

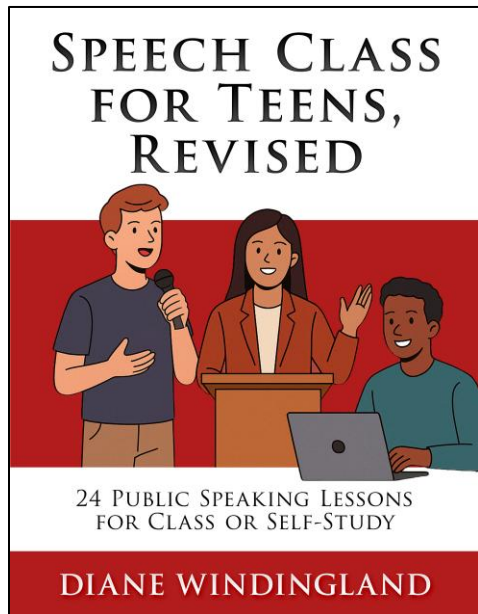
Public Speaking Toolkit for Teens

By Diane Windingland





PUBLIC SPEAKING TOOLKIT FOR TEENS



Speaking with confidence is a skill every teen can build—and you don't have to start from scratch. Whether you're a classroom teacher, homeschool parent, or a motivated self-study student, this starter pack gives you a ready-to-use toolkit excerpted from the newly revised book *Speech Class for Teens, Revised: 24 Public Speaking Lessons for Class or Self-Study*.

The new edition includes 24 complete lessons designed to develop students' skills in clear, confident communication. Each lesson features simple instruction, classroom-tested activities, and a practical speaking project that reinforces real-world skills like storytelling, persuasion, interviewing, and digital presentations. Topics in this Toolkit are excerpted from the book.

👉 Available on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0F6T16QBJ>



About the Author: Diane Windingland is a professional communication coach, author, and Distinguished Toastmaster. For over a decade, she taught public speaking to teens, helping them find their voice and speak with impact.

This **Public Speaking Toolkit** includes the following topics:

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How to Manage the Fear of Public Speaking



Fear is normal—but manageable.

Strategies to Calm Nerves

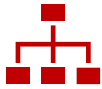
- **Reframe Fear as Excitement**
 - Instead of saying, “*I’m nervous*,” tell yourself, “*I’m excited!*”
 - Studies show that shifting your mindset can improve performance.
- **Breathe Deeply**
 - Use box breathing: Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold again for 4 seconds.
 - Breathing deeply helps lower anxiety and steadies your voice.
- **Power Pose for Confidence**
 - Stand tall with your arms stretched out or on your hips (like Superman).
 - Power posing for 2 minutes can boost confidence and lower stress.
- **Practice with Small Audiences**
 - Speak in front of friends or record yourself.
 - The more you practice, the less intimidating it becomes.
- **Prepare a Strong Opening**
 - Memorize your first sentence so you start with confidence.
 - Practicing the first 30 seconds reduces anxiety for the rest of the speech.
- **PLB at the start**—and occasionally during your speech (**P** = **Pause**, **L** = **Look**, and **B** = **Breathe**). You can even mark up your speech notes to remind yourself to PLB:
 - **Pause (P)** Pause 2-3 seconds to give you and your audience a moment to focus.
 - **Look (L)** Look at your audience to connect with them.
 - **Breathe (B)** Breathe to give yourself calming energy.

What to Do If You Freeze Mid-Speech

Even great speakers lose their train of thought. Here’s how to recover smoothly:

1. **Pause and Breathe**
 - Take a deep breath and sip some water if available.
 - A pause feels longer to you than to the audience—they likely won’t notice.
2. **Rewind or Jump Ahead**
 - Repeat the last sentence to help you regain your flow.
 - If you can’t remember, move to your next main point.
3. **Check Your Notes**
 - Glance at your notes briefly and confidently—there’s no need to apologize.

How to Organize Your Speech and Transition Between Points



Following a structured outline (beginning, middle, end) helps organize thoughts clearly.

Basic Outline Format (for a 2–3-minute speech):

1. **Introduction** (30-45 seconds)
 - Grab attention with a **hook** (question, quote, or story).
 - State your **topic and purpose**.
 - Preview your **main points**.
2. **Body** (60-90 seconds. A very short speech may only have one point, but longer speeches may have 3 or more)
 - Organize ideas logically using one of the structures above.
 - Support key points with **examples, facts, or stories**.
3. **Conclusion** (15-30 seconds)
 - Summarize key takeaways.
 - End with a **call to action, memorable statement, or personal reflection**.

Using Transitions to Connect Your Ideas

Transitions are **short phrases or sentences that link one part of your speech to another**. They help your audience stay with you and understand how your ideas fit together.

Without transitions, your speech may sound like a list of disconnected points. With transitions, it flows smoothly and feels more natural—like a conversation.

