

Tips for Reading Your Work Aloud

1/ Practice – We all read, but how often do we read aloud? Before the event, practice by reading your piece to a friendly audience – your friends or your family. Ask for their honest reactions to your reading style. Adjust your presentation as necessary, then try again.

2/ Slow Down – The Gettysburg Address was delivered by Lincoln at around 90 words per minute. Granted, what you are reading may be slightly less important, but slowing down will reduce stumbles, improve audience comprehension, and allow you to read with more attention to the content. While practicing, aim for an absolute maximum of 140 words per minute. That means a 700 word piece will take at least five minutes to read aloud. If the piece is complex in language or ideas, go slower.

3/ Relax – Okay, this one isn't easy, but remember that the audience wants you to succeed. Everyone is rooting for you. Smile at them, right at the start. Say hello. Make contact.

4/ Make Sure People Can Hear You – Whether or not you're using a sound system, start off by asking people in the back row if they can hear you. Adjust your volume accordingly, and make sure you don't get quieter and quieter as you go along, until people can't hear you anymore.

5/ Pause – After a punch line or a particularly dramatic section, pause, catch your breath and allow the audience to catch theirs. Look up from time to time. Again, make contact with your audience. This reading is supposed to be enjoyable for everyone.

6/ Slow Down – Oh, did we already mention this one? Guess it must be important.