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Cheat Sheet: Giving your first talk

Start Small

- Look for local events on sites like Meetup.com. Attend a few as an audience member before volunteering to speak.
- [Create a contributor profile on Antiquoted](#). It's free. Event organizers can find you and invite you to speak at their events.

Money

- Don't expect to get paid for your first talk, but you should always ask.
- Know how much to charge by asking other speakers with similar experiences.
- Brand-side speakers are usually more sought-after.
- Consider paying it forward if you're offered a fee and don't need it.

Ask questions

General

- What is the speaker fee? Are travel and expenses covered?
- Do you offer speaking skills coaching or mentorship for speakers?

Audience

- Who will be attending? What industry, job roles, and experience/seniority will the audience be?
- What are the audience's primary interests or pain points?
- How big is the room capacity where I'll be talking?

Talk & Content

- How long is my speaking slot? Does that include time for questions?
- Do you need me to send over my presentation before the event? If so, by when/where?
- Is there a specific format you need my slides in?
- Can I use audio/video?
- Is it OK to swear?
- Should my talk tie into other sessions or the theme of the conference?
- Should the talk be formal, interactive, or conversational?
- What type of content/talks have worked well previously?

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- Are there multiple tracks running at the same time? If there's a keynote at the same time, ask the organizer how they will encourage people to attend your session.
- Should I use my own slide template, or do you have one I should use?

Logistics

- What day/time do you want me to present? After lunch sessions mean people are flagging, so you need to deliver a higher energy talk.
- When should I arrive at the venue?
- Where should I go when I arrive/who should I meet?
- Do you do rehearsals?
- Will I have access to a green room or private space before my talk?

Tech

- What is the stage setup? Is there a lectern, mic, and stand?
- What equipment will be available? E.g., laptop, projector, clicker?
- Can I use my own laptop?
- What happens if the technology fails? Are there technicians on site?
- Do you use any software to run audience engagement, e.g., polls?

Marketing

- Is there an event hashtag or social media handle?
- Are there networking events, panels, or other sessions I should attend or participate in?
- Can I bring promotional material, such as books or business cards, for distribution afterward?
- Can I send some key points about myself for the MC to introduce me?
- What format/length of the text should I provide for my bio for the event website?
- Do you need a headshot for the event website?
- Can you provide me with a discount code or free tickets to give to my clients or social media followers?
- Can I write or record any teaser material for you to promote my talk?
- Can I use event recordings or photos for promotional purposes?
- Can you/I distribute my slides to event attendees after the talk?

Post-event

- Will any feedback be collected from attendees? Can you share it with me?
- Do you have any feedback for me?
- When do you start booking speakers for next year?

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Talk format

- Structure your talk like a story with a beginning, a change, and an end/outcome.
- Choose a topic where you are the expert, such as a case study.
- Create memorable phrases, acronyms, frameworks, or methods so that your ideas get referenced back to you.
- Create relatable, entertaining, and valuable content for the audience. Weave in human stories.
- Include a clear call to action at the end so people can reach out to you.
- Use slides as cues for your talking points. Use visuals and minimal text.

Content & Prep

- Practice, practice, practice: A month in advance.
- Rehearse your talk word-for-word, including gestures and tone, until you can deliver it without notes.
- Use Google Maps to plan your route to the venue.
- Visit the venue to familiarize yourself with the stage, seating, and equipment.
- Seek volunteers to deliver the rehearsed talk to and ask for feedback.
- Record yourself delivering your talk, and remove anything that doesn't have to be there.
- Come up with 5-10 questions the audience might ask you.

On the day

- Arrive early
- Reframe nerves as excitement. Imagine you're playing the role of a confident speaker.
- Try power poses or physical activities like running on the spot or clenching and unclenching your fists to move the adrenaline around your body.
- Focus on controlled, deep exhaling to calm your nerves.

During the Talk

- Take a long exhale just before you walk on stage.
- Speak slowly and use pauses to let your audience absorb information.
- Make eye contact.

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Post-Talk

- Network with the audience after your talk.
- Seek feedback from the organizers or social media. Use it to improve future talks.
- View every talk as preparation for the next. Focus on progress, not perfection.
- Use photos/videos/presentation content from your talk to promote yourself as a speaker.

Check out [Antiquoted.com](https://antiquoted.com) for more help with speaking at events, providing comments to the media, or being a guest on podcasts.