

Rehearsal & Pre-Talk Checklist

Two lists. The first one is work and takes a week. The second one takes ten minutes and is mostly about not doing things. Do not swap them around.

The week before

Rehearsal. This is where a talk actually gets better.

- ☐ My talk has a shape I can say out loud in one breath: opening, my points, close.
- ☐ I have six keywords on a card. Six — not a script, not sentences.
- ☐ I have run the whole thing out loud, standing, at least three times on different days.
- ☐ I timed a full run and I know my real length, not my guess.
- ☐ I know what I will cut if I run long, and I decided that in advance.
- ☐ I have said my first sentence and my last sentence enough times to say them without looking.
- ☐ I practiced once with somebody listening, or with a recording I played back.
- ☐ I wrote down the two questions I am most afraid of, and answered them out loud.

THE TWO QUESTIONS I AM AFRAID OF

The last ten minutes

Day of. Nothing here changes the talk. That is deliberate.

- ☐ Water within reach.
- ☐ My keyword card is where my hand can find it without looking.
- ☐ Phone silent. Not on vibrate — silent.
- ☐ If I am using slides or sound, I opened them and checked they work.
- ☐ I said my first sentence quietly to myself, once.
- ☐ I did four rounds of the breathing below.
- ☐ I stopped rewriting. Whatever it is now, that is what I am giving.
- ☐ Feet planted, shoulders down, eyes up. Then I start.

FOUR COUNTS, FOUR TIMES

4 breathe in	4 hold	4 breathe out	4 hold
------------------------	------------------	-------------------------	------------------

Slow, not deep. If four counts feels like a struggle, use three. The point is that you are counting something other than the audience.

If it goes wrong

It will wobble somewhere. That is normal, and a room forgives it far faster than you will. Say one of these, out loud, and carry on.

“Sorry — let me say that again.”

“In other words...”

“Where was I? Yes —”

“That’s a good question. Let me think for a second.”

Then keep going. Stopping to apologize twice is the only version of this that an audience actually notices.