

Setting up a speaking space in different venues

There are some venues or occasions over which the speaker has very little control of the layout of the space (eg a college assembly hall, some conference venues). However the following points are useful to consider as a checklist to help you gain the most from a speaking situation or to assist you to set up the space for yourself for maximum impact to achieve the purpose of your talk. Wherever possible it is wise to physically check out the venue well ahead of time or, at the very least, to ask a range of questions so you are prepared for any eventualities.

Checklist:

Hall/room/presenter space:

- The size of the space and the speaker/audience relationship.
 - Is this formal or informal?
 - If this is an informal occasion can the seating be arranged, say, in a semi-circle to bring audience into a closer relationship with the speaker?
 - Is the room long? Or wide? Does this present any specific challenges?
 - If you have control over seating, ensure there is a clear relationship between you and your audience and you can see each other easily for best 'connection' with the audience.
 - Are audience seated behind tables (as at some seminars/conferences), might this create problems with sightlines or 'connection' with the audience?
- The podium or table
 - Is there a lectern or table available that suits your needs?
- The acoustics from the podium
 - Are there any 'dead' spots in the room?
 - Is a microphone available/necessary, and if so what type?
- The lighting
 - Is it natural or artificial
 - Might it present a problem, say, in using visual aids such as powerpoint?
 - If daytime, is there a potential problem with sunlight?
- Access to and from the speaking area
 - Is it easy and clear of any cords or other hazards?
- Equipment, electronic or other
 - Does the venue have any resources you might need or will you be required to set up your own?
 - Where are the power points? Will you need extension cords?
 - If electronic equipment is available, are you able to work it or is there a technician?
- Air-conditioning

- If too noisy you may wish to turn it off.
- If temperature goes up or down you may wish it to be adjusted for comfort.

An outside Venue:

- Consider size and seating for audience 'connection' as above.
- Ask questions about crowd control.
- Weather – wind – how will your voice carry in wind.
- External noises – planes, traffic, building site, etc.