

60 secrets
to make your
talk, speech or
presentation
amazing



the speaker's coach

Graham Shaw

23 million views
of his TEDx talk

Praise for *The Speaker's Coach*

'There is no single set formula to giving a great talk. However, in this book you will find compelling insights and practical guidance to help you discover the way that's right for you.'

Chris Anderson, Head of TED

'Bursting with anecdotes, tips and techniques. This book is an essential guide for anyone who wants to improve their presentation skills.'

Jason Yeomanson, Leadership and Management Development Consultant, Marks & Spencer

'These sixty secrets make such sense. They are simple and easily enacted. After reading this, you will be unable to make a bad speech ever again.'

Neil Mullarkey, co-founder, London's Comedy Store Players; communication expert

'*The Speaker's Coach* is a comprehensive, invaluable and entertaining resource which should be required reading for anyone intending to deliver a presentation. It covers every aspect of the process to ensure phenomenal results.'

Jerome Kaplan MA/CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist, Boston University Aphasia Resource Centre

The following examples are from talks at the London Business Forum:

- 'Yes: Secrets from the science of persuasion' – Steve Martin
- 'Gravitas: How to speak so others listen' – Caroline Goyder
- 'Make your brain work: Top tips to boost performance' – Amy Brann

They show how you can create a catchy main title, and then the subtitle does the 'legwork' of stating the benefits of attending.

Get the benefits of your talk into your title whenever you can.

2 Use 'How' titles

The following TED talk titles show how effective the 'how' and 'how to' title can be for talks:

- 'How your brain decides what is beautiful' – Anjan Chatterjee (TEDMED 2016)
- 'How to design a library that makes kids want to read' – Michael Bierut (TEDNYC 2017)
- 'How to truly listen' – Evelyn Glennie (TED2003)

3 Use 'Question' titles

Making the title a question can be powerful, as shown in these TED talk examples.

- 'What if we ended the injustice of bail?' – Robin Steinberg (TED2018)
- 'What's it like to be a robot?' – Leila Takayama (TEDxPaloAlto 2017)
- 'What happens in your brain when you pay attention?' – Mehdi Ordikhani-Seyedlar (TED2017)

4 Use 'Why?' titles

'Why' sparks our curiosity, as the examples below show:

- 'Why jobs of the future won't feel like work' – David Lee (TED@UPS 2017)

- ‘Why glass towers are bad for city life – and what we need instead’ – Justin Davidson (TEDNYC 2017)
- ‘Why should anyone work here? How to attract top talent’ – Gareth Jones (London Business Forum 2016)

How to write a great title

1 Write a lot of titles

This will increase the chances of coming up with a great one.

TIP

Do not edit or discount titles, just keep writing until you have a long list.

2 Check and adjust your titles

Most of the time you need to experiment with wording to get a good title.

- Keep the strong words.
- Get rid of or replace weaker or unnecessary words.
- Juggle words and phrases to find what works best.
- Create a shortlist of good titles.

3 Test your shortlist of titles on people

You get valuable feedback by noticing someone’s instinctive reaction. You can then modify titles as a result.

What to be careful about

Shorter titles are not always better.

Instinctively, one might think that a short snappy title is best. However, I found many talk titles with up to around 13 words and they sound great. This is because longer titles can explain what the talk will do for you.

Your turn

Write a great title for your next talk:

- 1 Think of a presentation you have coming up.
- 2 Write at least 10 possible titles, regardless of whether they sound any good.
- 3 Play around with wording and come up with a shortlist.
- 4 Test them on someone.
- 5 Make your final choice.

Resource for further learning

Go to the TED website to see the online library of talks. Browse through the titles to get ideas for your own titles: www.ted.com

Secret 17: Get creative by using the power of your unconscious mind

To come up with the best ideas for our talk, or solve a complex problem in planning it, we would be wise to harness the power of our unconscious mind. This is because of the vast processing power of the unconscious mind compared with conscious thinking.

Scott Barry Kaufman has researched creativity at the University of Pennsylvania. He recommends a four-step creative process that will set your unconscious mind to work on your talk when you are not even thinking about it.

