

The Personal Benefits of Public Speaking

Brief: Public speaking has great personal benefits, including building self-esteem, honing critical thinking skills, and making meaningful social connections.

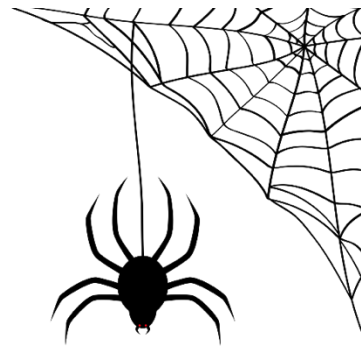
Learning Objective: Understand the personal benefits derived from public speaking.

Key Terms:

- Glossophobia: Fear of public speaking.

Personal Benefits of Public Speaking

Public speaking is a very common phobia, right up there with spiders and snakes. There's even a name for it: glossophobia. The term is derived from the Greek word for "tongue," and the Greek word for fear or dread, "phobos." You're not alone if you would prefer to do almost anything instead of standing up and talking in front a crowd of people.



Yet, public speaking has great personal benefits, including building self-esteem, honing critical thinking skills, and making meaningful social connections. These benefits are powerful motivators that push people to overcome their glossophobia every day.

Personal Satisfaction

Delivering a speech can feel intimidating and risky. Our fears and insecurities tend to multiply as speech day draws closer: "What if I freeze up?" "What if I forget my speech?" "What if people get bored and walk out?" "What if the audience tears me apart during the Q&A session?"

Why would you want to do something so stressful? The answer is easy. As with any endeavor worth undertaking, if you fail to take the risk, you'll receive no reward. Your fears don't have to be crippling—practice and preparation can build confidence leading up to a speech.

Overcoming these fears is an empowering experience. Public speaking is a great way to show yourself that, with practice, you can do the things that scare you the most. What starts out as a stressful experience can become a great self-esteem boost!

Once the nervous jitters are under control, you may discover that public speaking is actually very rewarding. How often are you able to explain your views to a room full of people? It's a special opportunity. Your job is to share your thoughts and your audience's job is to listen. If you think about it that way, public speaking can be satisfying on a personal level.

Critical Thinking

Public speaking is also a great way to build critical thinking skills. Writing a speech requires a great deal of careful thought, from the audience analysis to the outline to the conclusion. It's not enough to have a message—you also need to figure out how to tailor the message to fit the needs of your audience. How can you make your points relevant to your listeners? How can you help the audience understand your views?

Thinking in this way is a great exercise for improving general communication skills. Once you start truly considering how your public speaking audience will receive your message, you will naturally find it easier to adapt your communications to better match the needs of your everyday audiences, whether they be friends, family, or coworkers.

Social Connections

Are you looking for new ways to network and make social connections? Public speaking can help. Giving a speech is like starting a conversation with a room full of people—and you can continue that conversation as soon as you step down from the podium. In most cases, you and your audience will have a shared interest in the topic of your speech, which means you already have something to talk about!

If the schedule allows, you'll have the opportunity to mingle with the audience after your speech, answering questions and seeking fresh perspectives on your topic. Speakers generally give audience members the option of getting in touch with them at a later date by listing contact information on handouts or slides. If you're shy about following up with new contacts, this gives them a way to reach out to you.

If you're talking about a specialized area of expertise or an aspect of your business, you'll probably have a website. You'll be able to direct audience members there to find more information. If you're part of a speaking lineup, reach out to your fellow presenters. Congratulate them or, if you missed their talk, ask how it went. There are lots of opportunities for networking in the realm of public speaking, so plan ahead and make use of them.

From Concept to Action

Think of a time when you needed to communicate with someone and the stakes were high. Perhaps you had to describe something important to someone you care about or give directions to someone who was hopelessly lost. Think back to how you made sure that they received the message you needed to send. Did you repeat yourself? Write down the information? Ask them to repeat the message back to you? Consider how these skills might be applied to public speaking.

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