audience. What you should know is that audiences seldom detect it. If you are nervous, use breathing and relaxation techniques before you perform your speech for a calming effect. Once you are in front of your audience, put your energy into giving the audience the best presentation you can. Begin slowly and use short sentences. As you get used to the situation, you'll begin to feel more comfortable and at ease.

## 4. Make a good first impression

Before you even begin your presentation, your audience will base their first impression on your appearance. Make it count! Dress appropriately for the event. Be neat, clean, professional, and comfortable enough to act naturally.

## 5. Stand for attention

Stand up straight with your legs shoulder-width apart and your weight distributed. Good posture reflects confidence and engagement with your audience.

## 6. Act naturally

Body language is important. Be sure to make appropriate hand gestures and facial expressions. Do not use excessive or distracting gestures (e.g., fidgeting, playing with a pen, and hands in pockets). In following CPF Concours d'art oratoire rules, excessive gestures will result in a penalty of up to 3 points.

## 7. Make eye contact

A great way to calm your nerves is to make eye contact with one person in the audience at a time. Speak only to them. When you feel you have looked at them long enough to make a

connection, move onto another person, then another. Maintaining eye contact is also a great way to keep your audience engaged in your presentation.

### **8. Show your feelings**

You may normally be reserved, but for the presentation of your speech, open with a smile. Show your audience that you are happy to share your information with them. Facial expressions add power to your words, just be sure that your expressions are appropriate for the subject matter and contest.

### **9. Make yourself heard**

There are several aspects of verbal delivery to consider. When participating in the CPF Concours d'art oratoire, you will be judged on your vocal expression (pronunciation, articulation, fluency, pitch, audibility, and rate of speech). Make sure you speak loudly enough so that everyone can hear you. Also, consider your rate of delivery. When presenters are nervous they often speak at a faster rate. Make an active effort to speak slowly and clearly, so your audience can understand every word. Finally, consider the pitch of your voice. Too much variation is distracting and too little is monotone.

### **10. Silence your distracters**

Filler words and phrases like, “um,” “ah,” “you know,” etc. quickly become distracting. Break the habit of using filler words as quickly as possible. Instead, fill the space with silence, even if it means speaking in fragments. As you relax and improve your public speaking skills, the moments of silence will shorten and eventually you can eliminate them entirely. However, it is also very important to incorporate natural pauses in your speech. Pauses allow the audience to reflect and think about what you are saying. Do not race through your presentation and leave the audience and yourself feeling out of breath.

### **11. Know when to stop**

When taking part in the CPF Concours d'art oratoire, you will be penalized if your speech is shorter or longer than the allotted time. You will receive a penalty of 1 point for going over or under by 1-30 seconds, two points for 31-60 seconds, and so forth. It is crucial to the success of your presentation that you know when to stop talking. Use a timer to measure the length of your presentation when you are preparing at home. Remember, performers tend to speak a little faster in front of an audience—plan for this when you are writing and practicing your speech.

### **12. Speak with conviction**

Speak with conviction as if you truly believe in what you are saying. Persuade your audience effectively. The material you present orally should have the same components as a written research paper: an introduction, thesis statement, body and supporting arguments, and a conclusion.

*“In Canada, bilingualism is a most valuable asset. In life, public speaking is a most feared, but often unavoidable skill. By being well-versed in this challenging field as well as a practiced bilingual speaker, the Concours quite generously offers students the chance of a lifetime to gain invaluable experience. I am able to fully express myself in whatever manner I wish to a room full of attentive individuals and judges who abide by rules that are perfectly tailored to marking me only on the quality of my speech.*

*The Concours is always well-organized, warm, inviting, and an amazing experience. Words cannot describe how grateful I am for the Concours.”*

- 2013 provincial participant and winner.