

Campaign Skills Handbook

Module 7

Becoming a Powerful Communicator *Techniques and Tips for Effective Interviews and Speeches*



Introduction

Whether it's meeting voters on the campaign trail, articulating your opinion in party meetings, talking to journalists or giving a speech, effective communication makes a difference. This module covers how to prepare for different types of communication events focusing in particular on speeches and interviews.

Preparation is the key to overcoming many major communications challenges, including managing stage fright and making sure you are actually connecting with your audience. It is always a good idea to know your audience, understand their perspectives and define what you want to achieve in advance of actually delivering your speech or message.

The other secret is practice – the best public speakers honed their communication skills through a lot of practice. Using a mirror or enlisting the help of a friend to rehearse speeches, work on your body language or even assess what messages your physical image is sending to an audience can help build your confidence and abilities as a communicator.

Whether standing in front of hundreds at an event, talking to a reporter one-on-one, meeting with donors or giving a television interview, the tips included in this module will help you become a powerful, effective communicator for your candidacy and your political party. Topics include:

1. [The Stump Speech](#)
2. [Non-Verbal Communications](#)
3. [Delivering Great Speeches](#)
4. [Media Interviews](#)

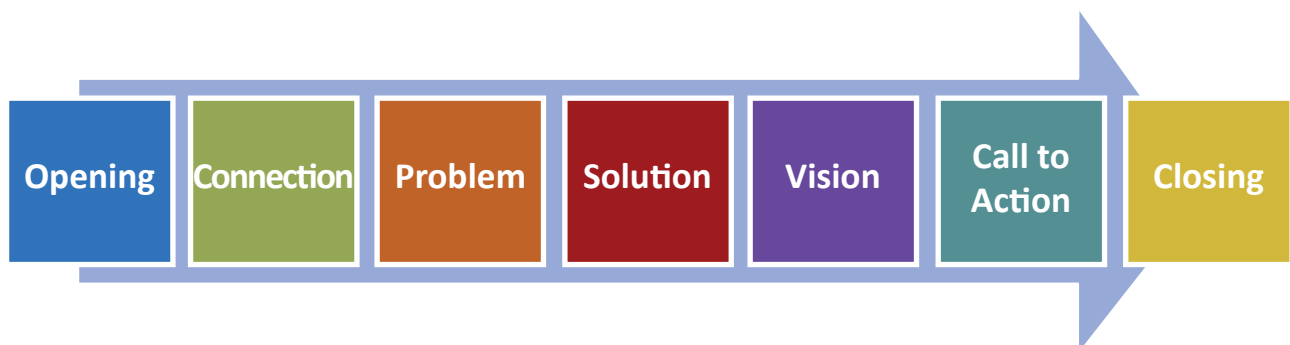
The Stump Speech

The “stump speech” is a term that describes the core speech that a candidate or party leader gives on almost every occasion with appropriate modifications for different audiences and situations. Your stump speech is an elaboration of your campaign message. It introduces you to voters, lets them know what you are running for and what you plan to do if elected, and tells them about the kind of person you are.

Like all other campaign communications, your stump speech should be based on your message and written to reach the potential supporters the campaign has identified as target audiences.

Make your stump speech a true reflection of you and your candidacy. Use language that is comfortable for you and memorize the stump speech so you are prepared to deliver it with confidence any time.

The following outline of a stump speech structure can help you get started. You can use this basic outline to write a speech that is 90 seconds, 5 minutes or 10 minutes long.



Each element of a speech has its own particular characteristics and purpose. When these are tied together, they create a structure that allows your speech to flow with ease and logic, making it easier for your audience to follow.

Opening Say your name, what you are running for, and why.

Connection Establish a connection with the audience by demonstrating a shared concern.

Problem What problem are you running for office to solve? How does it affect the audience? Describe the problem and say why you care about it.

Solution Describe your solution and how it benefits voters. What specifically will you do or fight for if elected?

Vision	Describe how things could be better and what kind of future you will work for. How would the community be different if this problem were solved?
Call to Action	Ask your audience to make a difference by voting for you and supporting your campaign.
Closing	Summarize why you are running, restate your call to action and thank the audience.

