

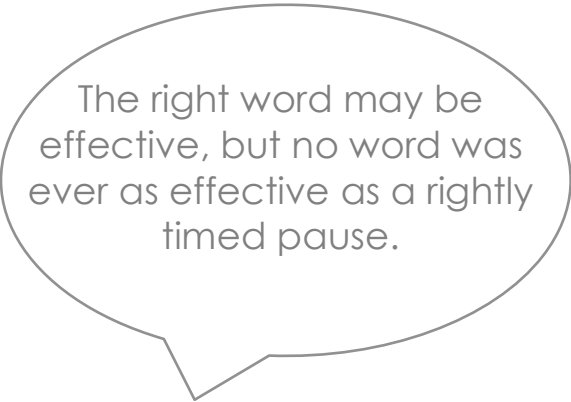


WAYS TO GIVE  
A BETTER  
PRESENTATION  
NOW

HANDOUTS

## THE BUCKLEY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SPEAKING





The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause.

Mark Twain

## Getting the Most from Delivery

A strong message is important—but it's only half the assignment. Great speakers use every tool they have to make that message come to life.

### **Voice—Projection and variety are key**

The first requirement for any speaker is that you must speak loudly enough to be heard. No audience will strain to hear you for long. Audiences also crave variety, so change your tone, preferably to match your message. A speaker in overdrive for his entire speech is as troubling as the too-quiet one.

### **Pace and Timing—Don't forget the pause**

Pace addresses your rate of speaking (and too many speakers rush). Timing refers to how you use pauses to make your talk funnier or more dramatic. First, you must deliver sentences at a rate that makes comprehension possible. Second, you should vary pace—to add intensity or emphasize a point. And finally, you must pause. Pause as you move from one idea to the next. Pause to build anticipation. Pause after a rhetorical question. Pause to draw out a laugh.

### **Eye Contact—Look them in the eye**

Don't scan the room like a lawn sprinkler. Instead, key on individuals. Make sustained eye contact with one, then move onto another in a different section of the room.

### **Gestures—Show us something**

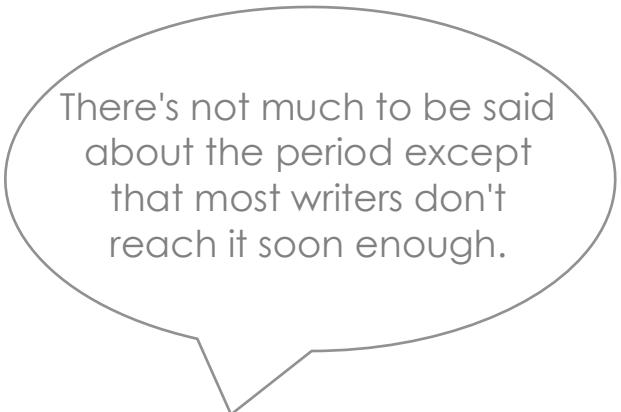
Use your hands and arms with purpose—and when you're not doing that, let hands rest quietly by your sides or grasp the lectern. The best gestures depict your sentences: Your hand goes up, for example, when you say "Profits are high." That said, don't emulate flight attendants and show us the emergency exits. We don't need an illustration for every line you speak.

### **Body Language—Controlled dynamism is the goal**

Stand with feet shoulder width apart, giving you a firm foundation for an animated upper body. Shrug, turn, lean in, pull back—move your body in a way that supports your message. These subtle but athletic moves will make your talk more interesting and make you appear more confident.

### **Face—Let your expressions reflect your words**

A smile is a lovely way to begin—but consider the full array of expressions that can match your words. Wrinkle your brow to question. Raise an eyebrow in astonishment. Frown at the offensive suggestion. You get the idea.



There's not much to be said  
about the period except  
that most writers don't  
reach it soon enough.

William Zinsser

# Speaking With Your Audience in Mind

Writing simply is a gift to readers. Speaking simply is a requirement. Audiences can't re-read the words you say, nor can they hit the pause button. So make it a practice of speaking to serve them.

Whether you're speaking or writing, these tips will help you get your ideas across to your audience:

## **Start strong**

Put together an open that grabs attention. Let the audience know what you're talking about and why they should care.

## **Keep sentences short**

They're easier to deliver and easier to follow. Break long sentences into shorter ones. Eliminate unnecessary words.

