

The Pre-Speech Checklist.

What top speakers do before they walk on stage.

THE NIGHT BEFORE

☐ **Lock your opening line**

Know the first 30 seconds cold. Nerves are highest at the start.

☐ **Lock your closing line**

Your last words define how the audience remembers you.

☐ **Rehearse out loud, at least once**

Not in your head. Your mouth needs the repetition, not just your brain. Film yourself if you can — even one run-through on camera shows you things a mirror never will. No camera? At minimum, record the audio and check your timing.

☐ **Confirm the logistics**

Time, location, parking, who to contact on arrival.

☐ **Prepare your outfit**

Avoid new clothes. No clinking jewelry. Wear something you feel comfortable and confident in. That feeling comes through on stage.

MORNING OF THE TALK

☐ **Eat light**

Full stomach = sluggish delivery. A heavy lunch before an afternoon talk is a common mistake.

☐ **Hydrate, start early**

Drink water from the moment you wake up. Hydration at T-30 minutes is too late.

☐ **Warm up your voice**

Humming, lip trills, tongue twisters. Five minutes. Your voice is an instrument.

☐ **Avoid coffee and alcohol**

Both dehydrate and increase anxiety. Not today.

30 MINUTES BEFORE

☐ **Arrive early and walk the stage**

Stand where you'll stand. Feel the space. It removes the physical unknown.

☐ **Meet the tech person**

Know their name. Confirm mic type, slide clicker, and check that your laptop connects to their setup. Mac, Windows, HDMI, USB-C, adapters — sort it now, not when you're about to go on.

☐ **Do one physical warm-up**

Shake out your hands, roll your shoulders, take a few deep breaths. Gets you out of your head.

☐ **Silence everything**

Phone on airplane mode. If you wear a smartwatch, put that on silent too. Nothing breaks focus like a wrist buzzing mid-sentence.

☐ **Visit the bathroom**

Non-negotiable.

RIGHT BEFORE YOU WALK ON

☐ **Box breathing, 2 minutes**

Inhale 4 counts, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4. Lowers heart rate. Used by athletes and surgeons.

☐ **Remind yourself: slow down**

Nerves make you rush. Your normal speaking pace on stage will feel slower than it actually is.

☐ **Cue your opening**

Run your first sentence in your head one last time. Then stop. Don't spiral.

☐ **Stand tall for 60 seconds**

Posture affects confidence. How you carry your body shapes how you feel inside it.

☐ **Decide to enjoy it**

Not 'survive it'. The audience wants you to succeed. Meet them halfway.

☐ **Go.**

DRY MOUTH, WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS

- **Bite your tongue.** Gently press your tongue against your teeth for 2-3 seconds. Triggers saliva instantly. No one sees it. Works mid-speech.
- **Eat a piece of green apple backstage.** The pectin cuts through mucus and stimulates saliva. Many broadcast journalists swear by this.
- **Room temperature water only.** Cold water tightens the throat. Keep a glass within reach, don't wait until you're parched.
- **Avoid before going on:** coffee, alcohol, dairy, and energy drinks all dry the mouth or coat the throat.
- **Breathe through your nose** when you're not speaking. Mouth breathing dries everything out fast.

A free resource by [Your Time To Speak](http://yourtimetospeak.com). yourtimetospeak.com