Here's an example of how Samia Habib used the stump speech formula in her campaign:

- 1. Opening → Say your name, what you are running for, and why.**
"Hello. My name is Samia Habib and I am a candidate for the local council. I am running to make a difference in the lives of the people I grew up with in this village."
- 2. Connection → Establish a connection with the audience by demonstrating a shared concern.**
"I would like to talk to you about problems that I can solve if you elect me. One of the concerns I share with you is our village's financial problem. Everyday, I see my brothers and sisters having a difficult time finding the money to buy oil or salt in the market..."
- 3. Problem → What problem are you running to solve? How does it affect the audience? Describe the problem and say why you care about it.**
"I have seen a great number of people who are having many difficulties raising enough money to survive. The people of this village do not have enough opportunities for making a living. Many voters have shared with me their frustrations about this important issue."
- 4. Solution → Describe your solution and how it benefits voters.**
"I believe that we must make small scale income generation our top priority. If I win this election, I promise to improve our village by bringing more income-generating opportunities here. If I am elected, I will work to involve more people in small income-generating projects. As a result, their financial problems will improve."
- 5. Vision → Describe how things could be better and what kind of future you will work for. How would the community be different if this problem were solved?**
"I want you to imagine what our village could be like if I am elected. I will bring

Non-Verbal Communication: Voice, Image and Body Language

Becoming a powerful communicator is about more than writing a great speech or having a strong message; it's also about how you use your image, voice and body language to connect with your audience. Studies have shown that an audience connects more easily with a speaker based on his or her tone of voice and physical gestures, rather than on the words the speaker says.

Non-verbal communication incorporates everything you convey to an audience outside of the actual words you say. Your voice is the sound that you make as you deliver the spoken word. Your image is your physical appearance and how you present yourself. Your body language is how you use gestures and how you hold your body when you are engaging in communication.

There are plentiful options for how you use all of these tools, and a number of guidelines for ensuring you are using them effectively. When used well, the instruments of non-verbal communication can provide music, dance, rhythm and energy to what would otherwise be just plain words.

Voice

Your voice says a lot about who you are. Are you confident, authoritative or in command? Are you friendly, approachable or trustworthy? Does the tone of your voice give the impression that you have something interesting to say?

Your voice is a tool that adds music to the words that you are communicating. Use your voice to let your listeners know when you are about to make one of your main points. You can speed up or slow down your speech, make your voice quieter or louder, or pause at a key point. To hold an audience's attention, a good speaker uses variety in her voice and pacing to create drama and interest.

Generally, for electronic media such as television, video or radio, it's a good idea to make your voice a bit lower in tone with an even pace. For public speaking it's more effective to speak louder than normal (without shouting), and to speak more slowly than you usually do so that you can be easily understood. Use inflection and rhythm to keep your audience engaged.

To make sure your audience can hear you, try projecting your voice. Projecting your voice is something theater actors do to make their voices carry to the back of the

room. Practice sending your voice to the back of the room so that you can be louder and convey more energy, but do this without shouting.

Activity 2: Using Your Voice

1. Practice saying the phrase, “Turn out the light,” out loud. The first time, say it with a voice that conveys anger. The second time, say it with a voice that conveys boredom. The third time, say it with a voice that conveys romance. Can you hear and feel the difference that tone of voice can make in communication? Record your impressions below.

2. Using your phone or another type of recorder, record yourself saying your campaign message several times. Practice speaking lower, slower and louder. Try changing your volume and the speed of your speech to emphasize key points or words. Play back your recording. What did you notice? Record your impressions below.

Image and Presentation

Your image is the type of person and personality you portray through your physical appearance. This includes how you carry yourself physically, the type of self-image you convey to others and even the manner in which you dress and groom yourself.

In politics and campaigns, first impressions are made quickly and a negative impression can be difficult to overcome. In a split second, an audience will form opinions about you in terms of your economic and educational background, your social position, your experience, your trustworthiness, your moral character and your success at your current or previous work based on their interpretations of the visual image you project. Use this type of personal judgment to your advantage by presenting yourself in a way that conveys a positive and engaging image.

