



## TIPS FOR OVERCOMING PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY IN ENGLISH

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### Abstract

Public speaking anxiety, especially in a second language like English, is a common challenge faced by many students and professionals. This article explores the psychological and linguistic aspects of speech anxiety and offers practical, research-based strategies to manage and overcome it. Through understanding the causes and applying specific techniques, individuals can improve their confidence and performance in public speaking situations.

### Keywords:

Public speaking, anxiety, English language, communication skills, confidence building, second language learning.

### Introduction

Public speaking in English can be an intimidating task, particularly for non-native speakers. Many learners, regardless of their language proficiency, experience fear, nervousness, and stress before or during a speech. For English learners, this fear is often intensified by concerns about pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and audience judgment.

In today's globalized world, English proficiency is an essential tool for academic, professional, and social success. The ability to speak fluently and confidently in English is a key goal for many learners. However, a significant number of individuals experience anxiety, nervousness, and even fear when speaking English in public. This phenomenon, known as "public speaking anxiety," is particularly prevalent among non-native English speakers.

Research shows that this fear can exist even in one's first language, but it becomes more pronounced when using a second language. Learners often fear judgment, making grammatical errors, or forgetting words. This article aims to identify the root causes of public speaking anxiety and provide evidence-based strategies to reduce its impact and improve confidence.

Overcoming this anxiety is crucial not only for academic success but also for professional and personal development. This article presents effective tips grounded in psychological theories, educational research, and real-life experiences to help learners reduce fear and build confidence.

The fear of saying something stupid exists not only when using a foreign language, but also when using one's native language. This is due to many factors: fear of public speaking or condemnation of others. Nevertheless, we have to overcome our fears to live and communicate in a familiar environment every day. But what about English, if there's no need to speak it every day?

This situation is familiar to students of any level of knowledge:

Initial: "I don't know anything, so there's nothing to say."

Middle: "I know everything, but I can't say."

The reasons are different, the cure is one - practice.

### **What is a language barrier?**

Before solving the problem, it is necessary to understand it. Language barrier is a frequent phenomenon and does not depend on the level of English. This is a feeling of uncertainty about starting or maintaining a conversation for a number of reasons. Moreover, excitement increases with cosmic speed when communicating with foreigners.

There are many worries in my head:

- They will laugh at me;
- If they don't understand me,
- what if the interlocutor is talking about an unfamiliar topic?

All these thoughts instill fears and paralyze conversational skills. Let's figure out how to get rid of them.

### **Why are we afraid to speak English?**

The first and perhaps the most difficult thing is to learn to control panic and identify stress factors. It's no secret that in any matter, anxiety is not a helper. If a singer is going to perform in front of a large audience, he might lose his voice due to excitement. If the news anchor is worried about forgetting the text, it will definitely happen. See the connection?

These are the main reasons that worry you when communicating in English.

### **Fear of mistakes**

If, when talking to a foreigner, you think: "If only I don't make a mistake, if only I don't make a mistake." In 99% of cases, the reverse effect occurs, which we tried our best to avoid. The brain was so preoccupied with the consequences of the mistake that it couldn't think about anything else. It's no surprise that a failure occurred at that moment. Our thinking is structured in such a way that when talking, we cannot think about several things simultaneously.

Let's get rid of the heavy thoughts, think about what happens if you make a mistake? I doubt people will laugh and point fingers at you, after all, we live in a civilized society. No one will think ill of you either. English speakers greatly respect people learning their language. Simply put yourself in the interlocutor's place. Would you "put the nail on the head" with someone who is learning your language and trying to express themselves?

### **Embarrassment**

Have you heard the saying: "Impudence is the second happiness"? Sometimes it's just necessary to proclaim yourself loudly and clearly, and in the situation of learning English, initiative is your best friend. Don't be afraid to start the conversation with questions. You will show interest and practice familiar grammatical structures. In this case, the interlocutor will speak more than you, but this will be the first step towards unhindered communication. People love to talk about themselves, give them the opportunity.

### **I don't understand**

The truth is that quick oral speech with an unfamiliar accent can confuse many English experts. The only difference is the reaction. If you focus your attention only on unfamiliar words, you will inevitably start to worry and miss everything that the person later said. It's better to abstract and listen to the "speech" entirely.

