The Five Elements of Public Speaking

Public speaking was an art form in ancient Greece. The five elements of public speaking are based on principles that have been around since Aristotle. They’ve been presented many different ways, but these five elements have withstood the test of time.

1. Know what you want to say.
The first key to giving a forceful, persuasive speech is to have a clear picture of exactly what you want your audience to understand.

2. Decide on a structure.
A good speech needs a framework. Here’s how the ancient Greeks structured their talks:

- Get the audience’s attention. Good ways to start include using a joke, story or vivid example of why your topic is important.
- Tell what you’ll talk about. Give a brief summary of the points to be covered.
- Tell how you plan to treat the theme: Give your point of view.
- Give the information, point by point.
- Summarize your points.
- Conclude.

3. Choose a style of presentation.
The Greeks divided styles into three categories: humble or bucolic, moderate and sublime. Whatever your style of presentation, the unstated message should be that you and your audience are really working toward common goals. Decide the tone of your speech and be consistent in applying it.

- Informal?
- Scholarly?
- Question and answer format?
- Dynamic, a real sales pitch?
- Should you use audiovisuals?

4. Learn it by heart.
Reading a speech will only put your audience to sleep. But learning a speech by heart is more than just memorizing. The speech must really come from your heart, so you present it with enough conviction and passion to persuade your audience.

5. Hone your speaking skills.

- Study your voice: Is it monotonous? Too soft? Do you speak too fast? Make a practice recording of your speech beforehand and study it.
- Use body language. Put yourself physically into what you’re saying, with appropriate gestures and stance.
- Be natural. Don’t use “dynamic” gestures or speech patterns that don’t come naturally to you.

Winning Them Over
All of these techniques have one goal: to get the audience on your side. You can boost this process by considering the subject from your audience’s point of view and by identifying with your audience. With this attitude, you’ll win them over right from the start.