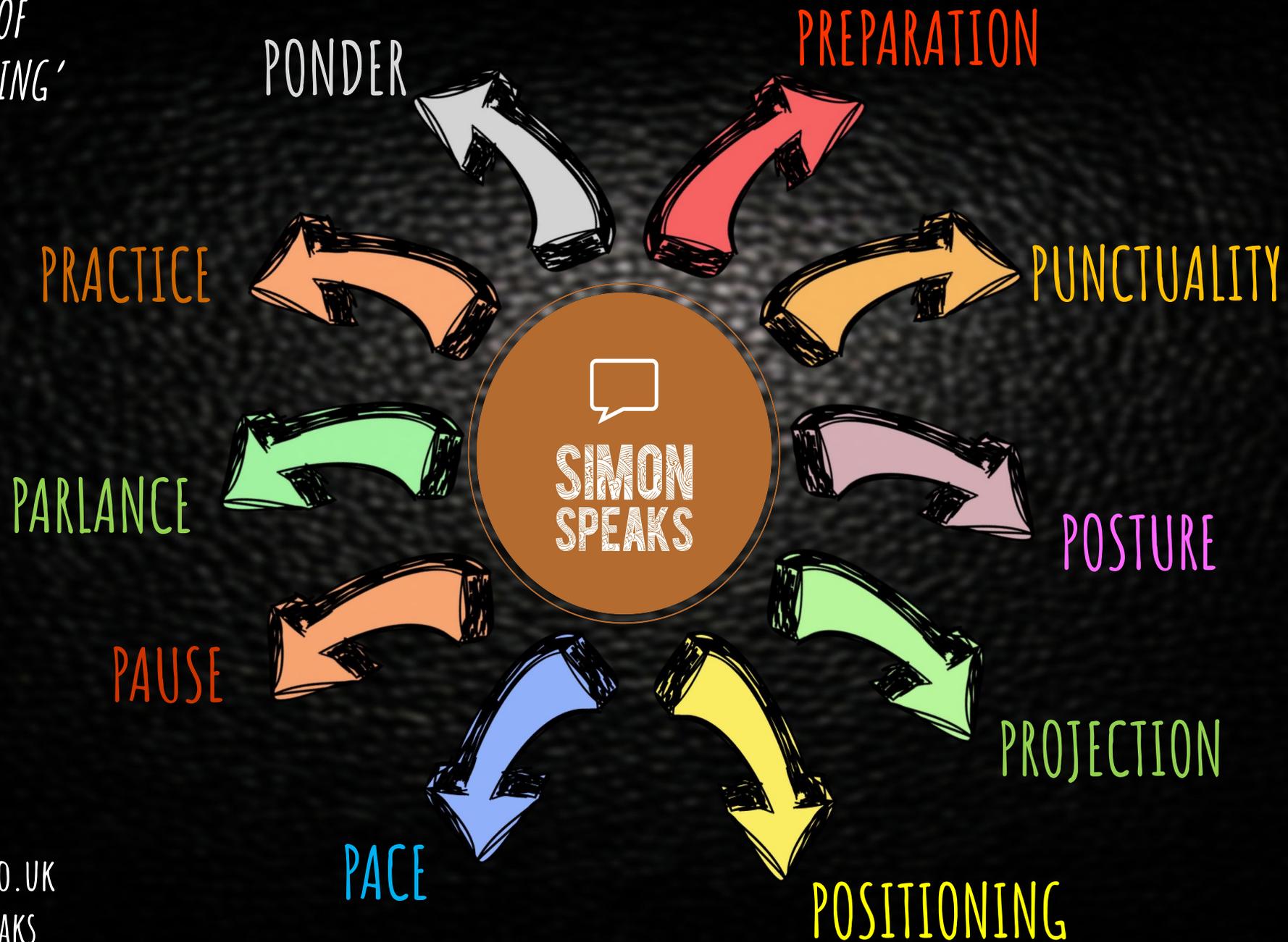


'THE 10 PS OF  
PUBLIC SPEAKING'



# 1. PREPARATION

Fail to prepare, prepare to fail. Any audience listening to anything you prepare has placed their trust in you. You are accountable for what they learn – or don't learn – in the time you have with them. You do your audience a tremendous disservice if you don't prepare sufficiently. Much of the fear and anxiety surrounding public speaking is eradicated by careful preparation. Better preparation, better reception; it's that simple.

