

Coaching Corner



Be your own best coach

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You are a public speaker and you want to get better. You may be a professional that gets paid thousands of dollars to speak, or you may be a beginner and just don't want to embarrass yourself. Either way, you want to raise your game to the next level. And there's no way to improve like getting coaching. But how?

Toastmasters

Perhaps the best known proven coaching method is Toastmasters International. The Toastmasters model helps aspiring speakers by



offering a consistent club environment where speakers are helped to design and present speeches while receiving regular feedback from other club members.

The process usually progresses as follows:

1. You pick a topic that fits a Toastmasters manual project
2. You prepare a speech
3. You (hopefully) practice it at home
4. You give the speech at your club
5. One club member gives you an evaluation from his or her perspective
6. Other club members may share comments
7. Repeat this process for your next speech.

While the above can be quite helpful, the process could be improved by:

1. More strategic selection of speech topics
2. More frequent and effective home practice
3. More coaching than just once at your club

Personal coach

How could a personal speaker coach help you?



1. Advise how to pick speech topics that fit your specific needs
2. Listen/watch/evaluate your speeches
3. Video/audio record your speeches and review your strengths / weaknesses with you
4. Help you with factors where you lack the skill or insight to improve

Coach yourself?

While Toastmasters or a personal coach will help you get better, why not also do your own self-coaching as often as



you want? You know what you want your speeches to look like. You know what speech topics are important for you. You just need a little guidance on how to proceed.

Pick topics that fit you

Pick topics that mirror your real needs outside of Toastmasters. You have a sales presentation to make? Make that your speech to work on. You need to toast the bridal couple at a wedding? Work on that toast.

Record, record, record

Nothing reveals reality more than a recording of your speech. If you have a

smartphone, you already have your recording tool. To make an audio recording, just use the recording app that came with



the phone. Nothing more is required. A phone-based video is also easy. To video your own speech, you'll need a tripod and a phone mount.

These can be purchased for under \$20. Start up your phone's camera app and give your speech. Presto! You now have a video of your speech.

Deliver, evaluate, repeat

Recording your speech is only the first step, however, to coaching yourself effectively. After each recording, spend time evaluating each factor of the recorded speech. Did the content hang together? Was it verbally smooth? Was it delivered convincingly? Are there trouble spots that need attention? Stay positive, but be a realistic critic. Make the



improvements you feel will help and repeat the process.

Experiment

Self-coaching also offers the opportunity to experiment with different approaches. See how a different look or tone of voice or delivery rate looks and sounds. Try a different sequence for your topic points. Experiment with these, record them, and watch. You'll get a much better feel for how they

work when you're watching dispassionately than when you're presenting live.

Extend your context

For more improvement, have someone record your next live presentation in front of a real audience. Then evaluate that recording the same way you do your home recordings. You



may find that things happen when you're in front of an audience that don't at home.

Summary

Self-coaching can be a very effective method for improving your speaking skills. Pick topics that fit your specific needs. Get as many repetitions as you're willing to spend time doing. See your speech as the audience sees it. And try out different ways of delivering the same message. Be your own best coach!