Be sensitive to and aware of the image you present. Wear clothing that is appropriate for your audience and the occasion. Find a balance between being comfortable in your clothing and creating an image that reflects your style of leadership.

Candidates and political activists who are younger or female are often subject to higher levels of scrutiny about their appearance than older and male politicians. Criticism comes from both friends and strangers. Although the vast majority of critiques about clothing, hair styles and other elements of physical appearance are entirely irrelevant to the job of running for or serving in public office, they can be unavoidable. The best strategy is to be proactive: envision the image you want to project, then put together the wardrobe and other tools you need to make that vision a reality.

Activity 3: Image and Presentation

Think about the image you want to project. Does your personal presentation currently reflect that image or would you like to make some changes? List anything you'd like to change below.

Body Language

Before we open our mouths to speak, our body language is already sending messages to our audience. Body language is the gestures, postures, and facial expressions that we use to communicate feelings or opinions, even when we're not fully aware that we're doing this.

What kinds of gestures tell an audience that you are confident? That they can trust you? That you are humble? That you are friendly and open to engaging with them, or that you are aloof and don't want to connect with them?

What kinds of gestures tell an audience that you are a formal or an informal person? That you are not sure about what you are saying, or that you have authority and know what you are talking about?

With some thought and practice, we can make sure that our body language reinforces, not undermines, the messages we are trying to send.

Take a few minutes to think about the following types of non-verbal communication, and what they are really 'saying' to the audience.

Activity 4: Interpreting Non-Verbal Communication

1. Not making eye contact can be interpreted as:

2. Moving closer to you can signify:

3. Someone who touches you lightly but deliberately on the arm could be saying:

4. Taking off or throwing down eyeglasses may mean:

5. Walking into a meeting and sitting at the back may be saying:

6. Tilting the head and smiling may be indicating:

7. Covering your mouth or looking down when you speak could suggest:

Delivering Great Speeches

Preparing and delivering great speeches is within anyone's reach. The keys are simple: consider the audience and define your goal, carefully write your speech with the audience in mind, practice it until you are comfortable and connect with the audience at the event.



Research the event and set your goal

- Know your audience. Knowing who you will talk to can help you adjust what you will say. Consider the audience's level of awareness and interest in your topic. More importantly, which of your campaign's targeted voters will be represented in the audience? Will any individuals your campaign hopes to cultivate for support be present? Will the media cover the event?
- Know the program or agenda. Are you the only speaker? What is the order of appearance? Will you be the first or last speaker? Will there be a panel of speakers? Exactly how long should your speech be? If there is going to be a question and answer session, who will moderate this and who will close the program?
- Know your topic. If you can, choose a topic that you enjoy and know well. Your passion for the subject will come through in your delivery. The most important rule of public speaking is to be familiar and comfortable with what you are talking about.

- Set a goal. Know what you want to achieve as a result of your presentation. Define the core purpose of the speech. Do you want to persuade the audience? Deliver information about a new or elusive topic? Mobilize your audience to take a specific action?
- Plan the day. Make sure you will be well-rested and have someone with you to help and support you. Plan something to wear that makes you feel comfortable and confident. Deciding what you will wear ahead of time will make you less nervous the day of the speech.
- Try to visit the venue before the event. Check the room and equipment so that you are comfortable and familiar with the set up.

Prepare your speech

- Define your key messages. What do you want to make sure the audience remembers?
- In 25 words or less, write down what you want the audience to know. Once you know what that is, reduce it to three or four points and elaborate on just those points.
- Illustrate each point with at least one example that will create a picture in the minds of your audience. Outline the substance of your presentation using human stories, quotes, examples, facts and other interesting information.
- Keep in mind the structure of a basic stump speech: Opening-Connection-Problem-Solution-Vision-Call to Action-Closing.
- Write the opening or “attention-getting” statement of your speech.
- Write the closing part of your speech. Aim for a strong finish. It should be a stirring statement in which you issue your call to action, make a declaration, refer to your opening comments and summarize your main goal.
- Do not write out the rest of your speech in full. Instead, write out the main points. If you write it out in full sentences, you will worry about using exactly the same words that you have on the paper when you are giving your speech. You want to sound confident, not rehearsed.