Think about:

- what was discussed;
- What emotions accompanied the intonation;
- what the opponent expects from you, the answer to the question, or your opinion.

Believe me, from the tone of voice, gestures, and even facial expressions, you will definitely guess the emotional message of the conversation. The rest is a matter of technology.

### **Small vocabulary**

Lack of phrases and expressions can lead to pauses in conversation. However, this is not a reason to despair. Firstly, it is possible to explain with the help of available means, gestures, and facial expressions. And secondly, be sure to study the vocabulary. Don't take individual words, always highlight the context and write out entire phrases and word combinations. This way, you will have ready-made answer templates for the questions.

Don't be afraid to forget the word, try to learn new expressions in pairs with synonyms and antonyms. This is a way to elegantly get out of an awkward situation and explain what you meant. And also memorize 3 times more.

### **Indefinite use of grammar**

Some students don't pay much attention to times and the use of articles in lessons and homework, but then inevitably encounter problems.

Lack of grammar knowledge leads to:

- incorrect use of verbs in speech;
- absence of word order in sentences;
- difficulties in expressing their thoughts;
- misunderstanding by the listener.

There is a precise recipe for getting rid of such problems:

- Start practicing with simple constructions.
- Fill the gaps in your knowledge.
- Start sharpening the skill immediately by talking to yourself and your teacher.
- Overcome your fear and look for any way to communicate with English speakers.

### **Lack of practice**

Follow the principle: "Eyes fear, hands do." If you think about it, then any matter requires constant engagement. Experience doesn't come immediately, and in the beginning, new things always seem frightening and terrifying to us. Recall how you learned to ride a bicycle or swim. You were afraid of falling or choking with water. But training after training and skill came.

High-level students can easily lose their communication skills if they don't use the language for a long time. Set yourself up for small daily steps that will inevitably lead to results in a few months.

### **Principles of overcoming language barriers**

Now that we "know the enemy in the face," we can definitely take the right measures to relieve anxiety in English conversations. The problem seems the same, but the reasons for it will be different for everyone. Consequently, the solution methods will also differ. By making the correct diagnosis, we can easily find a cure for the language barrier.

### **Relax**

A restless mind cannot help to correctly construct a sentence in English and, moreover, to recall the appropriate phraseological verb. Therefore, don't think about the opinion of

outsiders, focus on your opponent. Smile and maintain a positive attitude, then it will be easier and more comfortable for you to maintain a dialogue. You can directly tell a person that you are a little nervous, be assured that you will definitely be supported with a kind word.

**Don't take mistakes to heart.**

You might be surprised, but people mostly think about themselves and their feelings. No one will count how many phonetic or stylistic errors you made in your speech. The main goal of communication is the exchange of information and opinions. So your partner will also be focused on catching the meaning of your words.

Mistakes in learning are our loyal friends. They show us what we can do even better. After all, if you stumble on the same stone every day, you will eventually decide to go around it.

**Forget about literal translation**

Language is not just words arranged in the right order, it is a combination of culture, traditions, and history. How often have you encountered the problem of translating "winged expressions"?

Let's analyze the differences using the example "when the crab hangs on the mountain," which is equivalent in meaning to "when pigs fly."

If you have an insurmountable desire to translate all the words in your head, try to think more broadly and choose appropriate expressions to describe the entire situation. In such cases, knowledge of idioms and phraseological verbs will greatly help you.

**Explain if unclear**

Don't be afraid to ask again. It's better to clarify a vague question than to answer an unrelated question. This way, you will let the person know that you doubt, and they will have the opportunity to paraphrase the statement using simpler expressions. If you still don't want to ask guiding questions, repeat what you think the person said using their own vocabulary and interrogative intonation. Your interlocutor will only be happy to help you and support you if you don't succeed.

We are all different, and the language barrier problems are also different. The main thing is to be able to overcome them through practice.

**How to remove the language barrier?**

You have become familiar with the basic principles of stress relief during live communication. It should be mentioned that not all the techniques we will tell you about work like "magic pills." But they will undoubtedly help you speak more confidently if you consistently practice. Now that you've settled into positive emotions, let's consider practical tips that will significantly ease your difficulties in conversation.

