

7 Steps to Delivering an Awesome Assembly

1. When you ask a question, always raise your hand; this is a professional speaker's technique to subconsciously make members of the audience raise their hand even if they don't want to. Also, when you ask a question, ask them how they feel about the question rather than how they think about the question. Studies have proved that we are comfortable about how we *feel*, as you can't be wrong, but if you ask someone what they *think* they become more judgemental.
2. It's vital you learn how to tell stories; your stories will take them from where they are to where you want to take them. Good stories are experiences we can all envisage, i.e. 'Have you ever sat on a bus?' If you're talking to schoolchildren you'll know instantly that nearly every young person will be sharing your experience.
3. Get volunteers to come up to the front; as a result, this will not make the assembly about you. Young people have a tendency to have greater focus when their peers are involved. Use as many visual aids as possible. It doesn't always have to be PowerPoint; it could be a football, a cup or a tin of beans. Anything to disturb their normal pattern of thought. This will hold their attention longer. Try wearing a bright red tie, jumper or skirt. You'll find professional speakers will always do this, especially to a young audience, as this again will help hold a young audience's attention.
4. Ask questions to the students and wait for their response. Start the sentence: 'Has anyone seen?' (Remember to raise that hand). If no one raises their hand or responds, turn this into a positive by saying 'Well, I'm glad no one put their hand up because...'. It's so important you keep a nice flow to your delivery.
5. If you get a response, never say 'That's wrong' or 'No'. Always say something like 'That was a great answer' or 'I can tell you've thought about that answer'. You can start your sentence by saying this even if the answer is wrong; the idea is to make the young person feel they can answer any question you ask without feeling that if they get it wrong they'll feel embarrassed. This approach will also encourage others to respond.
6. Make every effort to avoid saying 'When I was your age'. This statement will only serve to alienate your young audience, as you will simply come across as yet another nagging parent. Also, when speaking, use your body to communicate: step forward when making a positive point and backward to make a negative point.
7. Be able to laugh at yourself; self-deprecation is the key to honest humour because you will come across as being like they are and not trying to come across better than them. Speak with clarity and honesty but, above all, be yourself.