## **Use simple words**

Fancy words don't impress. They confuse. Choose what speechwriter Peggy Noonan calls "*good, hard, simple words with good, hard, clear meanings.*"

## **Provide specifics**

Concrete details, analogies, stories, examples—these make messages engaging and easier to grasp.

## **Avoid tentative language**

Frequent use of "*I think*" or "*I believe*" or "*kinda sorta definitely*" undermine your message.

## **Cut the fluff**

No need to add "*I want you to understand that...*" or "*here is a story that will help you see what I mean.*" Jump to the substance that follows.

## **Identify with the audience**

Avoid "*I urge you ...*" or "*you must...*" Look for ways to say "*We're in this together.*"

## **Minimize jargon**

Jargon can be efficient. It can indicate knowledge of a company or field. But excessive use of jargon makes language boring and confuses people less familiar with your "secret code."

## **End well**

Conclude by reminding the audience of your major point and why they care. If there are next steps, those might be part of a conclusion, too.



# Making a Strong Start

*"I'm here today to talk to you about..."*

What's wrong with saying that?

It's factually correct, that's true. But it's the most overused, least useful way to start a talk. And because it's overused, it's also boring.

## STEP 1: GIVE THE AUDIENCE SOME THOUGHT

Too often, a speaker addresses the topic from the speaker's point of view, without considering where the audience is coming from—or what he hopes to accomplish by speaking to this particular group.

- **Understand your audience**

Who are they? What do they care about? How can you relate your topic to their interests or point of view?

- **Know what you need to accomplish**

What do you want this audience to remember after they hear you speak? What's the one most important message for them to take away?

## STEP 2: MAKE THEM WANT TO HEAR MORE

As famed writing professor William Zinsser explained to students, the job of the first sentence is to make you want to move on to the next sentence. But how do you do that? **To be strong, an open must do two things: 1) let me know what this is about and 2) let me know why I care.**

There are a number of ways to go about doing that. Here are three ideas:

- **Hook them with a story**

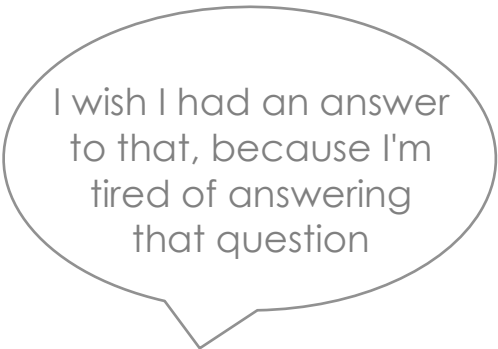
Stories are engaging—but be sure your story sets up your point and isn't too long. Stories in business presentations go wrong when they don't make a point or take too long to tell.

- **Provide a startling fact**

Is there one fact that will shock the audience into attention? Don't save it—lead with it.

- **Be direct**

Don't underestimate the appeal of just getting to it. Say what your talk is about and tell the audience why it matters to them, in clean fluff-free language.



I wish I had an answer  
to that, because I'm  
tired of answering  
that question

Yogi Berra

## Q&A: Cool Under Fire

You may want to open the floor to questions following a presentation. You may need to take questions as you go along, when the client or boss asks them.

Don't put yourself in the uncomfortable position of being called out unexpectedly:

### **Think about the group and your relationship with them.**

Are you bringing good news or bad? Are there hot issues aside from the ones you're addressing? Do you need to research your audience before you present? Do you need to recruit allies?

**Brainstorm the questions you might get**, the tough ones *and* the easy ones.

**Prepare your answers with the short answer first.** Usually, we take people through the process of our reasoning. See if you can give the conclusion—the short answer—first. It helps the audience follow you.

**Answer the question—and look for opportunities to advance your message.** Clients and colleagues are frustrated when you don't address the question. Give an answer, but if you can relate your answer to one of your points, it makes your case stronger.

**Repeat the positive. Reframe the negative.** In large rooms, it helps everyone (including you) if you repeat the question. Even better, if a question sounds negative, rephrase it so that you don't repeat the negative. That also sets you up to deliver a better answer.

**If you don't know, say so. Offer to find the information and get back with it.** Then deliver. If you face a series of questions that stump you, try delivering a big picture answer: *"I don't have the specifics, but I can say in general that we...."* You can also acknowledge that there's an area you need to explore further or draw on other experts in the room.

