

Giving a speech?

For some, giving a speech is just part of the job. These people are constantly doing sales pitches or addressing the board. For others, giving a speech is an opportunity to establish their credentials or gain more visibility. In any case, not everyone is a good speaker, and some people have really annoying habits when giving a speech.

I was at a two-day conference last week and I heard A LOT of speeches. Some were good, some were fine and some were just plain annoying. Here is a list of actual behaviors observed last week. If you are giving a speech, please keep your audience in mind and try to avoid any of these!

Talking too loudly: do not yell into a microphone please!

Talking too softly: yeah, the microphone amplifies your voice, but won't help if you are whispering. Besides, to me talking softly means that you are unsure of yourself.

Sounding unsure: mostly this happens when you end each and every sentence with a question mark, so your speech sound like this: Hi? Today I am going to be talking about widgets? Widgets are the fastest growing segment in the market?

Sounding too sure: also known as sounding arrogant or dismissive.

Self promoting: say you are asked to talk about literature in the eighteenth century, but all you talk about is the book you just wrote, inspired by the 18th century.

Being off-topic: you were given a topic, try to address it. No one came to hear your views on extra-terrestrials if the topic was the planetary system.

Hogging the spotlight: if you are speaking on a panel, that means the other people get to speak to. If you are told you

have five minutes, we should not still be hearing from you fifteen minutes later.

Not answering questions: this applies to speeches that have an audience Q&A component. If you don't know the answer to a question, it is OK to say that you don't know. It is not OK to go off on a tangent or ignore the content of the question and add more time to your speech.

Do you have any pet peeves about speeches? Any advice? Please share in the comments.