Here are some types of transitions and examples:

Type of Transition	When to Use It	Examples
Starting a New Point	When introducing a new idea or main point	“Let’s move on to...”, “Another reason is...”
Adding Information	To continue building on the same idea	“In addition...”, “Also...”, “Not only that...”
Giving an Example	To support a point you just made	“For example...”, “Let me give you a quick story...”
Showing Contrast	To point out a difference or opposing idea	“However...”, “On the other hand...”
Wrapping Up	To signal that you’re moving to the conclusion	“To sum it up...”, “In conclusion...”, “Finally...”

Ways to Start (and End) a Speech



The beginning and end of your speech are often the most memorable parts.

Techniques for Crafting an Engaging Opening

1. **Ask a Thought-Provoking Question:**
 - Example: “What would you do if you only had one day to achieve your biggest goal?”
2. **Share a Surprising Fact or Statistic:**
 - Example: “Did you know that over 75% of people fear public speaking more than death?”
3. **Use a Quote:**
 - Example: “As Nelson Mandela said, ‘It always seems impossible until it’s done.’”
4. **Tell a Short Story:**
 - Example: “When I was seven, I tried to build a treehouse. It collapsed, but I learned the value of teamwork that day.”
5. **Use Humor:**
 - Example: “Apparently, more people fear public speaking than sharks. Personally, I’d rather take my chances with the sharks.”

Once you’ve hooked your audience, briefly explain what your speech will cover to prepare them for what’s coming next.

Techniques for Crafting a Memorable Conclusion

1. **Summarize Your Key Points:**
 - Example: “So, teamwork teaches cooperation, improves health, and builds discipline.”
2. **Tie Back to Your Opening:**
 - This technique gives your speech a satisfying, full-circle feeling of closure.
 - Example: “Remember that treehouse I mentioned? I never rebuilt it, but I did learn to trust others, and that has made all the difference.”
3. **Use a Call to Action:**
 - Example: “Take the first step today—join a team, start a project, or simply trust someone with your ideas.”
4. **End with a Quote:**
 - Example: “Winston Churchill said, ‘Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.’”
5. **Share a Vision:**
 - This technique gets your audience thinking about the future.
 - Example: “Imagine a world where everyone works together. It starts with small steps, like the ones we’ve talked about today.”

Speech Planning Guide for a Topical Speech

Speech Planning Guide for a Topical Speech



A topical speech is the most common way to organize a speech. It is often organized like a 5-paragraph essay (introduction of your main idea, 3 main points supporting the main idea, and a conclusion).

What is the main idea of your speech, in one sentence? _____

Introduction: Get attention, preview topic, transition to the body. Some ways can get attention using: a question, a story, a startling statement, a quote, humor, or a prop.

Attention (hook): _____

Topic preview: _____

Transition: _____

Body: Support your main idea with 1-3 points (facts, stories/examples, explanation)

Point 1: _____

Support (keywords): _____

Transition: _____

Point 2: _____

Support (keywords): _____

Transition: _____

Point 3: _____

Support (keywords): _____

Transition: _____

Conclusion: Summarize & use one or more: tie back to opening, quote, call to action, vision

Materials needed? Prop, PowerPoint, notecards: _____

How to Use Your Voice Effectively



Vocal variety makes your speech engaging and helps your audience stay focused.

Reducing Filler Words: How to Sound More Confident

Filler words like "um," "uh," "like," "you know," and "so" can distract from your message and make you seem uncertain. You don't need to eliminate them completely—having a few is normal and often not even noticeable. Here's how to minimize them:

1. **Be Conscious of Your Fillers**
 - Record yourself speaking and identify patterns.
 - Example: If you frequently say "like," practice replacing it with a silent pause.
2. **Practice the "Pause and Replace" Technique**
 - Replace fillers with **intentional pauses**.
 - Example: Instead of saying, "So, um, I think this is, like, important," try:
 - "This is... important." (with a brief pause for impact).
3. **Slow Down Your Speech**
 - Speaking too fast increases filler word usage because your brain tries to catch up.
 - Use a steady pace and emphasize key points with pauses.
4. **Use Transitional Phrases**
 - Instead of "um," try structured transitions like:
 - "Let's move on to..."
 - "One example of this is..."
 - "A key takeaway is..."
5. **Practice with Filler Word Challenges**
 - Have a partner tap on a table or say "ding" every time you use a filler.
 - Set a goal to gradually reduce them.

