

## PREPARING THE TALK

**1. USE THE SCRIPTURES AND TEACHINGS OF MODERN PROPHETS (SEE D&C 52:9).** This is the heart of your talk. After all, that's one of the main reasons we're at church—to teach and learn the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can study your topic with the help of Guide to the Scriptures (at scriptures.lds.org) and general conference talks (search by topic at gc.lds.org). Be sure you understand the scriptures and quotes you are planning to use in your talk. If you need help, ask your parents or Church leaders.

**2. INVITE THE SPIRIT.** It's always a good idea to pray and prepare beforehand to have the Spirit with you as you speak. The Spirit not only provides comfort for your nerves, but He also testifies of truth (see D&C 42:14). Invite the Spirit into your sacrament meeting by bearing testimony of what you believe to be true.

**3. THINK OF A PERSONAL STORY.** One of the best ways to make connections with others is through stories. We like hearing others' experiences and what their lives are like. So try to think of a fun, unique, or challenging experience you've had that relates to the gospel principle you've been assigned to talk about. What did you learn from that experience? How did it help you? This is a great way to open your talk if you're stumped about how to begin.

**4. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!** After you've written your talk, you might want to practice speaking it out loud by yourself, and then in front of family members or friends. You can find out if your talk is within the given time limit and if there are parts you need to clarify. If it's OK with your bishop, you can even try going to your church building beforehand to go through your talk at the podium!

# 7

## TIPS for GIVING A TALK

*Speaking in sacrament meeting soon?  
Try these tips.*

**By Sarah Hanson**



I don't know about you, but when I'm assigned to give a talk in sacrament meeting, I feel really nervous—not about writing the talk but actually *presenting* the talk. I always worry, “What if I'm too boring? What if I forget to say something? What if I mess up a word?”

Ever felt the same way? (Hopefully I'm not the only one.) If so, it's not the end of the world! Check out these seven tips to improve your speaking skills and give an engaging talk.

## GIVING THE TALK



**5. AVOID THE “I DON’T WANT TO BE UP HERE” OPENER.** This opener can take many different forms, but most listeners recognize it right away. It’s usually something like, “When the bishop called me to ask if I’d give a talk, I tried to think of some excuse to get out of it.” Most Church members can empathize with how uncomfortable it can be to give a talk, but when you’re basically saying, “I don’t want to be here,” people could hear that as “Please don’t listen to me.” It’s best to avoid this opener altogether—be enthusiastic about your topic!

**6. SPEAK CLEARLY.** It isn’t unusual for someone to speak too quickly or too quietly because of nerves. I can totally relate! But it’s important to speak clearly as you give your talk so the congregation can understand you. Make a conscious effort to slow down, pronounce your words, and project your voice (yes, even with a microphone, it’s possible to be too quiet). People want to hear what you have to say!

**7. KEEP LOOKING UP.** Eye contact is a very important part of good communication. It shows that you’re sincerely focused on and invested in a conversation. Now, you definitely don’t have to make eye contact with everyone in the congregation as you speak, but even if you frequently look up at the back or front of the room, you’ll be much more interesting as a speaker. Avoid keeping your eyes glued to your notes! Your listeners want to see your smile, not the top of your head.

Even with these seven tips, you still might slip up on a word or notice someone snoozing on the third row. But does that mean you’re a terrible speaker? Of course not!

When we’re a little out of our comfort zone, it’s normal to feel nervous or make small mistakes. But as long as you try your best and invite the Spirit, it doesn’t matter if you stutter or forget to say something. You are doing God’s work and helping His children learn more about the gospel!

If you teach and testify of what you believe, everything will turn out great. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*