If you are an individual who struggles with English or an accent, public speaking may be particularly nerve-racking for you. Realize that most of your fears are universal, however. Most people acknowledge a fear of speaking because they think they might forget their speech, bore the audience, not make a clear point, etc. Of course, you do have additional concerns if English is your second language. Keep in mind that most audiences are understanding—they want to hear what you have to say. There are a few things that you can do as a speaker to make this an easier task, however.

**Know what to say (Content)**
- **KISS it—Keep It Short and Simple**
  Remember to stay focused on your message and avoid deviating from your planned comments.
- Speak from a planned outline or manuscript of the presentation (including an introduction, body, and conclusion)
  When speaking from an outline (rather than a manuscript), make sure that you give yourself plenty of time to practice. If speaking from a manuscript, make sure you are very familiar with the speech and can maintain eye contact with the audience and sound conversational while reading.
- Check pronunciation and definition of words you are unsure of before the speech
  Use online dictionaries that include audio pronunciation, check with friends, and practice in the Speaking Center
- Use visual aids to help clarify your content
  For example, it might be helpful for the audience to see main points (either in PowerPoint or a handout) of your presentation as you speak. Consider highlighting words that are particularly troubling for you so that the audience can see the word and hear your pronunciation.

**Know how to say it (Delivery)**
- **Speak up!**
  Volume is often a problem with speakers, but even more so if you also have an accent. The audience will have an easier time understanding you if you increase your volume.
- **Speak carefully and clearly**
  Enunciate and slow down when you reach words that are harder to pronounce. Pronounce key words carefully, especially if it is important that the audience catch those words.
  Practice pronunciation before the speech—review the speech with someone else, circle words that are hard to say, and you can put difficult words on your visual aid
- **Use vocal variety**
  This deals with your rate of speaking and how many pauses you use as you talk. It’s best to sound conversational while speaking—that is, try to sound like you are conversing with the audience, not reading to them. If your voice is monotone (sounds the same throughout the speech) your speech will be less engaging. Try to vary your rate, pitch, and volume. Pause between sections of the speech.
Know how to present yourself (Body Language)

- The majority of what we communicate comes from our body language and tone. Keep this in mind as you practice your presentation.
- Use eye contact with your audience. It creates more of a connection with them and shows your confidence.
- Be mindful of your posture. Stand straight and show that you are confident through your nonverbals.
- Use facial expressions. This will show interest in your topic and let your audience know if you are being humorous, serious, etc.
- Use gestures to help communicate your meaning. Hand gestures, pointing to your visual aid, etc.

Practicing your Speech

- Give yourself enough time to practice. A few days is minimum for practicing a speech, a week will be better.
- Get feedback from a trusted partner. This can be a spouse, classmate, friend, or a speaking center consultant.
- Understand that mistakes happen. Even native speakers mispronounce words or confuse audiences, be realistic with your expectations of yourself and learn from your mistakes.

Use the Speaking Center

- Set up regular appointments with us to work on conversational and public speaking. These appointments can help you with your pronunciation and help build your confidence as a speaker.
- When you have a presentation coming up, make sure to set up several appointments to prepare yourself for the presentation.
- Use our equipment—make a video of your presentation so you can watch yourself and see what you would like to improve.

Remember, the more you practice, the more confident you will be about speaking in public!