



American Translators Association

The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

225 Reinekers Lane
Suite 590
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel +1-703-683-6100
Fax +1-703-683-6122
www.atanet.org

ATA Client Outreach Kit

Skills Module

Managing nerves

Don't be concerned if you're nervous about public speaking; everyone is. Many great actors and orators have stage fright throughout their careers: the key is to use the energy to your benefit.

Here are some ways to calm your nerves.

- Be prepared: following the guidelines in the other Skill Modules will help you to get organized and feel confident.
- Practice. Read your presentation aloud several times and have at least one dress rehearsal in front of your spouse, a colleague, a friend, your dog, or—if all else fails—a mirror. This will give you a familiar routine to fall back on if you feel nervous in front of your audience.
- Keep some sort of notes or prompts on hand (index cards, clearly written notes etc.) to help if you blank out. Be sure to number these so that they can easily be put back in order if you drop them.
- Get to the venue at least 20 minutes ahead of time to check audiovisual equipment and get a feel for the place and your audience.
- Feel free to hit the bar after you've left the event, but take a pass on cocktails before you speak and while mingling afterwards.
- Remember that nobody in the room knows as much as you do about translation. And our profession is inherently interesting, regardless of the audience. That's an enormous advantage right off the bat.
- Take deep breaths, drop your shoulders, and smile. (It works!)
- Be yourself. Being a good speaker doesn't mean you have to be formal or stuffy. Develop a speaking style that you're comfortable with and stay with it—but be sure you're prepared.
- If you run out of things to say, ask the audience if they have any questions. Another good "filler" is to show a poor—ideally humorous—translation example and challenge the audience to identify where it went off the tracks. See www.atanet.org/client_outreach/translation_bloopers.php