

## ***Communication Skills: Lecture No. 31***

### **Module 10**

#### **Lecture 1**

## **ORAL PRESENTATION**

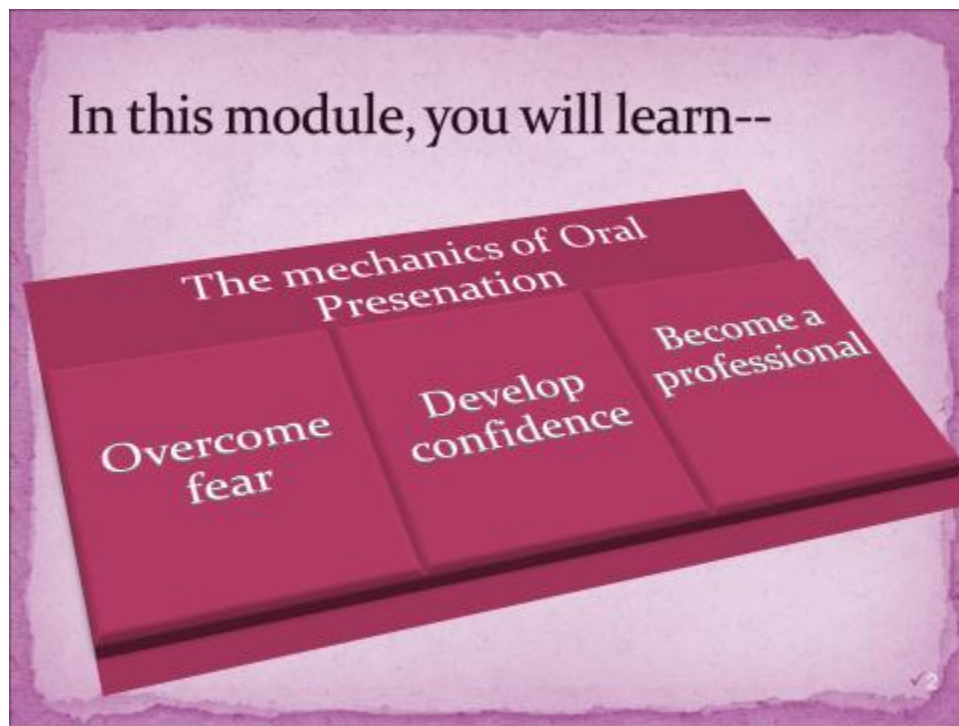


### **Oral presentation**

Oral presentation is a formal way of speaking with a communicative purpose. This way of expressing one's ideas in a structured manner is used mostly in business or academic situations. This is similar to public speaking, though public speaking could be less structured and lacking in academic content. However, both oral presentation and public speaking can be treated synonymously because the requisite skills are almost the same. A major difference lies in the size of the audience; while in the former it could be smaller formal group, in the latter, it could be a

large, informal gathering of people; for instance, the people who come to listen to their popular leader's speech. In oral presentation, often it is a small restricted group that comprises an examiner, teachers, senior members, students and staff. It may be sometimes in the form of a business proposal. In such a case, one of the employees is asked by the manager or supervisor or higher authority to present before some other dignitaries. Very often, it is done through prepared slides run through overhead projector or Power Point presentation.

### **What will you learn from this module on oral presentation?**



In this first lecture of the module, I will focus entirely on the preliminary phase of oral presentation: overcoming fear.

