

Speaker Toolbox

10 Tips for Eye Contact

Tip 1: Greet your listeners as they gather	Before the meeting or event even begins, an initial greeting with direct eye contact helps build rapport, turning strangers into friends.
Tip 2: Start and end with direct eye contact	Once you're introduced — but before you say a word — stop, look out at your audience directly, and smile. End your remarks by looking out, scanning the audience, and smiling.
Tip 3: Divide the room into sections	Make sure to give each section of the room equal time and energy. Look to the left side for a few seconds, then the middle, then to the right. Don't neglect the people in the back! Hint: When looking at the back of a large room, it makes more sense to focus on a section or a head in the distance rather than trying to make direct eye contact with someone far away.
Tip 4: Look for friendly faces	To build confidence, initially make eye contact with people who are smiling, nodding, and showing support for you and your message.
Tip 5: Use the 3-second rule	Hold eye contact with a person for 3 seconds at a time. Have direct eye contact with a number of people in the audience, and every now and then glance at the whole audience while speaking.
Tip 6: Maintain direct, roving, continuous eye contact	Sweep your gaze across the audience, remembering to engage with people at the very back and far sides as well as those in the front. The rule of thumb is 90% direct, roving continuous eye contact.
Tip 7: Be easy on the eyes	Have sincere eye contact but careful not to drill holes through people.
Tip 8: Speak to the eyes	Avoid speaking to your notes, slides, flip chart, ceiling or back wall.
Tip 9: Use your eyes to read your audience	Remember, a presentation is more than a one-way communication; it's a dialogue with your audience. As you scan the audience, notice that they are communicating with their eyes, their body language and their facial expressions. Take advantage of this non-verbal communication and adjust your delivery accordingly.
Tip 10: Be sensitive to cultural differences	In the United States, eye contact communicates confidence, credibility and connection. People from Arab countries use prolonged eye contact to gauge trustworthiness. However, in some countries direct eye contact is seen as challenging and rude, for example in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, people avoid direct eye contact as a sign of respect. It will be worth your while to know this about your audience ahead of time.