

How to avoid going over time

by J.A. Gamache, 3rd place Champion at the 2001 Toastmasters International World Championship of Public Speaking



Have you ever been disqualified from a contest because you went over time? Here are three sure-fire ways to stay within any time limit.

1- Find your speaking flow

Since everyone has their own speaking flow, i.e. the number of words spoken per minute, it is important that you find your own speaking flow.

Do you know how many words you speak per minute? Here is how to find out what is your own speaking flow. Read a text out loud and stop after a minute to count the words (Microsoft Word has a tool for counting words). For example my speaking flow in French, my native language, is about 150 words a minute, while in English it slows down to 105 words a minute. This means that to give a seven minute speech in English my text cannot be longer than 735 words!

Another advantage of knowing your speaking flow, is that you can make corrections in your flow as you speak because you know where you are supposed to be in your text at the green, amber and red light during a Toastmasters contest. This way you will know if you have to speed up to avoid going over time.

Now that you have learned how to evaluate your speaking flow, find your speaking style and hang on to it!

2- Find your speaking style and hang on to it!

When you practice your speech, try to deliver it as closely as possible to the real thing. Any change in your speaking style will change the length of your speech.

Always practice your speech with the same voice fluctuation, the same energy and the same rhythm, and it will always be the same length. Now that you know your speaking style and you're hanging on to it, prepare a shorter ending.

3- Prepare a shorter ending

You delivered your best speech ever. You rehearsed it to stay within the time limit. People laughed and applauded but you are still over time. Why? Applause and laughter take time. Did you know that a crowd of over a thousand people having a good laugh can take up to 10 seconds off your speech? What can you do? Two things: One, keep a time buffer. Personally I keep a 45 second time buffer just for peace of mind. Two, always prepare a shorter ending just in case.

You should now have all the tools you need during the three stages of your speech to prevent you from going over time.

While you are writing your speech, make sure you check your speaking flow. While you are rehearsing, be sure you hang on to your speaking style and while you deliver your speech, keep your shorter ending in mind...just in case.

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About J.A. Gamache, inspirational speaker :

A bachelor in business administration, J.A. Gamache is a bilingual (French and English) professional speaker from Montreal, Canada. His presentations are humorous, inspirational and lead audiences to take action immediately.

In 2003, He was the president of the Montreal's Chapter of the Canadian Association of Public Speakers (CAPS).

A proud Toastmasters member since 1993, J.A. Gamache is the only Quebecer to ever win a podium (3rd place in the 2001) at Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking and was a finalist in that same contest in 2005 and 2007. Over 35 000 contestants participate in this prestigious event every year.

His free newsletter "Public Speaking with J.A." is read in more than 50 countries around the world by over 3000 readers.

Invite J.A. Gamache at your next convention! Visit: <http://www.jagamache.com> or phone 450-962-4342