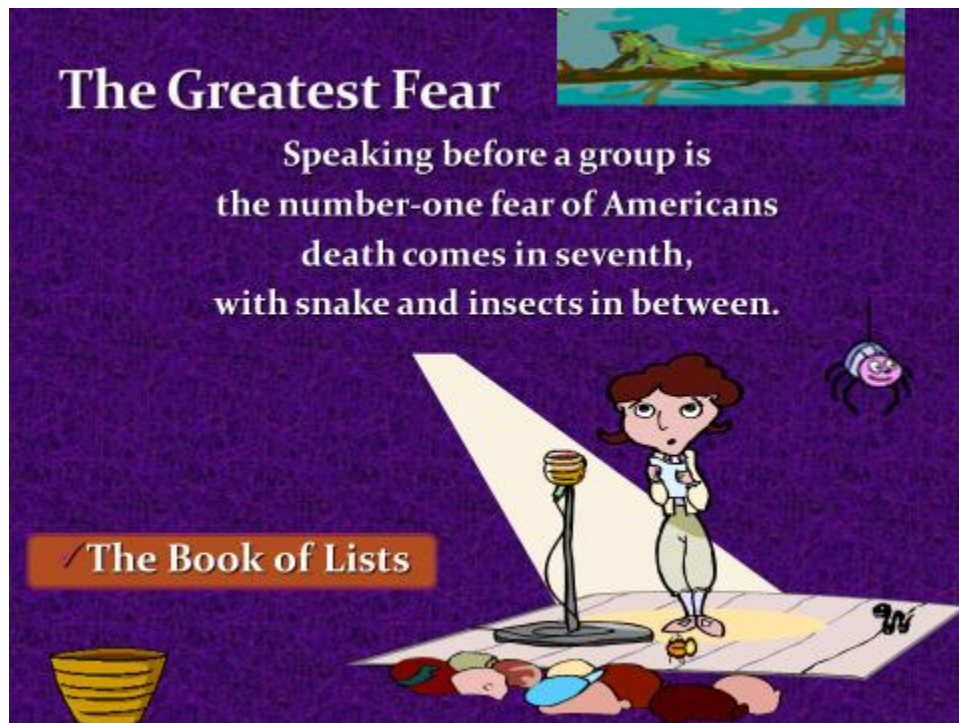
### **Overcoming Fear**

To become a professional speaker/presenter, you need to learn first to overcome the fear of public speaking or the fear of presenting before a group. After overcoming fear, you need to develop confidence to deliver the presentation before an audience.

Ironically, most people do not fear talking in small groups with known people such as chatting for hours in canteen with friends. Many would speak effortlessly in informal situations. But the same people would fear to give a formal presentation, especially, before an unfamiliar group. If compelled, they try to run away from the situation or turn into a jelly.

In a business context, the manager of the company can ask you to present the annual report before the shareholders, or your chairman can ask you to give presentation for marketing a new product. In such case, you are free to choose your mode of presentation: A Power Point presentation, Black Board, Overhead projector, Handouts/handwritten notes. Nonetheless, the challenge here is to overcome the initial fear that freezes your nerves.

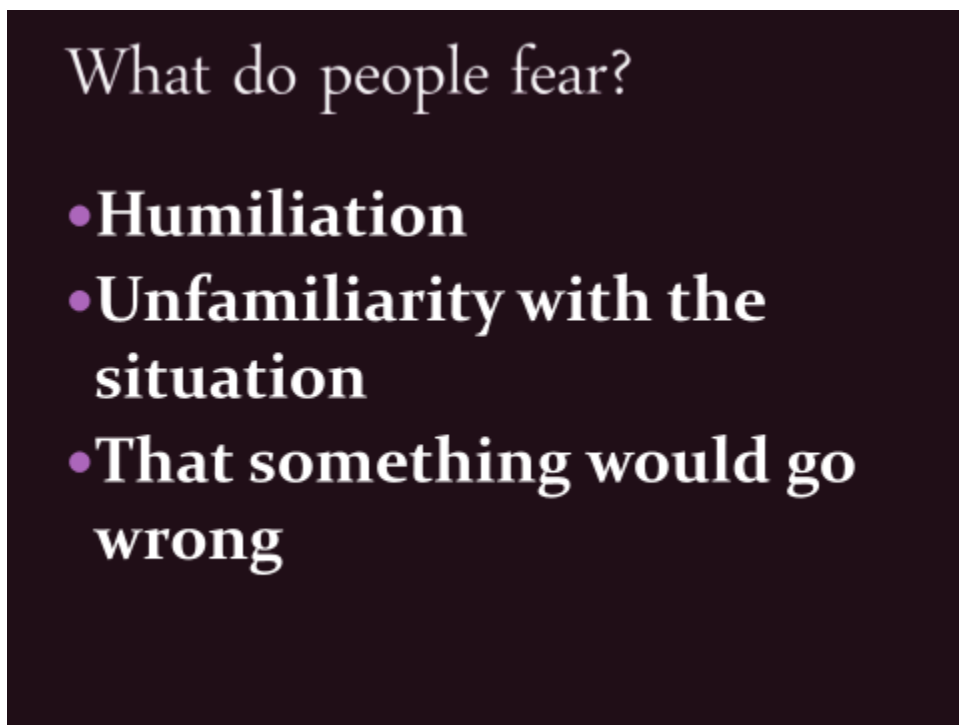
You need to understand a fundamental fact about fear that you are not the only one who experiences it. If your mother tongue is Hindi, and if you have to deliver a speech in English, you might fear that you will make many mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. However, the fact is even if somebody's mother tongue is English the person fears public speaking. So the fear you might have is irrespective of one's language proficiency. In this context, *The Book of Lists* states that the greatest fear of an American is *public speaking*!