- Be precise; use simple words and short sentences. Avoid acronyms. Avoid the overuse of statistics. While important, too many statistics can be confusing.
- In any good presentation, you will tell the audience what you are going to tell them (the opening), tell them (the body of the speech), and tell them what you told them (the closing).

Practice and prepare

- Practice your entire speech before the presentation until you are comfortable delivering it. Practice with another person who can give you helpful comments. Practice in front of a mirror.
- Time your speech and adjust the length if it is too long or short. When in doubt, opt for a shorter speech.
- Remember to practice not just saying the words, but also using your voice and hand gestures to emphasize your message.
- Arrive early so that you can meet and speak with members of the audience. The more you learn about them, the better you will be able to connect with them during your speech.
- Make sure you meet the person who will introduce you and understand when you will be introduced to speak.
- Relax. If you are feeling nervous, use some relaxation techniques before you start. If you can find a place to be alone, jump up and down or stomp each foot really hard. This exercise will ground you and release tension. Shake your hands and clench and unclench your fists. This action will keep your hands from shaking too much. If trembling is really a problem, hold onto the podium while you speak. Stick out your tongue, open your eyes and mouth as wide as you can, then scrunch your face into a tight ball. This will relax the muscles of your entire face. Breathe deeply and make a small humming sound to warm up your voice.
- Turn off cellphones, spit out gum and give your bag or any materials you have to a friend or campaign volunteer to hold.
- Drink water (not coffee, tea, milk or fizzy drinks) and have more close by, dry the palms of your hands with a tissue if they are sweaty and you're ready.

- Deliver your speech and connect with the audience
- Connect with your audience. Mention concerns you share with them and tell a personal story to show them why you care. Consider illustrating your point with a story about someone present, or someone they can relate to.
- Make audiences aware of a human need. Before being moved to act, people must care, so paint them a picture of the human impact of your topic. Stories about real people can illustrate a complex problem and solution in understandable, human terms—and show that change is possible.
- Speak in terms of problems and solutions. Alternating between problems and solutions creates a dramatic tension in your speech. Your audience will experience concern and hope.
- Create a sense of urgency. Every communication intended to motivate behavior must move people to act immediately. A sense of urgency may be evoked through negative and positive emotional appeals. People may respond in reaction to anger or fear, or to hope and belief that positive change is possible.
- End with a “Call to Action.” When asking people to take an action, such as voting or volunteering, make sure that the request is simple and that the audience knows that their action matters.

Keep in mind general rules for delivering speeches

- Be yourself. Be natural. Smile!
- Observe proper protocol: recognize dignitaries at the beginning of your remarks and thank the event organizers.
- Do not read the speech – you want to be natural, enthusiastic and excited. Talk to your audience. Write an outline with key words or phrases on index cards that you can hold in the palm of your hand and then practice giving the speech. Only look down at your notes every now and then when absolutely needed.
- Maintain eye contact with the audience. This technique will help to hold their attention and emphasize main points. Make eye contact with one person at a time and hold it for several seconds.
- Use hand gestures to express your points. Gesturing too much distracts the audience. Not gesturing at all makes you seem stiff and unnatural.
- Stand up straight and stand still. Don't play with your hair or adjust your clothes.
- Use your nervousness to your advantage. Being nervous is normal. It gives us the adrenalin we need to focus on the immediate task. Try to channel this nervous energy into enthusiasm and excitement. Don't forget that the audience is there, usually, because they care about what you are saying and want to hear you say it. Find those individuals in the audience who are smiling and giving you positive feedback – they will help keep you confident.
- Remember to vary your voice's speed and volume to emphasize key points, and to speak a bit lower, slower, and louder than normal.
- Manage questions. Take questions from the entire audience rather than a select few. Listen carefully and treat each question equally. Repeat all positive questions so that the audience can hear them. Do not allow one questioner to dominate the audience. Respond as simply and directly as possible. Do not be afraid to say "I don't know," and either promise to get back to them with information or invite them to contact you at a later date.



