

1ST SPEAKER'S TENET: EVERYTHING SPEAKS

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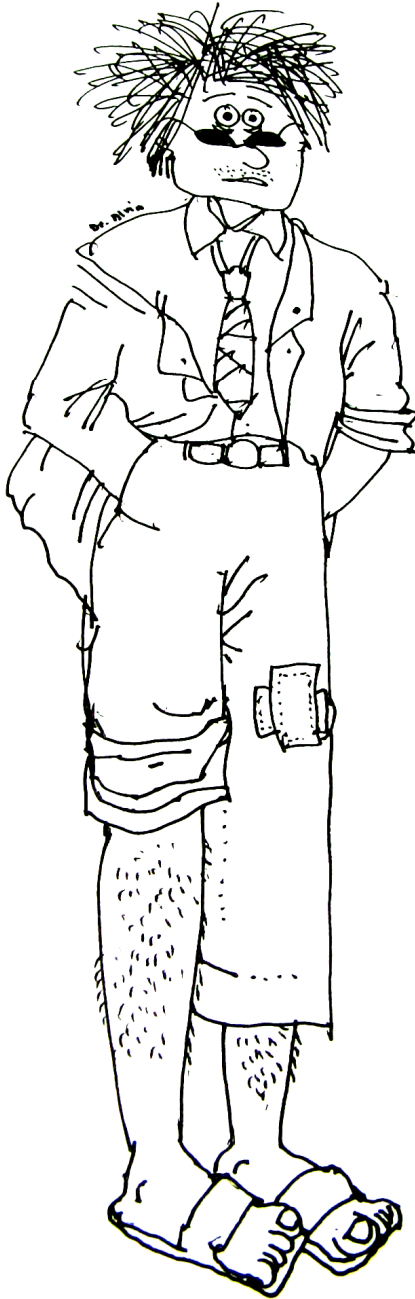
Everything about you speaks; in fact the audience would usually have already made up their mind about you and pre-judged whether they would want to listen to you even before you utter your very first word. This is done by just by looking at your mere appearance.

Studies have shown that 55% of our appearance and 38% of our body language makes up our first impression. This goes to say that a poor representation of your appearance or the inappropriate use of use of body language can kill your presentation. The saying “you don’t get a second chance to make a first impression” holds true. Therefore it is vital for you to remember that “Everything Speaks!”

Could you remember the last time you had to make a presentation, go for an interview or make a sales call? Could you recall how you were dressed? If you conducted make your presentation in your casual outfit, rather than in formal wear, do you think you would have been as successful in making an impact? Well why couldn’t you? The reason is simple. People are pre-judged by what they wear and how they carry themselves long before they are judged on their ability to perform.

Everything Speaks is a tenet on how you look as a speaker and what impact it has on the audience.

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Would you pay your hard earned money to listen to him speak?

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How do you look anyway?

First and foremost, look at yourself in front of a full length mirror and observe your physical appearance. Don't be overly critical about things that you may not be able to change immediately, such as your height or the size of your mid section. However do ask yourself what you can change to improve the overall disposition.

Ask yourself:

“If I was a member of the audience and saw myself coming up on stage to make a presentation, what will be my first impression of me?”

If your answer is not positive, then you will have to go ahead and change! What can you do? Experiment with the clothes that you have, both formal and informal wear. Mix and match to find suitable “Speaking Clothes” that would be your attire when ever you make a presentation. Your “speaking clothes” must be comfortable and become your stage outfit. The more comfortable you will feel, the more confident that you will speak well.

Here are some tips on how you should present yourself better as a speaker.

HAIR

For the men, well trimmed hair is important. Scruffy, long and unkempt hair tells the world that you are disorganized and perhaps a tad careless. If you have long hair for men may give out the impression that you are not professional or not able to further impact the audience.

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Would you trust him with brain surgery?

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To prove this point, take a look on page 5.

What if you were told that the man you see in that picture is a medical graduated from Harvard University's Medical School with a Masters Degree in Neurology. Would you believe this statement? Some of you may be sceptical but there are others who will give him the benefit of the doubt. If however, you were told that he will be performing brain surgery on a patient today, and the patient is YOU! Surely now you will all be sceptical about his ability

Through this illustration we are not invoking any prejudice towards men with long hair but show the psychological impact on perception of their abilities and professionalism.

For ladies, your hair makes an even more critical first impression. Having an outdated or stale hairstyle will label one as old fashion or behind time. In a formal setting, wearing the hair long is as equally acceptable as having short hair. However to portray a professional image especially while making a presentation, ladies with long hair should always have it tied up preferably in a hair net.

Why you may ask.

The fact remains that one should never allow the hair to cover the face when making a speech or having a conversation. Hair on the face causes a distraction to both you and your audience. When your face is covered, the sincerity of our message becomes questionable as if indirectly telling to the audience that one has something to hide. One will also be tempted to consistently "flip" your hair and make unnecessary distractive gestures.

