



No.7: How to control nerves

Have you ever experienced the following: shallow breathing, palpitations and a rising feeling of panic? Your hands are clammy and shaking, your knees shake a little too, your legs seem to have a life of their own, and you sweat profusely... And then you find that you are 'umming' and 'ahhing' all the time, your mouth is dry and you can't remember the next thing you want to say... It could be a nightmare! But it needn't be.

Remember

- Fear is a normal experience. If you have it, you are like lots of other presenters.
- The tension you feel at the beginning of your presentation is helpful and the adrenalin can help sharpen your delivery.
- Don't drink too much coffee or reach for an alcoholic drink to control your nerves – even biscuits are not a good idea because they can make you cough!

Take action

- Prepare your notes, slides and handouts meticulously. 90% preparation results in just 10% perspiration.
- Look great: good grooming sends out messages about how you value yourself and works wonders on your confidence levels.
- Warm up the body and the voice (see our last set of Tips).
- Rehearse thoroughly and make sure you read your speech aloud. Visualise yourself doing a great job.
- Perfect your opening line. Get this right and everything else should flow.
- Concentrate on the audience rather than yourself. Present initially to those with smiley faces and who seem engaged in your presentation.
- Use positive language, be enthusiastic and be friendly – it will rub off on the audience. Even consider a smile!