

A Poem in Performance

Practise the poem by reading it out loud

This enables you to get to know the poem, and to 'hear' the poem's rhythm and rhymes.

Learn the poem

If possible, learn the poem by heart. It means you can concentrate on your recitation, rather than having to look down at the book all the time.

Announce the poem's title and author

Always let the audience know the poem's title and author. Then pause...before you begin to recite.

Slow down!

Performers often feel nervous. This means they tend to rush their recitation and thus don't allow the audience time to properly digest the words. So, slow down! Recite the poem at half-speed your normal talking voice. Remember, **you** know the poem well: the audience may be hearing it for the first time!

Expression

Try to modulate your voice. Don't recite in a dull monotone. Make your voice rise and fall, and make expressive use of surprise, sadness or excitement as the poem's words demand.

Use of eyes and hands

The eyes can say **so** much. 'Act' the poem with your eyes (e.g.: eyes wide in surprise or narrow with suspicion). Look at your audience. Establish eye contact. Your hands can also be expressive. Allow them to help you to tell the poem's 'story'.

Using percussion instruments, or sound effects

Musical sounds (by using instruments or taped sound effects) can greatly enhance your reading. Make sure you pause as you read in order to give musical sounds full effect.

Don't fidget or fiddle

Keep your legs and body still while you recite. If you feel nervous you will often move without knowing it. Let the audience concentrate on your voice (and eyes, and hands) rather than watching your feet wriggle and jiggle!

Good luck!
Wes Magee