

Part 3

Read the following newspaper article and then answer questions 21–27 on page 27. Indicate the letter, A, B, C or D against the number of each question 21–27. Give only one answer to each question.

You could be one of those lucky people who seem to be naturally good at public speaking. It is unlikely that you were born with this ability. Great speakers are instinctive and inspired. They also prepare well, learn performance technique and draw heavily on experience to develop their skills.

What passes for a natural ease and rapport with an audience is often down to technique – the speaker using learned skills so well that we can't see the 'seams'.

Body language

You can learn to speak effectively in public by going on courses and reading manuals. But there is no substitute for getting out and doing it. If you dislike speaking in public, then take every opportunity to do so – even if you only start off by asking questions at the PTA meeting.

When you speak in public, almost all the aspects that make up your total image come under scrutiny. Your posture, body language, facial expression, use of voice and appearance all matter.

The situation is often stressful, because the speaker is being observed and judged by others. Small quirks, like speaking too quietly or wriggling, which are not particularly noticeable in everyday communication, become intrusive and exaggerated in front of an audience.

Stereotypes

It is hardly surprising, then, that some of us feel it is easier to pretend to be somebody else when we are speaking in public. We assume a 'public speaking image' that has nothing to do with our real selves.

We sense that speaking in public is connected to acting and so we portray

Secrets of talking your way to the TOP

stereotypical roles like 'the super-smooth sales person', 'the successful superwoman'. Unfortunately, if we don't really feel like these types, then we will look as though we are striving for effect.

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For instance, you could decide that you want to play the life and soul of the party when you speak, although, in actuality, you are a rather quiet person who rarely uses humour. You read that humour works well in public speaking so you decide to tell a few jokes.

You look ill at ease when you do so and your timing leaves a lot to be desired. Your talk misfires badly. You will not have been true to yourself and your audience will have been reluctant to trust you. You need to find your own style.

The most skilled actors use their own feelings

and experiences to help them inhabit character. As a public speaker, you have more scope than most actors

– you have your own script, direction and interpretation to follow. You can even rearrange the set and choose the costume if you like.

The most successful speakers are obviously projecting an image but one that rings true. They project the best aspects of themselves – 'edited highlight'. The serious quiet person will project serenity and consideration for others. The outrageous extrovert will use humour and shock tactics. Speaking in public is a performance and one in which you present a heightened version of your personality.

To speak well, there needs to be a balance of impact between speaker, message and audience. If one of these elements overpowers the other two, say if the speaker is over-concerned to project personality, or the message is rammed home without due regard for the type of audience, or the speaker allows him or herself to be thrown by a noisy crowd – then the performance will suffer.

Image

Your image helps maintain this balance. If you get up to speak dressed like a Christmas tree, then your appearance will be overpowering. Delivering your message in an over-stressed and, therefore, over-significant tone of voice, will encourage your audience to switch off. When you start to speak, if your body language and facial expression remind the audience of a frightened rabbit, then you won't gain its confidence.

The biggest block to effective public speaking is attitude. If you think you can't and you never will be able to, you won't. Speaking in public is something anyone can learn to do. Be positive and accept setbacks as part of the learning process.

- 21 The author says that the best public speakers
- A are professional actors.
 - B go on learning from the talks they give.
 - C feel naturally at ease with people.
 - D don't need to plan their talks in advance.
- 22 Her main advice to beginners is to
- A attend a course on public speaking.
 - B ask good speakers for advice.
 - C get as much practice as possible.
 - D study other speakers' performances.
- 23 Some speakers pretend to be someone else because
- A they feel less self-conscious.
 - B they don't want to be recognised.
 - C they've been advised to.
 - D they enjoy acting.
- 24 This approach is not recommended because
- A it will make the audience laugh.
 - B it is likely to look false.
 - C it can make the talk last too long.
 - D the audience will complain.
- 25 The best speakers
- A use visual aids.
 - B tell stories and jokes.
 - C learn the scripts of their talks by heart.
 - D present their most positive characteristics.
- 26 The author warns against
- A being too emphatic in what you say.
 - B getting into arguments with the audience.
 - C making the audience feel nervous.
 - D wearing coloured clothing.
- 27 Overall, the author's message is that public speaking is
- A something few people can do.
 - B the most frightening thing you can do.
 - C a talent many people have naturally.
 - D a skill that can be developed.