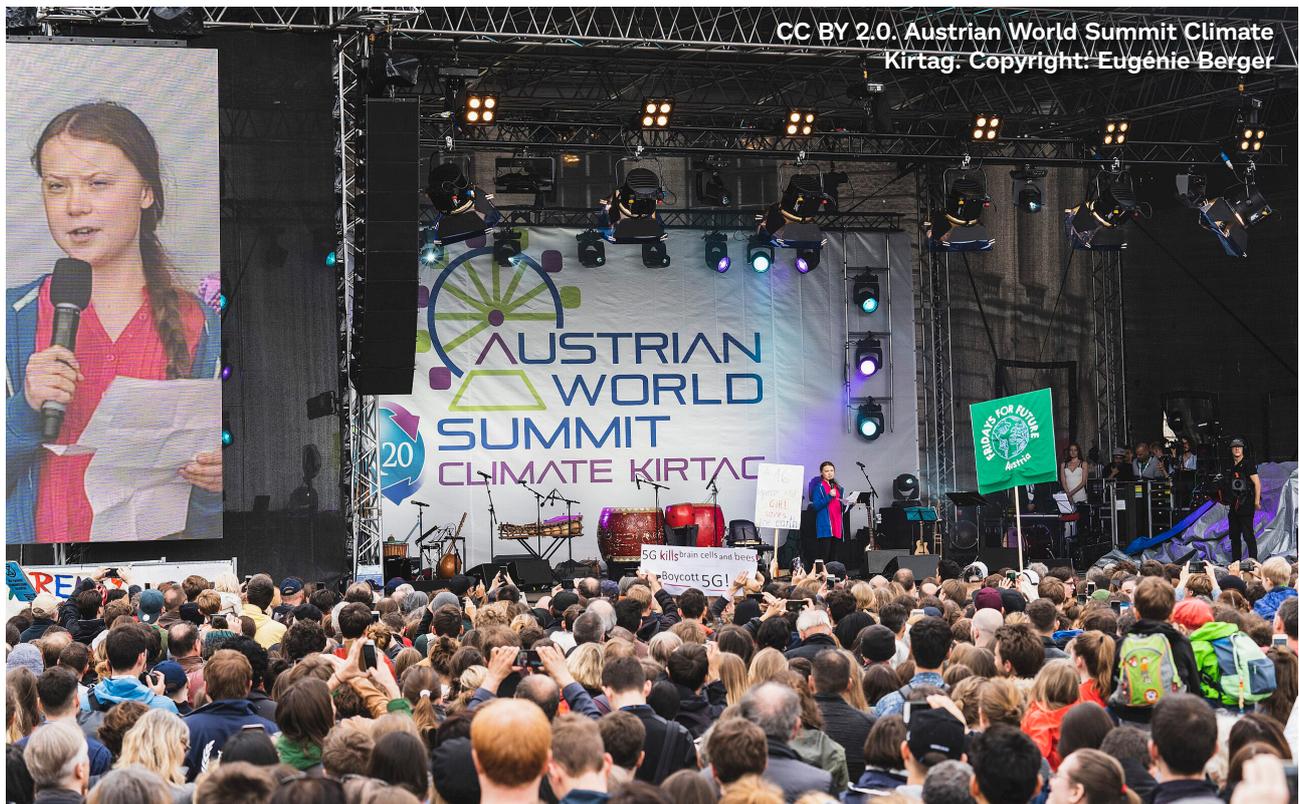


How to guide: Public speaking for conservation

Written by Emma Greenwood, Young Changemaker

Public speaking can be a convincing way to fight for what you believe in, but it can also be one of the scariest. The good news is, if you find public speaking intimidating or hard, you're not alone. Many prominent politicians and celebrities who speak in front of thousands get support from a massive team to guide them through public speaking because it's so hard.



A great example of this is Greta Thunberg, who started the Fridays For Future movement, that led to young people around the world striking from school in 2019 and 2020. Greta has Asperges Syndrome, OCD and selective mutism which can make public speaking very difficult and is why she, “only speaks when it’s necessary” but has still managed to speak on massive international stages in front of many global leaders by taking the time to find mechanisms that work for her.

Like many skills, public speaking is a muscle you have to work to develop and build up; very few people can just step foot on a stage and be able to speak confidently and eloquently and that’s okay. Public speaking is about embracing trial and error to find the mechanisms and styles that work for you, which this guide is hopefully going to start enabling you to do.

A step-by-step guide to public speaking

So, you're preparing to speak at an event whether it's in front of your classmates or at a conference of thousands, I want to start by saying a massive well done for putting yourself out there and deciding to use your voice, even if it is a little scary. I've put together a step-by-step guide to help you with the prep before the event, what you can do during it and how to manage your emotions after. Feel free to skip to the bit that is relevant to you or have a read through it all.

1. Before you even get to writing

It can be really hard knowing where to start when faced with prepping a speech, but writing some answers to the questions below can be a good way to get you going:

🌟 What do you want people to come away knowing or doing?

Having one clear sentence, to summarise what you want the purpose of your talk to be, can help ground you later down the line if you get lost in the writing process.

🌟 Who are you targeting the talk at?

Understanding who's going to be in the audience can be really helpful in deciding what sort of language to use and even what cultural references/jokes to include.

🌟 Why are you giving the talk?