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Can facial hair paint an impression of you?

How do you feel about the 4 persons here?

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FACE AND MAKE UP

Facial hair is viewed differently from one culture to another, from one profession to another. The safest option would probably be clean shaven. Stubbles are a definite no-no where professional impressions go. Stubbles may look macho on Brad Pitt or David Beckham, but will not look presentable who wants to make a positive first impression. Unless they are meticulously cared for, trimmed and washed regularly, a moustache or beard is then not objectionable.

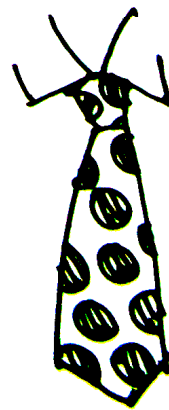
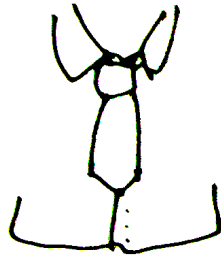
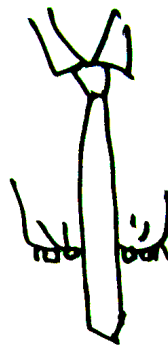
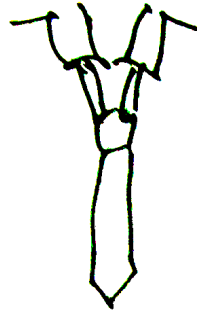
For ladies light makeup is a necessary enhancement to the face. Even if you are naturally pleasant looking, light makeup can enhance the positive features of your face and mask negative ones. The key to making up is to not overdo it. For makeup to look good less is often more than enough and more is just too much. Always remember the KISS rule: *Keep It Sweet and Simple*

SHIRTS

For men, it is important to choose business shirts with long sleeves and those that lightly coloured or with pastel shades. Whites and light beige is best and look most business like. Lightly coloured shirts portray high authority and look smart when worn properly. Do make sure that shirts receive the proper care and pressing. Nothing speaks more badly than a poorly worn crumpled shirt. The audience will notice a badly ironed shirt immediately and wearing one will not help you gain the necessary respect as a speaker.

Short sleeve and dark coloured shirts would not command authority. Thus avoid these shirts when making a presentation.

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Definitely No-No's in Tie Selection and Tie Wearing

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TIES

Ties are strong impression makers. They can enhance your overall appearance but will move you down the authority ladder if worn improperly. Avoid ties with cartoon motives or loudly coloured ones as it would make you look like someone who is not serious or professional. Choose ties that will blend with your shirt and trousers and look formal. Pastel or striped ties will look business like and impress the audience

The length of your tie is also an important matter to consider. Too short will make you look like a “part-time” clown, while too long a tie means sloppiness. The correct length of your tie should be just above your belt buckle.

BLOUSES AND LADIES' SHIRTS

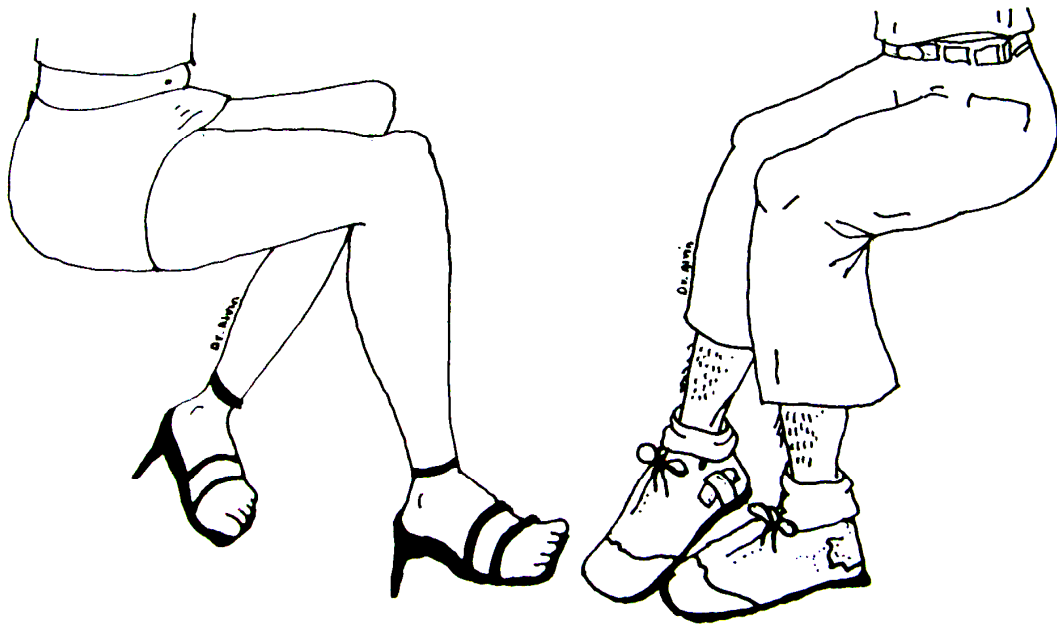
For ladies, a formal blouse or shirt is the attire for a business type presentation. Once again the rule about colour and length of the sleeve would correspond with the one applied to the gentlemen. A tie is not an essential accessory in ladies' attire. A scarf or brooch is an ideal replacement for the neckwear.