Why it matters

The conscious mind is restricted in creative ability compared with the unconscious:

- **Conscious 'hare brain' thinking has its limitations:**

In *Hare Brain Tortoise Mind*, Guy Claxton writes: 'Deliberate thinking, d-mode, works well when the problem it is facing is easily conceptualised.'

So it works fine for problems needing logical thought, but it has limitations for resolving complex issues. This is because of the small amount of information we can keep in our conscious minds at one moment. George Miller's research found we can hold around *only seven* items of information in our working memory at once.

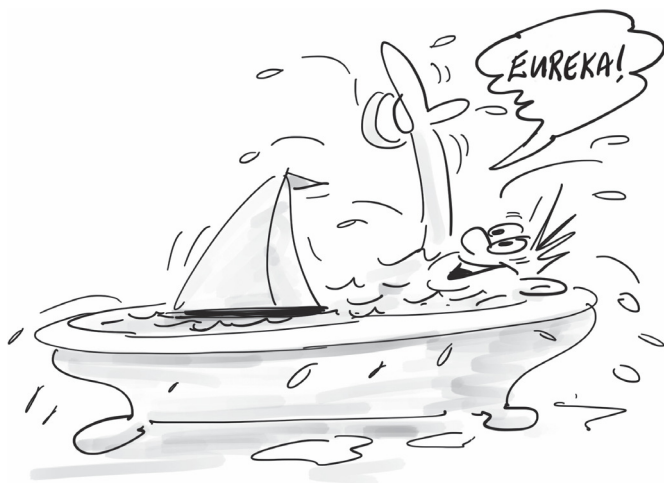
Conversely:

- **Creative insights occur with a more relaxed 'tortoise mind':**

Claxton describes this way of thinking as: 'Less purposeful and clear-cut, more playful, leisurely and dreamy.'

Our mind might be wandering when we sit looking at the sea. This slower mental register can process huge amounts of information. Colin Martindale's research at the University of Maine demonstrates that creativity is linked to this lower-focused mental activity.

Jim hadn't even been thinking about his speech when the most brilliant idea popped into his head



What to do

Kaufman identified four stages to tap into the power of your unconscious mind: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification.

The four steps are below, with guidance on how to apply them when planning a talk.

1 Preparation – work on your talk *consciously* to prime your unconscious mind

The unconscious mind needs to know what it needs to work on. Prime your unconscious mind by writing down:

- desired outcomes;
- initial ideas;
- aspects on which you would like creative ideas.

2 Incubation – go about your normal business – let your mind wander

To enable your unconscious mind to work on your talk:

- forget about your talk for a while;
- take walks or do other activities;
- just mull it over now and then when in a contemplative state.

You need to allow time gaps for your unconscious to get to work.

One key reason that incubation works is because of our reticular activating system (RAS). This bundle of nerves filters out information we do not need and alerts us to information that is helpful.

3 Illumination – when you get those lightbulb moments write them down

This is where you are apt to get insights. You never know when they will occur, but make a note of them when they do.

Write down insights when they occur

TIP

Keep your talk ideas visible on a wall, then you can add to them when you get a new insight.

4 Verification – *consciously* work on your talk and test those lightbulb ideas

Resume working on your talk.

- Look back at your lightbulb moments.
- Test them with a *critical mind* to see how useful they are.
- Incorporate the useful ideas into your plan.
- Review and identify what needs sorting next.

Repeat the four steps as necessary as you develop your talk.

Make it a habit of allowing your unconscious mind to help you. It will maximise your chances of creating outstanding talks.

Your turn

- 1 Write down where and when is best for you to work on a talk in depth.
- 2 When you plan your next talk, decide when you will have time gaps where you forget about it for a while.
- 3 Then, as ideas naturally occur to you, just write them down.

Resource for further learning

Hare Brain Tortoise Mind: Why Intelligence Increases When You Think Less (1999) by Guy Claxton.

For an in-depth look at research on modes of thinking, especially intuition.