

Managing Speech Anxiety

APSU Writing Center Handout

Speech anxiety, often referred to as "stage fright," is a common experience for many speakers.

This type of anxiety typically peaks just before a presentation and during the initial moments of speaking. As you progress through your speech, you may find that your anxiety decreases as you become more engaged with your content and audience.

Preparation is Key

Research your topic thoroughly.

Create an outline highlighting key points.

Practice your speech multiple times.

Familiarity with content boosts confidence and ease.

Identify Your Nervousness

Write down your reasons for feeling nervous.

Ask yourself:

- Do I fear forgetting what to say?
- What triggers my anxiety?
- Understanding anxiety triggers helps you develop coping strategies.

Understand the Speech Prompt

Know your assignment details

Time limit

Audience size

Available equipment (PowerPoint, notecards, podium, etc.)

Have a backup plan for technological issues.

Focus on Message

Plan how to handle anxiety during the speech.

Remind yourself:

- "If I lose my place, I will take a deep breath and refocus."
- "I have prepared well and know my material."
- "My perspective is valuable, and my audience wants to hear it."

Seek Support

Practice with a peer or writing tutor at the APSU Writing Center.

Ask for constructive feedback:

Did I speak too fast? Did I rely on filler words?

Were my key points clear?

What areas did I do well in?

During the Speech

Take a moment to calm your nerves before starting.

Look for a friendly face in the audience.

Smile and begin confidently.

Remember that your peers likely feel similar anxiety.

References

University of Nevada Writing Center. (2014). *Speech Anxiety*. <https://www.unr.edu/writing-speaking-center/writing-speaking-resources/speech-anxiety>

University of Pittsburgh Department of Communication. (n.d.). *Speech Anxiety*. <https://www.comm.pitt.edu/speech-anxiety>