Do avoid exposing too much skin by wearing sleeveless or spaghetti-strapped tops. Tight-fitting tops and the showing of the midriff should be avoided as it is not business-like. Clothes of these types should be restricted for casual occasions and not worn when presenting a formal speech.

JACKETS AND BLAZERS

A classic black or charcoal grey jacket or blazer is a must for any public speaker to make the first great impression. Jackets may be single or double-breasted and must be of good fit.

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Can this be a high powered corporate meeting?

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Excessively loose or ill-fitted jackets cause the speaker to command lesser authority and respect from the audience.

For the ladies, a classic black jacket with an appropriate cut should be worn over the blouse or shirt. The jacket must compliment the woman's figure and should enhance a business-like and professional image.

TROUSERS AND SKIRTS

Classic black would be the ideal colour for trousers or skirts. Black does not go out of style and is an international accepted colour for formal attire. The length of the trousers is another important factor. Do not have them hanging (like Mr. Bean) or too long. The recommended length should be enough to cover the top part of your shoes. The socks must never be seen while standing up.

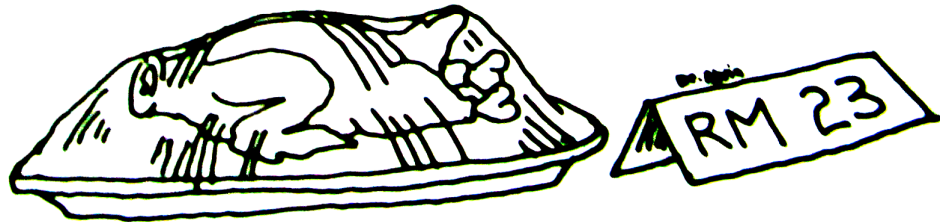
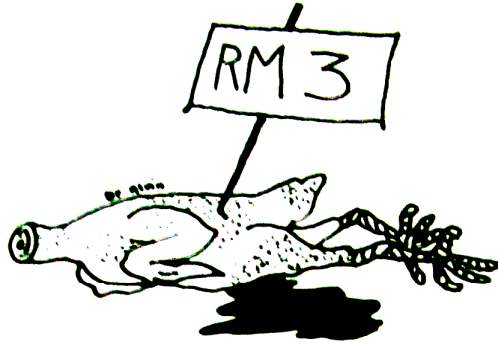
Ladies will have the option to wear skirts or pants as part of their presentation suit. Skirts must not be too short and hemlines should be below or just above the knee. The rule for skirts is this: "The more you expose the less authority you will command". Therefore mini skirts are not appropriate in a business setting.

SOCKS AND STOCKINGS

Socks should match the trousers; the safest colour would be the classic black. Make sure socks are properly held up and discard any pair which has lost its elasticity or with holes. White socks should never be worn with the business attire and should be exclusively used with sports wear, unless you are Michael Jackson, of course.

Stockings for ladies should be skin toned and sheer. Fishnet stockings and loudly coloured stockings should be avoided as it does not give the positive first impression.

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A little packaging raises your standard and perceived value.

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Care for your stockings and make sure that you do not wear stockings with runs in them.

SHOES

Formal court shoes for both ladies and gentlemen are the final touch for professional appearance. Make sure court shoes are black and well-polished. Ladies shoes must be closed toed and heels must not be more than one and a half inch tall. A pair of comfortable and broken in shoes is highly recommended. Brand new shoes should be avoided.

OVERALL LOOK

Now that you have understood the importance of properly attiring yourself before making a speech, it would be a good habit to consistently dress well to feel confident in your professional wear. Always remember that “Everything Speaks!” So make that great first impression and put your best foot forward!

PRACTICE THE TAO

1. Do a little research on the best type of attire that is suitable for the following events of which you have been invited to speak.
 - i. A farewell dinner for a colleague hosted by the chairman of the company.
 - ii. A conference with international guests from 24 countries around the world.
 - iii. A funeral for a good friend.
2. Rehearsing your next speech in front of the mirror. First, rehearse without the proper attire and then rehearse the same speech with what you will be attired on that day. Reflect on the two presentations and notice the difference in terms of the impact of your speech.
3. Observe the American and British corporate attire. Compare and contrast the differences in style to select the better before choosing your “speaking clothes”.