

# How to Speak at a User Group or Conference

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# Who am I?

## Beth Tucker Long

- ▣ PHP Developer
- ▣ Stay-at-home mom
- ▣ User group leader
- ▣ Mentor & Apprentice
- ▣ e3beth



# Audience Participation?

Completely fine.  
Ask me questions any time.

**Why?**

# Finding a Topic

# Finding a Topic

1. What have you learned recently?
2. What skills do you think are really important to have?
3. If we were training someone to work with you, what would you teach them?
4. What topics are being presented at related conferences?
5. What is something you have always wanted to learn?

# Making Slides

# Making Slides

1. Use very contrasting text versus background color.
2. Reds and yellows are very difficult to read on most projectors.
3. Never count on color working. Test is B&W.
4. Be brief on your slides. You should not be able to read your talk off of your slides.
5. Use the Speaker Notes section to remind you of what you need.



# Making Slides

1. Do not use acronyms unless you define them. Avoid colloquialisms and slang.
2. Be sure to have contact info on your last slide.  
Possibly Twitter on an intro slide.
3. Be clear when you are switching topics, and your slides should reflect this.
4. After your closing slide, put about 15 minutes of extra slides or have questions prepared to ask the audience to encourage discussion.

# Collecting Feedback

# Collecting Feedback

1. Joind.in - <http://joind.in>

2. Meetup - <http://www.meetup.com>

3. SpeakerRate - <http://speakerrate.com>

4. Twitter

5. Email

6. SurveyMonkey - <https://www.surveymonkey.com>

7. Paper forms at the talk (not recommended)

# Preparing to Speak

# Preparing to Speak

1. Make multiple backups of your slides. Best to have a copy on your laptop, in the cloud, and on a USB drive you have with you. If you are using presentation software, have a PDF or HTML backup that will run anywhere.
2. Make sure to pack adapters for all situations.
3. Bring cough drops.
4. Bring water.

# Preparing to Speak

1. Bring business cards.
2. Extra power supply or battery pack.
3. International power adapters.
4. Laser pointer or slide clicker.
5. Practice your talk in front of people.
6. Write your talk out in prose format.

**Know Your Venue**

# Know Your Venue

1. Where is the speaker room?
2. Where is your talk's room?
3. Is there a podium?
4. Is there a microphone?
5. What is happening before and after your talk?
6. What is around you on the stage? Cords? Dropoff?



**While Speaking**

# While Speaking

1. Find out how formal you are expected to dress. Wear something you find comfortable within that category.
2. Wear comfortable shoes.
3. Don't lock your knees.
4. Arrive early.
5. Don't lean on the podium (they move!)
6. It's ok to move around, but don't pace.

# While Speaking

1. Let people know your preferences for asking questions.
2. Remember to pause and take a breath after every slide.
3. Record yourself speaking and watch it.
4. Be mindful of your repetitive words.

# While Speaking

1. Make eye contact with the audience.
2. If you are doing live coding, make sure you have a slide backup version in case the program or internet doesn't work.
3. Talk to the audience, don't read to them.
4. Pause every 15 minutes to ask if there are any questions.

# While Speaking

1. Speak more loudly than you think you should.
2. Don't be self-deprecating.
3. Handle interruptors respectfully.
4. Don't walk in front of the slides.
5. Don't have bullets appear individually. Takes your focus away from audience and audience's focus away from you.
6. End professionally. Don't just say "I'm done." Thank the audience and give them a way to give you feedback.

**Know Yourself**

# Know Yourself

1. Do you need some quiet time before or after your talk?
2. Can you eat right before your talk?
3. Do you need room to walk around?

# Thank You

**[beth@TreelineDesign.com](mailto:beth@TreelineDesign.com)**

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Slides:

<http://www.TreelineDesign.com/slides>



# Call for Papers

# Call for Papers (CfP)

## Writing a Title

1. The title should be attention grabbing, but always be honest.
2. Do not mention yourself.
3. Keep it short.

# Call for Papers (CfP)

## Writing an Abstract or Talk Description

1. The abstract should describe a real-life problem and how your talk will solve that problem for attendees.
2. Keep it in third-person.
3. Don't mention yourself unless it is very relevant to the talk topic.
4. Don't use acronyms.
5. Limit it to one paragraph.

# Call for Papers (CfP)

## Resources:

1. <http://www.alittleofboth.com/2014/01/how-to-submit-a-talk-to-a-conference/>

2. <http://matthewturland.com/2010/01/20/speaking-at-a-conference/>

3. <https://blog.engineyard.com/2013/speaking-at-conferences>

4. <http://helpmeabstract.com>

5. <http://www.phpmentoring.org>

# Call for Papers (CfP)

## Writing a Bio

1. Third-person is best (and make sure to use only third-person).
2. Explain key accomplishments.
3. Unless your company is very recognizable, explain where you work.
4. Give pertinent contact info, like a Twitter handle.

# Call for Papers (CfP)

## Notes:

1. Let them know if you have given the talk before.
2. Link to any speaker feedback you have received.
3. Let them know if you do not need travel/housing reimbursement.
4. Submit more than one paper.

# Call for Papers (CfP)

Find Open CfPs:

<http://callingallpapers.com>

<https://twitter.com/CallbackWomen>

<https://joind.in/event/callforpapers>

<https://calltospeakers.com>

Make filling out the repetitive forms easier:

<http://getlazarus.com/download>

**FAQ**



# FAQ

Q: Is it ok for a talk to run late?

A: Sometimes, but only if you really need to. Ask the organizers for certain.

Take a look at what is happening after your talk:

- Lunch -> Not ok to run late.
- End of the day -> Not ok to run late.
- 15 minute break before next talk -> Not ok to run late.
- 30 minute break before the next talk -> Maybe ok to run late.
- 15 minute Q&A time period for your talk -> Ok to run late.

# FAQ

Q: Any suggestions for helping with nerves?

A: It's different for everyone, but find something that helps you focus and feel confident.

Some suggestions are:

- Practice in front of real people.
- Listen to your favorite song before going on stage.
- Talk to a loved one.
- Find someplace quiet to focus and relax.
- Look at your favorite (appropriate) meme photo or include it as one of your opening slides.

# FAQ

Q: How do you handle negative feedback?

A: Take each comment seriously, but don't take them personally. Try to find the constructive comments and disregard the rest.

# FAQ

Your talk totally sucked! I can't believe you don't even know about CoolTool2000. You obviously have no idea what you're talking about.

Translation:

You didn't mention my favorite tool, CoolTool2000. I recommend adding it to your talk.

# FAQ

This talk was so beyond noob that I can't even begin to think of something I learned from it. Total waste of my time.

Translation:

This talk was more beginner than I was expecting. Check your talk description and make sure it's clear what level this talk is for.

# FAQ

F%@& you.

Translation:

This person did not like your talk, but you can't please everyone all the time (and it's really a waste of time to try to please people who behave like this anyway).

# Thank You

**[beth@TreelineDesign.com](mailto:beth@TreelineDesign.com)**

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