

In 1979, while in a restaurant waiting for guests to arrive, Sister Ann Edward asked Archbishop Sheen for some hints about presenting a talk. As he spoke, she furiously took notes, adding numbers when she typed up the results:

1. Voice-tone: Plato recalls tone three or four days after hearing a talk. It's the *tonal* quality that strikes an audience.
2. When listening to a speaker, count the words on each breath. Indicate each word by a dash, and each pause by a stroke. If it's—/—/, it's dull, flat, stale.
3. Avoid a pulpit voice. Be natural. As Disraeli said, "There's no index of character as sure as the voice."
4. Learn [the] value of *pauses*. Never for their own sake, but for emphasis or to allow the thought to sink into the audience. They need time for digestion.
5. A whisper can have more value than a shout. Macaulay said of Pitt, "Even a whisper of his was heard in the remotest corner of the House of Commons."
6. If there's a commotion, disturbance, or latecomers, do not raise the voice; lower it and the audience will try to catch the whisper.
7. [The] audience is infallible in judging if a voice is artificial or natural.
8. Let [a] first sentence be interesting. Do not state the obvious, e.g. "Today we celebrate a 25th anniversary."
9. Only nervous speakers need water.
10. If brevity is the soul of wit, the secret of oratory is "know when to quit."
11. Before beginning, pause a few moments. As a mother cannot forget the child of her womb, we can't forget the child of our brain.
12. Start with a *low* voice.
13. Audience needs a come-on; feel superior, not timid or obsequious.
14. To begin with, have a story where *you* come out second best.

—Tell plot first. Homer did; Shakespeare did.

—Any emphasis needs time.

—All ears? Audience silent? Pause if they're not.

—Never state the obvious.

—Lungs full of air are resonant. (Ball on a fountain of water, bouncing.)

At that point, the guests arrived and Sheen's ten-minute presentation ended. A copy of these notes, with commentary by the note taker, is in the Ann Edward file.