Most of the best speeches/talks are ones that come from the heart, before you even start maybe write down one or two points about why this conservation subject area is important to you e.g. a story or experience. You might be able to include this in your speech later, but if you get a little scared it can also help remind you why you're doing it.

2. Creating your message

As a rule of thumb, a good speech has **three clear sections**:

Introduction

Make a bold statement, captivate the audience and tell them why it's so important they listen to the rest of your talk.

Main body

Give context to your introduction, it can be useful to use facts and examples here, especially personal stories that people can emotionally relate to.

Conclusion

End with a bang like a memorable statement that'll stick with people or a clear call to action (CTA) of what people can go away and do.

Don't forget though, there's no right or wrong way to write a speech as long as it feels true to you, so don't be afraid to break the rules.

When it comes to writing the contents of your speech it is up to you but here's some advice that might help you:

- 🌟 **Avoid the jargon** - Jargon is all those technical words people use in speeches and can be hard to understand. Make sure to use clear and concise language where you can. It can help to try out a speech on someone in your target audience before you actually deliver it e.g. a sibling or parent, to make sure they understand it all.

- 🌿 **Back up what you're saying** - You don't need to include too many, but a few facts to give what you're saying some validity can be a great way to convince people of what you're saying or get across the severity of the situation (**make sure your facts are from a reliable source**).
- 🌿 **You can use visuals** - You might not need a visual presentation, but if you do, it's often good to avoid a lot of text on PowerPoint slides but if you want some bold statements, pictures or graphs behind you whilst you talk, visuals can be a great thing to include.
- 🌿 **Remember it is YOUR voice** - You're an expert at your own **lived experience**, so whatever you want to say deserves to be said. It can be useful to take inspiration from other people's speeches but **don't forget to embrace the power of your own unique voice and story**.

3. Practicing and delivering your speech

You've done the hard bit of writing the speech, now it's time to prep for delivering it. There are so many different ways to do this:

- 🌿 **Read it to yourself in a mirror out loud until you feel comfortable.**
- 🌿 **Get a parent, sibling or friend to listen and give their feedback.**
- 🌿 **Record yourself reading it out loud and watch it back to see how you could improve.**



The most important thing is to practice, practice, practice. The more familiar and confident you are with the speech the better you'll feel and the more you can enjoy the experience when it comes to delivering it.

Here are some common issues people run into when it comes to public speaking and what you can do to help manage them:

You're talking too fast: When you're nervous this one is all too easy to fall into. It can be helpful to write in your speech '**PAUSE**' or '**BREATH**' where you want to give the audience time to think and also remind yourself to slow down.

You don't know where to look: If you can, it's good to try and look at lots of different people in the audience but that isn't always doable. Instead, some people like to look at a fixed spot at the back of the hall or a specific person they feel comfortable with in the audience. The main thing to remember is don't spend the whole time looking at the piece of paper your speech is written on, try to look up at least once every 30 seconds or so.

You don't know what to do with your hands/body language: Suddenly when it comes to public speaking, your hands can feel like they're in the way. If we take a lesson from politicians, talking with your hands can be a great way to add depth to your speech and put emphasis on specific parts. If you don't feel comfortable doing that, you can take some cue cards up to hold or ask for a lectern to stand behind and hold.

You feel too nervous to get up in front of everyone: The few minutes before you actually go up to speak can be some of the most nerve wracking. To manage this remember to take deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth, and go back to the 'why' you wrote in step one of this process to focus on when you're giving the talk and visualise yourself smashing the talk out of the park. You've got this!

4. After you've given the speech

The first and most important thing is to celebrate, even though you might have been nervous, you did something incredible and used your voice to stand up for what you believe in! That bravery is an incredible achievement. No matter how it went you deserve to celebrate.

If it didn't go too well, that's okay because like any skill, public speaking is about trial and error. It's one big never-ending learning experience. Even so, it's natural to feel a bit disappointed in yourself or sad, here are some things you might be able to do to help:

🌱 Talk to a friend who was in the audience

Sometimes you can think it went terribly but the audience loved it. Don't forget to talk to people you knew in the audience and listen to the feedback they have; to celebrate what went well or see what you could do differently next time.

🌱 Take some time to breathe

Public speaking can bring a lot of anxiety with it, so if you need to have a few minutes to yourself to take some deep breaths and regroup, that's absolutely fine. Listen to your body and what it needs.

🌱 Distract yourself

If a speech goes badly, it's not the end of the world, things won't feel as overwhelming forever. Sometimes the best thing you can do is move on and focus on something else until you want to come back and give it another go.

🌱 Share your message

Don't forget to shout about your incredible achievement and message online. This can be a great way to help it reach a larger audience and also inspire others so that they too can give public speaking a go.

Public speaking is a powerful tool for advocating environmental and conservation issues. By understanding your audience, crafting a compelling message, practicing your delivery, and effectively managing feedback, you can make a significant impact. Use these strategies to confidently communicate your passion and inspire others about the environment too.

Emma Greenwood is a 20-year-old youth voice and climate champion. She started getting involved in change making when she was 16 and became the Young Member of Parliament for Bury, as well as helping to co-found the Manchester branch of the global Youth Strike 4 Climate Movement. Since then, she's helped to work on a number of campaigns and has even got to appear on the One Show, BBC News and speak at COP26. She now works with a few different organisations to implement intergenerational collaboration and push for climate action.