# 2. PUNCTUALITY

We hate it when meetings start late or run over. If an audience knows what time you are due to start and finish, their attention span will only last that long. If you run over, they will be watching the clock, planning the rest of their day or making meal plans for that evening. Never hesitate to trim a presentation if it allows you to finish at the agreed time. The audience will appreciate this statement of professionalism more than anything you say that takes time they didn't want to give you in the first place.

# 3. POSTURE

When we feel anxious, our body language automatically becomes defensive. We make ourselves small, we fold our arms, put hands in pockets, fidget or look down. Eye contact is a vital part of trust-building. An audience will take far more from what you say if it feels like it is intended for them and not the carpet. Good posture will help improve your voice projection and instill confidence in your audience. Your voice will only ever be as strong as the platform you build for it.

# 4. PROJECTION

It starts with the diaphragm. It's a muscle so, like all other muscles, it can be trained and strengthened. Improving diaphragm control improves the resonance and power you can apply to your speaking voice, as well as maintaining its longevity. There are also many health benefits related to oxygen intake and regulation. Get into a habit of performing deep breathing exercises regularly, and especially before a presentation. They will help calm your nerves and improve the quality of your speaking voice.

# 5. POSITIONING

Whilst centre stage is the best place to begin your speech, it can become very one-dimensional if the whole speech is delivered from one spot. Using the full stage area by moving from one side to the other between key points can help bring your audience on the journey with you. You can even pick up and leave characters and stories in different parts of the room to build a compelling narrative. Step closer to create intimacy or tell your audience a secret. It's about knowing your space and using it to your advantage. Always move obstacles – such as chairs or lecterns – out of the way if you do not need them, as they often confine you to a smaller operating space.

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Have you ever listened to a presentation where the speaker spoke far too quickly for you to absorb the information they were sharing? Research suggests that the ideal speaking pace is 120-150 words a minute. Think about it: that's a little over two words a second. You can afford to speak slower. Not only will the audience take away more of what you say, you won't be under as much pressure to deliver lots of content! Better to cover fewer key points in adequate depth than rush and spread yourself too thin.

6. PACE

Another problem with speaking too quickly comes in the form of 'crutch words' or 'filler words'; these are unnecessary sounds we rely on to fill gaps. Words such as 'like', 'so', 'you know', 'well', 'erm', 'um' and 'ah' all erode our credibility and the efficiency with which we deliver our message. We use these needless sounds to fill pauses because we are afraid of silence. The audience appreciates pauses as they can absorb what you've just told them. They can even be used dramatically to great effect. Next time you feel rushed, just pause! Take a deep breath and move on to the next sentence. This is the first skill I developed that made a significant difference to the quality of my communication. If you are unsure where to start, focus on developing this skill first.

7. PAUSE

Words are our greatest tool, and their effective use makes all the difference when it comes to leaving a lasting impression. I'm not suggesting we scour the dictionary for deliberately obscure or unfamiliar words; this will alienate and frustrate your audience. However, we can do far better when it comes to how we use language for effect. There are scores of devices you can employ to enhance your communication. These will add flavour to both written and spoken language and, when used effectively, can create a sensory experience for the audience that will draw them into the world you are creating for them.

8. PARLANCE

Determination, grit, resolve, stoicism, fortitude. Call it anything you want, but becoming a competent speaker takes practice and consistency. Nobody that is an expert at something today achieved it without paying the price of progress. If it makes you uncomfortable, it is likely going to help you transcend your current limitations and yield progress. You will never become comfortable in uncomfortable situations without first passing through some uncomfortable situations.

9. PRACTICE

Personal reflection should be frequent and emotionally challenging. It can sometimes be an agonising process and ALWAYS includes a pen and paper. Writing goals and plans automatically makes you twice as likely to achieve them. Be accountable to someone other than yourself; the rate of your improvement will accelerate. You can then help others learn what you have learned, which in turn teaches you more than you could have learned by working alone.

10. PONDER

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