How Emphasis Changes Meaning

Beyond pacing, the way you emphasize certain words can change your entire message. The sentence exercise below is a great example of how vocal variety brings out hidden meaning and subtext. Consider the sentence: "**I did not say you stole my red hat.**"

- **Examples:**
 - "I did not say you stole my red hat." (Someone else did.)
 - "I **did not** say you stole my red hat." (Denial.)
 - "I did not **say** you stole my red hat." (Implied in another way.)
 - "I did not say **you** stole my red hat." (Someone else stole it.)
 - "I did not say you **stole** my red hat." (You borrowed it.)
 - "I did not say you stole **my** red hat." (It wasn't mine.)
 - "I did not say you stole my **red** hat." (It wasn't red.)
 - "I did not say you stole my red **hat**." (It wasn't a hat.)

How to Make Effective Eye Contact



Eye contact is a powerful tool for connecting with your audience. Here's why:

1. **Builds Trust:**
 - Looking at your audience shows confidence and credibility.
2. **Engages Your Audience:**
 - Eye contact makes listeners feel included and keeps their attention.
3. **Helps You Read Your Audience:**
 - You can gauge reactions, such as nods or confused expressions, and adjust your delivery as needed.

Techniques for Effective Eye Contact

1. Look at Individuals, Not the Crowd:

- Instead of scanning the audience randomly, focus on individual people for a few seconds at a time (about 3-5 seconds or a complete thought).
- Imagine you're having a series of one-on-one conversations.

2. Practice with Keyword Notes:

- While you may practice with a full script at first for refining pacing and emphasis, wean yourself from a full script and use keyword notes to avoid reading. Your delivery will be more authentic if you don't read or try to memorize your speech word-for-word. Your audience doesn't know exactly what you planned to say, so it's okay to phrase things differently than you originally wrote. This often sounds more natural.
- Remember to talk to people, not to paper. Glance at your keyword notes briefly, then look up to connect with the audience before you speak.

4. Avoid Focusing on One Person:

- While it's great to make eye contact with individuals, avoid locking onto one person for too long. Shift your gaze naturally to include everyone.

5. For Virtual Presentations: Look at the Camera Most of the Time When Speaking

- In virtual settings, maintain eye contact by looking directly at the camera lens, not the screen.
- You can also try placing your notes near the webcam, so your eyes don't shift far away.
- If speaking without a live audience, place a photo of a friendly face near your camera to make it feel more personal, if speaking without an audience.

How to Use Body Language to Engage Your Audience



Body language isn't just about looking confident—it's about keeping your audience interested. Here's how:

1. Stand Tall and Open

- Keep your shoulders back and your chest open.
- Avoid slouching, which makes you appear uncertain or disengaged.

2. Use Strategic Movement

- Move with purpose rather than pacing nervously.
- Example:
 - Step forward when making a key point.
 - Shift positions to mark transitions between topics.
 - Avoid pacing or rocking from side to side—move only with purpose.

3. Use Open Gestures

- Keep your hands mostly above the waist and away from your body.
- Open palms facing up signal honesty and openness.

5. Use Gestures Intentionally

- You don't need to choreograph every movement, but purposeful gestures—such as using your hands to show size, direction, or emotion—make your message more dynamic and easier to follow.
- Example of gesturing to enhance meaning:
Saying: “We must climb higher than ever before.”
Gesture: One hand slowly moving upward to show elevation or growth.

6. Use Facial Expressions to Match Your Message

- A smile adds warmth and approachability.
- Raised eyebrows emphasize surprise or excitement.
- A serious look conveys importance or concern.
- Don't forget: your face is part of your message. If you're telling a happy story, let your expression reflect it!

Fun Group Activities



Public speaking isn't just about **formal speeches**—it's about **thinking on your feet, engaging an audience, and using body language effectively**. *Speech Class for Teens, Revised* includes more than a dozen **interactive games and improv activities** to help students develop confidence, spontaneity, and essential speaking skills in a **fun and low-pressure way**. Below are 3 of the activities.

One-Word Story

Focus: Collaboration, creativity, quick thinking **Group Size:** Whole class or groups of 4–6

Instructions:

1. Students form a circle or line.
 2. One person starts a story with a single word (e.g., “Yesterday…”).
 3. Going around, each person adds *only one word* at a time to continue the story.
 4. Keep going until the story naturally ends or set a 1-minute timer.
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Fortunately, Unfortunately

Focus: Creativity, adaptability, and quick humor **Group Size:** Small groups or whole class

Instructions:

1. One student begins a story with a sentence: “Fortunately, I found a treasure map.”
2. The next student adds: “Unfortunately, it was written in invisible ink.”

Alternate back and forth, building a ridiculous chain of events.

Lost on a Deserted Island

Focus: Creativity, persuasion, teamwork **Group Size:** Whole class, then small teams

Instructions:

1. Present the scenario: *After a shipwreck, the entire class is stranded on a deserted island. Each person may bring one object with them.*
 2. Each student **chooses an object** and explains why it's essential for survival.
 3. Once all students speak, divide them into **small groups** and challenge them to **combine their items** creatively to maximize survival.
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