



# Deb's 15 Rules for the Road

## A Public Speaking Primer

### 1. **Lighten up – keep a relaxed face.**

The most important time is the 2 minutes of your introduction – early in a speech folks listen to what they “see” more than what they “hear”. Smile, gesture, and begin the process of eye contact with a few friendly folks.

**2. Vary your voice** – work at sounding believable and conversational. It is important to speak with energy and enthusiasm.

**3. Be glad to be there** – the first step to giving a good speech is to be glad to be there. How many speakers actually sound glad? That is your hook.

**4. Tell your audience your credentials** – make them proud to know you.

**5. Talk about the audience** – one mark of effective speakers is that they focus less about themselves and more on those who have come to hear them speak.

**6. Take up space** – powerful people take up physical space.<sup>TM</sup> Use large gestures and illustrate what the words are saying. Don't shrink up in the room or you will be overlooked.

**7. Speak with power** – make sure your voice conveys authority. Women need to be careful about letting their voice rise at the end of a sentence because it sounds like they are asking a question rather than making a statement.

**8. Open the floor** – after the presentation is finished, open the floor to questions from the audience and answer them.

**NOTE: Acknowledge** – with graciousness every member of the audience who approaches you after the speech.

**9. Maintain a calm and even delivery** – abrupt changes in behavior can scare your audience. Act cool and in control even if you are panicking inside.

**10. If it isn't funny don't use it** - I am sad to report that everyone is waiting to be offended. Poor word choices can wreck a career. It might be funny with your friends on Friday night but it's probably not so funny on Monday morning at the office; one slip up and you'll find yourself in damage-control mode. Remember we're a sound bite society so you will never get your full say to explain your joke or comment. Be sure to protect yourself.

**11. Be word wise**  
Make your words count. Master the Queen's English and be

careful about using slang. Use proper English and grammar to maintain your professionalism. Drop swear words from your vocabulary and find substitutes for trite words and replace words like: “like”, “whatever”, “you know”, “to be honest”, “to tell the truth” and “definitely.” You must also drop the corporate speak like: “new tomorrow”, “value-driven”, “feedback”, “visioning”, “stakeholders”, “win-win”, “quality-time”, “synergy”, “strategic”, “networking” and “programmatic”. Choose your words wisely for your success.

**12. Open your talk with an unpredictable personal story** – it is best if you can start your speech with something that your audience has not heard from other speakers. If you can tell a personal joke or good line do so. If you are not a joker, stick to what you do best.

**13. Use controlled emotion** – if you are just trying to convey information, you could just hand out a report. A speech has some emotion. A good speech might have humor, anger, commitment and learning.

**14. Have a single concept in mind** – this is not the time for multiple messages or meandering. Have a clear, concise message with no more than 3 key points and a definitive ending.

**15. Be brief and keep your presentations short** – studies show that the attention span of today's audience is about 1,000 seconds, or 16 and one-half minutes.

Deb Sofield trains worldwide for success in public speaking, presentation skills, media skills, message development and crisis communications. Deb would be the perfect speaker for your next conference.

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