



HOW TO
SPEAK
SO PEOPLE
LISTEN



Grab their
attention and
get your message
heard

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Speaker's Checklist: Openers

Here is a list of twenty alternative ways to open your talk.

1. State something familiar – then undermine it.
2. Make a bold claim for your talk – which you can deliver on.
3. Assert something surprising.
4. Make a provocative remark.
5. Make a paradoxical statement.
6. Offer a prize for something.
7. Ask your audience a question.
8. Give your audience a short quiz.
9. Take a poll (show of hands) of your audience.
10. Ask for someone who fits a description – the characteristics will be relevant to your talk.
11. Tell a story – real life or allegorical.
12. State elicitation – get your audience into a mood or emotional state.
13. Describe a common experience that your audience will share.
14. Describe a scenario and ask a question, like “what would you do?”
15. Challenge your audience.
16. Recount a current or recent news story – that you will show is relevant.
17. Quote a quotation.
18. Make a demonstration – call for a volunteer first to really get them on edge.
19. Draw an analogy between something familiar and your topic.
20. A humorous observation – but be very careful with jokes unless you are very accomplished.