

Lessons from Our Most Successful Speakers Bureau Talks

1. **Less is more.** Have a particular focus and a few key take-aways. Be able to express the core of your talk in a sentence. Ask yourself: what do you want your audience to remember afterwards? *Example: At the end of my presentation, the audience will be able to better separate fake news from legitimate news.*
2. **Set the level.** Since not everyone is coming into the room with the same amount of knowledge about your topic, be sure to get everyone up to speed. Avoid jargon and define your terms. *Example: If your talk is about dystopian literature, define “dystopian” and provide relatable and clear examples, like 1984 or The Hunger Games.*
3. **Tell a story.** Stories and specific examples emotionally resonate with your audience and help make points *real*. Too much theory feels academic and disconnected from the real world. Additionally, your talk should have a clear structure and flow that carries your audience with you. *Example: In a talk about Washington State history, use the narratives of a few individuals to help illustrate points.*
4. **Keep your slides simple.** If you use slides, make sure they are not text-heavy. No more than three bullet points per slide is a good rule of thumb. Bullet points should only be a sentence long, not a paragraph. Make sure your images are high-quality and cleanly laid out. Do not stack images on top of each other or lay them out haphazardly. *Resource: [Top Ten Slide Tips](#)*
5. **Break it up.** Be sure to engage your audience with discussion questions, activities, or opportunities for input. Even if your talk is chiefly a lecture followed by Q&A, breaking it up with brief interludes of audience participation will help keep your audience’s attention. *Example: (To the audience) When you look at this graph, what stands out to you?*
6. **Be heard.** Remember to speak loudly, clearly, and confidently. Speaking too quickly and mumbling are common, but avoidable issues. If a microphone is available, use it. Your audience is excited to see *and* hear you! *Resource: [How to Improve Your Clarity of Speech](#)*
7. **Welcome discussion.** Discussion or Q&A sections require speakers to be friendly and genuinely interested in the thoughts of the audience. The audience needs to feel that their questions are welcomed. With your guidance, difficult, tense, or confusing moments in Q&A can be turned into meaningful learning experiences for the entire audience. *Resource: [How to Handle Questions and Answers](#)*

General Resources

- [12 Tips for Public Speaking](#) – Forbes
- [Public Speaking for Academics](#) – The Guardian
- [6 Ways to be an Amazing Public Speaker](#) – Forbes
- [7 Secrets to Handling a Hostile Audience](#) – LinkedIn
- [8 Tips to Help Communicate a Controversial Topic](#) – Composition Logic