So, it's interesting to know that speaking before a group is the number-one fear of Americans, which precedes even death! Once you internalize this fact that you are not the single one in this planet who fears public speaking, then your mind accepts it as a normal phenomenon and reduces the fear factor by half. This will also help you in building up confidence for speaking before group.

### What do people fear?

Before we go to the actual discussion of building up your confidence, you need to know what aspects of public speaking are frightening to them.



Let us try to understand what do people fear and why do they fear it. People are basically afraid of public speaking because they fear they will be faced with *humiliation* after the delivery. They are afraid that something might go wrong and they will end up feeling low, inferior, and insulted. They presume that they will make a fool of themselves before their peer group and strangers who will make fun of them.

This fear, however, arises owing to the newness of the situation and perhaps lack of adequate preparation. Once a person prepares thoroughly and practices enough by way of mock presentations, this fear of humiliation will considerably reduce. I will be giving more tips on this aspect in the coming lectures, especially on ways to familiarize oneself with unknown

surroundings. By unknown surroundings, I mean auditorium, conference room, and classroom, contrasted with quite familiar places like one's home or hostel mess. Nonetheless, even if one overcomes these initial inhibitions, one might suffer from 'stage-fright'—the fear that affects a person about to face an audience.

### How to Overcome Stage-Fright?

In order to overcome stage-fright, above all, you should be confident. To remain confident, you should visualize, behave, and act as if you are confident. Besides, you should have a positive self-image. To develop a positive self-image, you should avoid self-underestimation and ignore those who undermine your capabilities. Never compare yourself with others, particularly, those whom you perceive to be better achievers than you. Tackle with the chance to deliver an oral presentation as an opportunity to learn and grow. Be determined to do something about this fear. Start practicing at a small, informal level. Tell yourself: *I may make mistakes, that's no problem, but I will learn from my mistakes. If people laugh at me, it's their problem. Soon I will improve on my mistakes and surprise them with an excellent presentation. I know that there are some who already taking note of my efforts and appreciate my way of presentation.*

