

Tips, tricks and guidance: Your speakers' cheat sheet

When it comes to delivering your presentation there are a few things you can do to prepare yourself and make the whole thing run smoothly.

✓ **Embrace your nerves**

Even the most seasoned performers suffer from nerves before they go onstage. They're not fun at first, but nerves create adrenaline which helps sharpen the mind. However, if they are severe, try some deep breathing before you start. Also try to relax your neck and shoulder muscles; this will help with a more controlled voice.

✓ **Get their attention**

Before you start your presentation, make sure you have everyone's attention. If that means doing something to get it, then go ahead!

✓ **Embrace the spotlight**

Take a few moments to look at your audience before you start. Remember, they're here to see you – you've already got them on your side.

✓ **The power of the pause**

If you've practiced your presentation, you'll have already noticed places where it feels right to pause. Pausing helps to highlight a point, gain attention and create confidence. It also gives you a few seconds to gather your thoughts.

✓ **Emphasise important words**

A presentation that's dynamic and flowing will always be better remembered than one that's delivered in a monotone. When practicing, look for the words or phrases you most want your audience to remember and make sure they stand out.

✓ **Ums and ahs**

Even the best-rehearsed speaker can stumble from time to time, so don't worry if this happens. But by rehearsing, you can reduce the amount of 'ums', 'ahs' and 'you knows' in your presentation. Not only will you sound more confident, you'll feel more confident too.

✓ **Pace yourself**

Pacing yourself can help with clarity, speed and emphasis. Try recording yourself practicing. Is it too fast or too slow? Are you mumbling? Do you sound like you're reading out loud? Try to work in little ebbs and flows to keep your presentation feeling fresh and lively.

✓ **Eye contact**

Eye contact is one of the ways we best connect as humans. Too much can be a little off-putting. But used right, it's great way to engage your audience and keep their attention.

✓ **Body language:**

If mobility isn't an issue for you, gentle movements to emphasise words are a great way to keep the audience's attention.

✓ **Take your notes**

If you practice enough you won't need notes. However, they can be comforting if you're feeling nervous and they can also be a life-saver if you have any technical difficulties on the night. So take them with you just in case.

✓ **Enjoy it**

What you're doing is incredibly important. On the night, know that you are making a difference. So when you notice that you're enjoying it, take a moment to memorise how it feels.

Your 'what not to do' checklist:

Don't:

✗ **Treat your presentation slides as a script**

Reading out what's on the screen is a sure-fire way to lose your audience's attention.

✗ **Use too many slides**

It's better to have a few meaningful slides than multiple unnecessary ones.

✗ **Include far too many facts and stats – they won't be remembered**

✗ **Stand in front of the screen if you want it to be seen**

✗ **Use slides that contain spelling or grammatical errors – they will be spotted!**

✗ **Use acronyms without explanation**

✗ **Rely on your presentation slides**

Rehearse without them so if your equipment fails, you can still give your presentation.

✗ **Worry**

You're not there to be judged and you'll find audiences are generally polite, friendly and interested in what you have to say. You're doing a brilliant thing by speaking and helping spread the word about MND – so always keep that in mind if nerves get the better of you.