

The 9 questions

You'll learn one of the best tools I've found for preparing a great speech.

Every time I've failed at a speech, it's been because I haven't paid attention to one of these questions. Every time I've succeeded, it's because I have. I expect it will be similar for you.

The tool requires seemingly little effort but gives huge outcomes. *Why? Because the questions will trigger your subconscious to work on your speech. As a result, once you sit down to prepare the actual speech, you will automatically find the right words, expressions & tone of voice. In the usual case, using the 9 Questions will cut your preparation time (and stress) by hours.*

The questions are divided into 3 groups: The audience, you, and your message.

Go through the exercise at least 3 weeks before your speech. *This will give your subconscious enough time to work. If three weeks is not possible, even just one week still helps. The earlier you do the exercise, the less your speech will stress you out. I prefer doing the exercise several months in advance, whenever possible.*

If you only have 2 days or less, skip this step and go straight to the Home beacon exercise. *You will not have enough time to benefit from the 9 Questions.*

When you ponder these questions for the first time, you don't need to find the answers yet. *Just process them for 3 minutes per question, and it is enough to set your mind to work. The answers will come to you in due time.*

The 9 Questions was developed by a Finnish rhetorics expert Juhana Torkki and outlined in his book "Puhevalta Käyttöön". It's not available in English, but I wanted you to benefit from it so you'll find the translated questions below, as well as a brief explanation of why the questions are important.

How to do the 9 Questions -exercise:

1. Set aside 1 hour.
2. Set a timer for 3 minutes.
3. Think of each question in turn for those 3 minutes.
4. Use the rest of the time to capture the thoughts inspired by the questions.
5. Continue your day.
6. Whenever you get an idea related to your speech, **capture it immediately.**

In case you're more comfortable going through the 9 Questions without a timer, feel free to do so. As long as you give some thought to each of them.

Capture your ideas once they come.

I recommend these 3 options:

- 1. carry pen & paper,*
- 2. record your thoughts on your phone's voice recorder, or*
- 3. write notes on your phone.*

I usually capture ideas on an A4 sketchbook that I always have with me, or if I'm on the go and can't use the sketchbook, I write them down on a file on my phone called "Journal".

-Miika

THE AUDIENCE

1. What am I grateful for towards my listeners?

A good speaker looks up to his audience. This ensures that you won't come across as cocky.

2. What are my listeners proud of?

When you understand how your listeners view themselves, you'll know what words to use and speak with confidence.

3. What are my listeners afraid of?

Fears are the internal beliefs that hold your listeners back. You can also understand this question as "What's holding your listeners back from being better?" Besides, your listeners might be afraid of something you might say. Until you address that fear, they won't listen. This is especially important when you need to share bad news or have a difficult audience.

YOU

4. What have I been excited about recently?

Excitement is contagious. So talk about what gets you excited! Don't worry if it's not related to your topic - with a bit of creativity, you can link almost any exciting thought to your actual topic.

5. What am I afraid of?

Public speaking is scary. But once you understand the exact reasons you're afraid, the fears lose much of their power and you can speak with confidence.

6. How can my speech make the world better?

Your job as a speaker is to help your audience. When you understand that your speech makes a difference, no matter how small, you understand that you're doing important work. This will get you much more motivated to create the speech and practice.

THE MESSAGE

7. What one sentence do I want my listeners to remember?

Only when you deeply understand your message, will the audience have a chance of getting it, too. Writing your message down in one sentence will make a world of difference, once you sit down to create your speech. You'll magically know what to include and what to exclude, saving you hours of time and frustration.

8. How do I make my message concrete?

We only listen to messages that are either 1. useful or 2. simple to understand. (Preferably both.) By making your language crystal clear, you make it easy for the listeners to understand what you're saying. When Steve Jobs walked onstage to introduce a magical new gadget the world had never seen before, a 4-grader could understand what he was saying. Use simple language.

9. What personal story can I tell?

Stories move us, inspire us and motivate us. More, they are the way we have communicated since speech was invented. Our brains are wired for story. So don't just convey information, but tell us why it matters. Tell a personal story.