**Look for the question behind the question.** Sometimes, the person isn't seeking a literal answer but is looking for reassurance that you understand the topic or have considered everything. Sometimes, people ask a question because they have an agenda that's different from yours.

**Don't end on Q&A.** Reserve the final word for you. If you take questions at the end, prepare and deliver a brief conclusion after you've answered the last question. If you've concluded once—before Q&A—conclude again.

The Seventh Law of Spiritual  
and Financial Growth:  
The only way to get rich from a  
get-rich book is  
to write one.

Brother Ty, as told to  
Christopher Buckley and  
John Tierney  
in *God is My Broker*



For online writing and  
grammar tools, try the  
Purdue OWL:  
[purdue.edu/owl](http://purdue.edu/owl)

## Speaker's Self-Help

### ***Strictly Speaking* by Reid Buckley**

Buckley based this book on years of experience as a speaker, debater, and public speaking coach to top executives. The way chapters are organized makes this a great reference book.

### ***On Speaking* by Peggy Noonan**

Noonan was President Reagan's speechwriter and is a terrific writer. This book is a great read, with solid advice for speakers in every situation. It's particularly helpful on ways to figure out what you have to say and getting organized.

### ***Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner**

This book delivers on its promise: O'Conner explains grammar with humor and as little technical hoo-ha as possible. Organized so that you can find the rule you need. A great reference book for speaking and writing.

### ***Made to Stick* by Chip Heath & Dan Heath**

Why do we remember urban legends in vivid detail but can't get a handle on real-world news? These brothers — a communications pro and a professor — examine the elements and structure that make stories memorable.

### ***Presentation Zen* by Garr Reynolds**

A look at the visual side of organizing a message (i.e. PowerPoint) that's also full of good general advice on message construction.

# About The Buckley School

More than 30 years ago, Reid Buckley got the notion to use his experience as a professional speaker, writer, and debater to help businesspeople. He combined classic training and on-your-feet practice with immediate feedback, all delivered with irreverence, a warm heart, and a sense of humor.

**The Buckley School held its first seminar in 1988.** In the decades since, the school has become known for its ability to help speakers tap into their talents and shine.

Many of our clients find us through personal referral. Often, people tell us, *"I asked why everyone at this company is such a good speaker. They told me 'The Buckley School.'"*

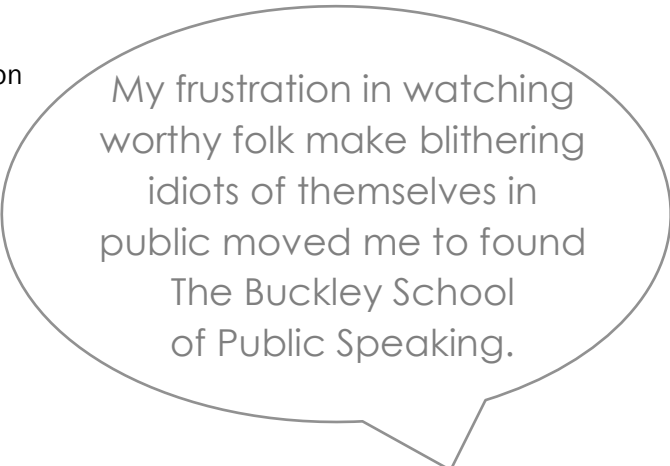
We are enthusiastic about helping people find their unique voices—another legacy of Reid Buckley. And we're gratified that our training speaks for itself, as we continue to expand our programs in Camden, S.C., and at locations around the country.

The Buckley School programs **open to the public for individual enrollment** include:

- The Executive Seminar
- Organization of Materials
- Writing to Make Your Point
- Business Etiquette

Our **private on-site training** takes The Buckley School to companies and organization and can be customized to include:

- Public speaking fundamentals
- Making the best of PowerPoint
- Sales presentations and pitches
- Storytelling
- Handling questions and challenges
- Media training
- Business writing
- Etiquette & Protocol



My frustration in watching worthy folk make blithering idiots of themselves in public moved me to found The Buckley School of Public Speaking.

We also provide **private coaching** for those who want to focus on a specific speech or presentation.

Reid Buckley

You can find details on all programs at [www.buckleyschool.com](http://www.buckleyschool.com).

We're always happy to answer questions, too, so feel free to call us at 803.425.4681 or email us at [info@buckleyschool.com](mailto:info@buckleyschool.com).