

Relaxation Tips:

1. You are not aiming for perfect here. In fact, perfect doesn't exist.
2. Accept a small amount of anxiety as normal. Really, it's very normal. Even Mark Twain once said, "There are two kinds of speakers: those that are nervous and those that are liars."
3. Slow down your breathing—this is really important. Increased heart rate, dry mouth, and sweaty palms can all be alleviated, at least a bit, by slowing down your rate of breath. Place your hand on your abdomen/diaphragm and try to breathe from there. High-up shallow breaths aren't as effective.
4. Give yourself a pep talk. Try to recognize any negative thoughts that creep in and stop them in their tracks. Replace them with, "You are courageous for doing this," and "You have good examples—you can do this."
5. Picture yourself doing well. Before your performance, imagine yourself up there speaking with supreme confidence and smiles and hand gestures and eye contact.
6. Remember, the audience wants you to do well. Sure, you may be in a "competition" but it is no doubt a friendly competition. We are all in this together. We are all a part of the speech giving family.
7. Also, usually people can't see your nerves as much as you believe they can. Honestly, being aware of the fact that they can't see your nerves all that much, will improve your speaking.
8. Arrive as prepared as you can. There no substitute for knowing your material and heaps of practice. This is the gold standard for reducing speech anxiety.