

Teleprompting 101: First-Time Presenting

Relax. You'll be with a crew whose sole responsibility is to make sure you do as well as you can. If you make little mistakes, it's not the end of the world. Very, very few productions, live or recorded, go through without hiccups.

The operator scrolls words at your speed: if you slow down, the words slow down. Speed up, and the words will speed up. If you think the words are going too fast – pause! Use full-stops and commas as breath aids and pauses for you to collect your thoughts.

Before a take, have a stretch, scrunch your face up a few times before reading, clear your throat – like any other activity, warming up always helps. More direction about your personal presentation will be given by the director.

Teleprompting 101: Warming Up

Before launching into a piece, stretch your arms out wide and take a big breath of air. A little water helps (preferably just below room temperature, not ice cold). Then try some basic head rolls and mouth exercises, like big forced smiles then scrunched frowns. Like a sport, presenting involves being warmed up before the delivery. More direction about your personal presentation will be given by the director.

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What's more Important: You or the Message?

Professional presenters are trained so that their body language and the words they're saying are the same. New/ untrained presenters are able to say the words... but their body language is either missing or betraying the message. Just before the rehearsals start, focus on WHY you're presenting this message, rather than the words.

As a presenter you're important because you represent a great business. Whether or not you are a great person, look nice or are very intelligent is beside the point. Harsh, but a fact. If you're not engaged about WHY the message needs to go out to your audience, this will show on camera. When people look self-conscious or uncomfortable on camera, it's because they either don't believe what they're saying, or they're thinking about what they look like, rather than the message itself.

Who Says It like THAT??!?

Imagine this scenario: You've finished writing your message to the audience and believe it utterly. Then, when you go to present it, there's one section of simple words that REFUSES to be spoken properly! It's like being stymied by the world's simplest tongue-twister, one which everyone can say except you. Spoken language and written language suit different tasks. When drafting your speech, look to incorporate contractions of phrases, like "can't" instead of "cannot", "we'll" for "we will" and "you're" for "you are".

Often the autocue operator can help by re-arranging words slightly, inserting 'breath-aids' like commas, blank lines and minor formatting that aids you in timing your delivery. PLEASE don't try adding your own formatting before giving the script to the operator. Common 'page' format elements like bullet points, indentation and tables don't translate to autocues.

If all else fails, slow down or use gestures. Use hand movements and slow speed to emphasise the aspect you're getting stuck on. This helps you concentrate on getting past this block.

Oh, and pre-read the bit that comes after the section you get stuck on. After 5 takes of trying to get one little bit right, presenters are often so relieved that they forget there's more to come... and trip over THAT!