### Fight or Flight Response

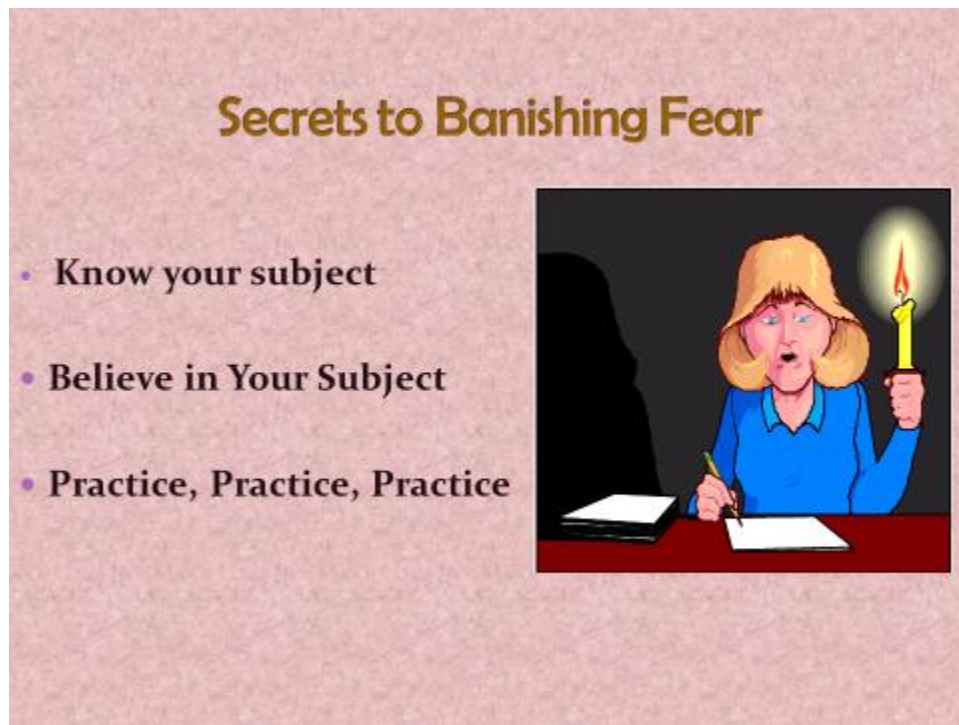
Remember, adrenaline and other extra-energizing hormones secrete in your body only when you are confronted with a fight or flight response. Like an interview and GD, oral presentation provides you with one such situation that you can choose to run away from or confront and win. It's always easy to run away from the situation, though, by avoiding the situation, you will regret throughout your life. But, if you choose to fight, if you choose to confront it, the secreted hormones will help you to work miracles. Adrenaline will help you to make active your patent vocabulary owing to which you will surprise yourself by using words in an innovative manner. Also, when you are pushed to do it, you will use words which you have never used before. Certainly, some audience will appreciate you for your effective word choice during the presentation.

You should not be too self-conscious and frighten yourself by the thought that the audience are going to note that you are nervous. That they will see your shaking hands and legs is delusional. It is an unwarranted thought because people are buried in their own thoughts and insecurities, hence, they will barely notice that you are shaky. Besides, all audience give contingency to the initial nervousness of a speaker. They know that a speaker needs some initial moments to warm up and once warmed up will deliver a confident presentation. Even the most famous Shakespearean actor Lawrence Olivier had admitted to his initial five minute nervousness despite hundreds of his stellar performances in the past.