If all else fails, remember that your best public speaking coach was your mother. She told you to:

- Stand up straight
- Look people in the eye
- Smile
- Comb your hair
- Don't slouch
- Don't fidget
- Speak clearly
- Tell the truth

Media Interviews

Although it can be intimidating to speak to a reporter, media interviews can be one of the most effective tools in your campaign. With preparation and practice, you can make sure that media coverage reflects your campaign's message and helps your candidacy.

Before the Interview

- *Research.* Try to find out what the reporter wants to know in advance, what their bias may be, and who else the reporter will be interviewing. This will help you frame your responses. How do you find out? Ask, and read previous articles the reporter has written on the subject.
- *Prepare.* Prepare for the interview by writing down all the difficult or potentially sticky questions a reporter may ask, and determine how you will answer them in a positive way. Don't distribute this or bring it with you; it's just to help you practice. Have a friend role play with you so you can practice answering the questions with confidence.
- *Simplify.* Hone your messages to a few key points. Very little of what you say will be used, so make sure your comments will be targeted by creating a simplified, quotable version of your key message.
- *Confirm.* Prior to the interview, make a quick phone call to the reporter to verify the meeting, and offer to send directions to your office or event. These additional steps can save you both from an embarrassing situation that might start your relationship off on the wrong foot.

At the Interview

- *Stay "on message."* Staying on message means making sure that every answer you give expresses your message. Those who stay on message control the message. The media can only report what it sees and hears. If you provide nothing but your message, it will repeat only your message. The worst communications mistakes nearly always result from an undisciplined speaker. Staying on message is the best way to reach your audience in a manner over which you have control.
- *Flag key points.* When you're speaking, use "flags" to signal key points. Let the reporter know you're about to make a main point by flagging it with a phrase such as, "the key point is ..." or "the important thing to remember is ..." This

helps ensure that reporters won't miss your key points while making notes about something less important you just said.

- *Use bridges to take control of the interview.* If a reporter asks you a potentially sticky question, answer it, but bridge it to a message you want to convey. “Yes, but have you considered ...” or “No, but we’ve solved that problem through ...”
- *Make it visual.* Use metaphors, stories and anecdotes to illustrate and simplify your points. These help audiences visualize what you’re talking about.
- *Avoid jargon.* When speaking with reporters or the lay public, avoid the use of jargon and acronyms. Your mission is to convey information. If your listeners have to decipher jargon, you’ll lose their attention.
- *Be interesting.* If you are passionate about your subject, it will help make a better story. Remember that the reporter is the pipeline to your audience. Help the reporter tell the best story possible.
- *Watch casual remarks.* Understand that nothing is really off the record, even if the reporter says it is. You should never say anything you wouldn’t want to be quoted on to a reporter because those are usually just the juicy tidbits that will end up in print.
- *Answer every question.* Never use the phrase “no comment.” You must answer every question or you will seem evasive. If there is a legitimate reason for not answering a question, simply state that you cannot answer it and give the reason.
- *Be prepared for the reporter to go off-topic.* During the interview, don’t be surprised if a reporter asks something totally unrelated to the subject at hand. If a reporter asks something you can’t answer immediately, say you’ll get back to him or her later, and do so promptly.

After the Interview

- *Follow up.* After the interview, send a note or email of thanks to the reporter. In it, reiterate any points you want to make. Ask the reporter if the interview provided him or her with enough information, and offer to assist further. The reporter may not respond before the article is printed, but will appreciate being asked, and it will open the door for follow-up articles.

Activity 5: Preparing for Interviews

Imagine you are on your way to an interview with a reporter from a local newspaper. The reporter is covering the election and is doing a story about new candidates running for the first time. Write down five questions you think you are likely to get, and come up with answers that are on your message and meet the criteria laid out above.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