**The answer is always in the question**

English grammar can confuse "beginner users." You can draw tables and use pre-prepared templates, but it's better to just listen carefully. It's difficult to call this language logical and structured, but this case is our luck and exception. If you are unsure when to answer, pay attention to the question. The point is that grammatically, the question and the answer must always be in harmony. Therefore, you only need to correctly define the construction and apply it using your own vocabulary.

**Use English in your life**

Basically, communication difficulties arise from the rare use of language. Individual lessons with the teacher are a great start and good discipline, but still not enough measure to speak easily and freely. The pronunciation and meaning of words are forgotten after 30 minutes of study. You may not need to call your friends from other countries or foreign colleagues every day, but you can do this yourself.

How to do this:

- Comment on your actions aloud.
- Write a post on social media.
- Watch movies in the original.
- Reading aloud.
- Tell yourself how your day went.
- Express your feelings and emotions while watching your favorite TV series.

### **Thoughts aloud**

To learn to speak a foreign language, you need at least a partner. But if you have a teacher or a friend abroad and still lack practice, then there is a very simple and accessible option. Express your thoughts in English. Make sure there is no one to embarrass you with their presence, and start talking about your impressions and emotions. Think about what words and phrases you need to describe a recent situation. Tell yourself the story of a well-known film or book. You can say whatever comes to your mind, the main thing is to do it as often as possible. Over time, you will feel a sense of ease in conversing with people.

### **"Interview" Method**

Teaching methodology should arouse genuine interest and curiosity. Imagine that you have the opportunity to talk to a favorite actor or director. You can prepare a list of questions, having verified the correctness of the grammar beforehand, and then turn on the dictaphone and voice the recording. Soon you will noticeably become easier to handle oral grammar, and you will be conducting this exercise without preparation. It's important to listen to your notes and note where mistakes or delays were made.

### **Categorizing the Causes of Public Speaking Anxiety**

- **Psychological Factors:** Low self-esteem, fear of criticism, perfectionism.
- **Linguistic Factors:** Limited vocabulary, grammatical weaknesses.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Sweating, voice tremors, increased heart rate.
- **Lack of Experience:** Infrequent exposure to real-life speaking situations.
- **Inadequate Preparation:** Last-minute rehearsals or no planning.

### **Recommendations**

**Thorough Preparation and Rehearsal** Lucas (2011) emphasizes that detailed preparation significantly reduces speaking anxiety. Structuring speeches, using notes, and rehearsing repeatedly – including in front of mirrors or with recordings – can increase familiarity and decrease fear.

**Visual Aids and Outlining** Using slides, charts, cue cards, and structured outlines helps speakers stay on track and reduces cognitive load during delivery.

**Gradual Exposure to Public Speaking** Start small – practice speaking in front of a friend or small group, then gradually move to larger audiences. This mirrors the principles of exposure therapy used in psychology.



**Use of Technology and Language Tools** Apps like Grammarly, speech simulators, and online speaking platforms (e.g., Toastmasters, TED-Ed Clubs) provide opportunities for practice and feedback.

#### **Psychological Techniques**

- **Positive Visualization:** Mentally rehearsing a successful speech scenario.
- **Self-Affirmation:** Using motivational phrases like "I am prepared and capable."
- **Breathing Exercises:** Slow, controlled breathing calms nerves and improves voice control.
- **Mindfulness and Relaxation:** Techniques such as meditation reduce performance anxiety.

**Participating in Speaking Clubs and Peer Feedback** Engaging in structured peer speaking environments provides regular exposure, constructive feedback, and reduces the fear of judgment.

#### **Conclusion**

Public speaking anxiety in English is a widespread challenge, but it is not insurmountable. By addressing both linguistic and psychological factors, learners can reduce fear and build confidence. Key strategies include preparation, rehearsal, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and consistent practice in real or simulated settings. As demonstrated by various studies, these methods lead to significant improvements in fluency and confidence.

The integration of technology, supportive learning environments, and mindful communication practices can empower individuals to become confident English speakers. Educators and language professionals should incorporate these techniques into curricula to foster effective and fearless communication skills.

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