## Secrets to Banishing Fear

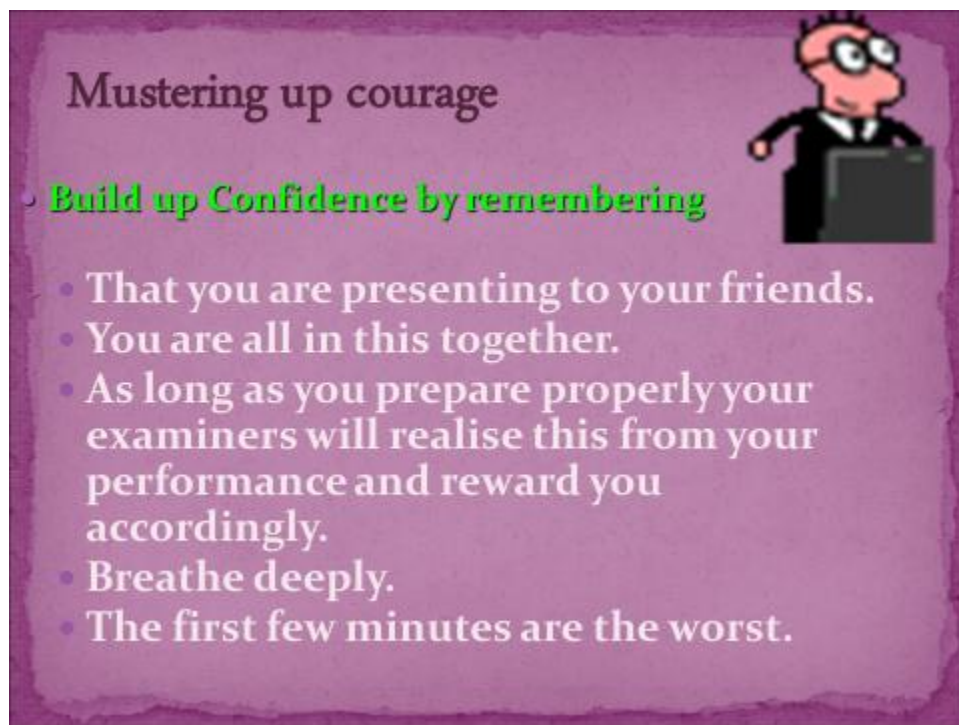
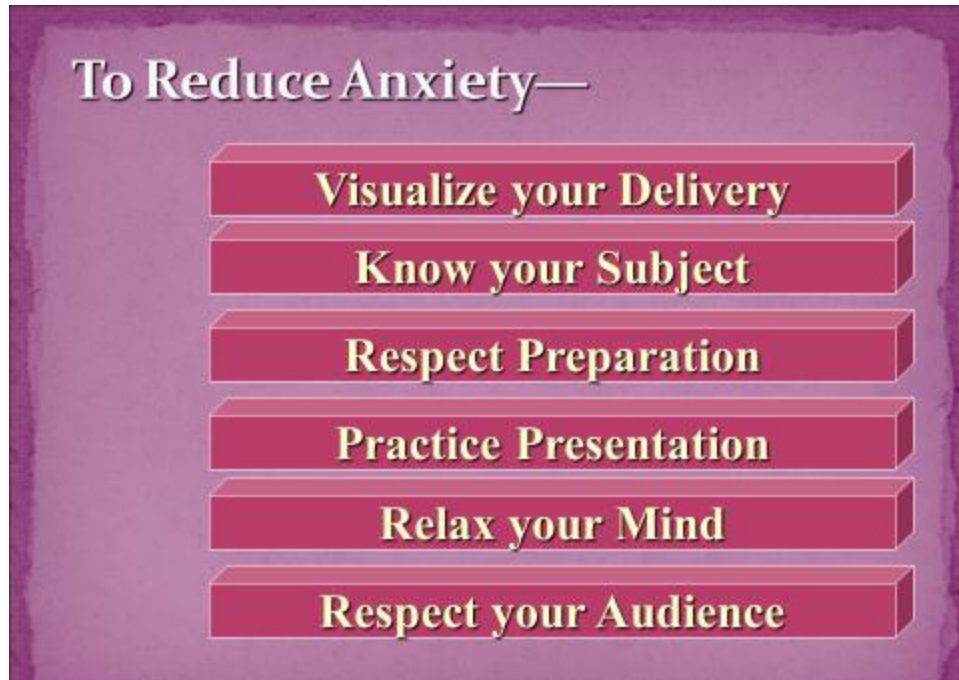
There are no hidden secrets to banishing stage-fright other than the three mentioned below.



You will be instilled with confidence if you *know your subject* thoroughly. Do not commit to giving a presentation on unknown subject. Once you agree to give a presentation, collect all relevant materials and do an in-depth study. After mastering the subject, you need to *believe* in it. Robert Frost says, “No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader.” Which means, in this context, if you do not have enough conviction on your subject, then you cannot expect the audience to believe it. It’s your passionate involvement with the subject that will make your audience gain credibility with it. Before giving the presentation, *practice* as much as possible. Practice before a mirror, practice with the timer set, record it on a video. Review your own performance, look for areas of improvement. Next, give the same presentation before some friends and well-wishes, seek their feedback. Use their feedback to strengthen your presentation further.

If you follow these steps sincerely and seriously you will give a good presentation without fear. What is more, you will get more invitations, and you will look forward to giving presentations in more challenging circumstances.

To reduce anxiety and develop confidence, you can take note of all the suggestions given below.



If you follow the above suggestions, your fear will disappear soon and you will happily accept any oral presentation. Nonetheless, overcoming fear is only the initial step, you need to learn to give a confident presentation.

In the next lecture, I will discuss how you can give a confident presentation.

### For Further Reference

#### For further reference:

- Natalie Rogers, *How to Speak Without Fear*.
- Dale Carnegie, *The Quick and Easy Way to Effective Speaking*.
- Paul E. Nelson & Judy C. Pearson, *Confidence in Public Speaking*.
- Gary Kroehnert, *Basic Presentation Skills*.
- Karen Kalish, *How to Give a Terrific Presentation*.
- Shirley Hughes, *Professional Presentations*.