

Winning Edge #70 – One-Minute Reps

This is Trevor Bragdon with Commonwealth Partners' *The Winning Edge*: Tips to help conservatives persuade and win.



This past week my fourth grader had the school's annual "Wax Museum" project. The kids research a historical figure, dress like them, and memorize a 90-second speech. On the big day, parents walk around, press a button by each display, and the student recites their speech.

What stood out was how hard the kids tried to get every exact word right. When you pressed the button, many of them rushed. You could almost see the script running in their heads. They couldn't focus on the audience because they were thinking about not messing up a line.

Now, they all did a great job, and better than I would have in 4th grade. But it made me think about how often public speaking advice feels the same way.

You get advice to memorize your script. But when you focus on nailing the exact wording, the speech sounds more like a wax museum recording.

The problem is real life doesn't work like that. Yes, occasionally you can read from a script. However most of the speaking you do as a candidate is off the cuff. It's in town halls, small groups, Q&A, VFW halls, or conversations.

So how do you get better at speaking naturally from bullet points instead of a script?

1. Stop thinking of a speech as the "right words."

Words do matter, but your confidence, tone, and clarity matter almost as much. If you know what you're trying to say, you don't need perfect phrasing.

2. Think of it as a conversation.

Most people have no trouble holding a conversation. Some of the best presentations feel like the speaker is simply talking with you, not delivering memorized lines.

3. Talk to the audience, not at them.

This one is more subtle. You want it to feel like you're leading the audience somewhere. Not standing at a podium creating distance like it's a formal commencement address. Pick a few friendly faces and talk to them like you're explaining an idea across a table.

4. Try the one-minute rep.

Don't rehearse the entire speech trying to make it perfect. Practice the first minute without looking at notes. Then pick one thing to improve and run it again. Do that four times. Five minutes total.

The next day, work on the next minute. By the end of the week, connect the sections and do a few full reps.

You'll be far more comfortable than if you tried to memorize the whole thing.

Over the next couple of Winning Edges, we'll share specific techniques to sharpen your speaking in less than five minutes a day.

For this week, do two things:

1. Treat every speech like a conversation.
2. Practice one minute at a time with no notes.

Don't worry about saying it the same way twice. Focus on finding the most natural way you say it.