




**CONTROLLING YOUR NERVES**

**Visual 4.14**

**Controlling Your Nerves**

**Mark Twain said:**  
“There are two types of speakers. Those who get nervous and those who are liars.”



 **FEMA** 

Visual 4.14  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

Mark Twain said, “There are two types of speakers. Those who get nervous and those who are liars.”

Speech anxiety is the single most common social anxiety in the United States. The effect can range from simple nervousness to a degree that makes the speaker physically ill.

How do you feel when you learn that you must present a speech? To analyze your level of speech anxiety, complete the self-assessment activity on the next page.

**ACTIVITY: SPEECH ANXIETY SELF-ASSESSMENT**



**Visual 4.15**

**Activity: Speech Anxiety Self-Assessment**

---

**Instructions: Working individually:**

- **Review the Speech Anxiety Self-Assessment.**
- **Identify your own concerns in each area.**

 **FEMA** 

Visual 4.15  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to analyze how you typically feel when you learn you must present a speech.

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Instructions:**

- Review the Speech Anxiety Self-Assessment.
- Identify your own concerns in each area.

**Speech Anxiety Self-Assessment**

**Symptoms:** Before I have to give a speech, I experience:

- No symptoms of anxiety.
- Tightness in my chest.
- Dry mouth.
- Clammy palms.
- Stomach pain or nausea.
- Shortness of breath.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Level of Anxiety:** Rate your level of anxiety on the following scale:

|                        |                                   |                                |                                 |                                  |                                 |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>0</b><br>No anxiety | <b>1</b><br>Simple<br>Nervousness | <b>2</b><br>Recurring<br>Worry | <b>3</b><br>Constant<br>Anxiety | <b>4</b><br>Overwhelming<br>Fear | <b>5</b><br>Physical<br>Illness |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|

**Anxiety Triggers:** My level of anxiety increases with:

- Lack of familiarity with the topic.
- Size of the audience.
- Use of microphones.
- Existence of camera equipment.
- Negative attitude of the audience.
- Power or seniority of the audience.
- Expectation that I will have to answer questions “off the cuff.”

**Other Sources of Anxiety:** My anxiety relates to:


- General lack of self-confidence.
- Body image.
- Tendency toward occasional mispronunciations.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_



**CONTROLLING YOUR NERVES**

**Visual 4.16**

**Gaining Control**

- Prepare ahead of time.
- Practice and visualize the presentation.
- Connect with the audience first.
- Convert nervousness to positive energy.
- Maintain a sense of humor.
- Realize the audience wants you to succeed.
- Know it is OK to pause and gather your thoughts.



 **FEMA** 

Visual 4.16  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

Whatever the sources of your anxiety, there are many steps that you can take to reduce nervousness and gain control of your presentation. Most presenters control their nerves by:

- Preparing ahead of time.
- Practicing and visualizing the presentation.
- Connecting with the audience before starting the presentation.
- Converting the nervousness into positive energy.
- Maintaining a sense of humor.
- Knowing that there is no such thing as a perfect presentation.
- Realizing that audiences want the presenter to succeed.
- Knowing it is okay to pause to gather thoughts.

The job aid on the next page provides additional tips for controlling your nerves.

## Lesson 4. Preparing for Oral Presentations

### Job Aid: Tips for Controlling Your Nerves

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Preparation</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know your audience.</li><li>• Preview the venue, if possible.</li><li>• Do your research and know your facts.</li><li>• Consider the emotional issues of your message.</li><li>• Anticipate the questions you may be asked and prepare answers.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Practice</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Present the speech aloud, to yourself, until it is completely familiar.</li><li>• Read the speech in front of a mirror and ensure that your body language aids your message.</li><li>• Seize all opportunities to speak aloud so that you become more comfortable (e.g., ask questions in meetings, join Toastmasters or another public-speaking group, speak to small friendly groups, present slides to your family, or teach a course).</li></ul>                            |
| <b>Acceptance and Relaxation</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accept your nervousness as normal.</li><li>• Accept that you may misspeak during your presentation and plan to correct yourself immediately and smoothly.</li><li>• Use relaxation techniques, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Stretching.</li><li>○ Muscle tensing and relaxing.</li><li>○ Deep breathing.</li><li>○ Body alignment.</li><li>○ Consciously choosing to let go of tension.</li><li>○ Visualizing an effective presentation.</li></ul></li></ul> |