

#### 4.13 – Video: Varying your speaking pace

There is a **very effective and easy way to make your presentations more interesting**, and that is to **vary your speaking speed**. There are very few people who speak too slowly but many who talk too fast, especially when they are feeling stressed – for instance in an exam situation.

**Successful speakers often slow down and speed up**, for example to **generate excitement at key passages** – and they **often ... take breaks**. A little bit of **well-placed silence** is a great way to **grab your listeners' attention** and make an essential point. Normally, when you listen to a presentation or a news report, or even if you're in a conversation with a friend, **as soon as there's a pause, you check what's going on**. The pause grabs your attention right away. It has that power.

You can also take a little break whenever you want to give your listeners time to **think about an important point you just made**; or after a **question they should consider** – and perhaps answer in their heads. Another typical situation that calls for a pause is when you're **between two sections of a presentation**, especially when you want to **change the direction** of your presentation and move towards a new subject. Or maybe you want to give your audience a chance to **predict what you will say or do next**. That can be very effective, too.

In any case, a pause usually creates a **connection** between you and your listeners. And that's good. The **worst** presentations are often those where the speaker **doesn't think about their audience at all**. **Avoid this mistake. Put yourself into your listeners' shoes and try to reach them**. Make things **as interesting for them as possible**. And one way to achieve that is to vary your speaking pace.

It's also an excellent idea to try to **imitate great speakers by speaking along with them**.

Watch one minute of a good speech or presentation on video, then watch it again and **try to speak along** with the person in the video. Do it another time and really try to **emulate the speaker**. That way, you get a good sense of the ways and methods professional presenters use to get their message across.

