



Speak Up Speak Out

ROSTRUM WA

Rostrum WA helps you speak confidently in any situation

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|--|----|
| Acknowledgements:..... | 2 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Purpose..... | 4 |
| Learning Outcomes | 4 |
| Prerequisites..... | 4 |
| About this book..... | 4 |
| About Rostrum WA | 4 |
| Your Nerves and You | 5 |
| Everyone makes the odd mistake | 6 |
| Your audience wants you to succeed..... | 6 |
| Carry a lifebelt to help you remember..... | 6 |
| Choose an interesting topic or angle | 6 |
| Other hints and tips to better control nerves..... | 6 |
| Getting Together Something to Say | 7 |
| Purpose..... | 7 |
| Speech Construction | 8 |
| Mind Maps..... | 10 |
| Word Pictures | 10 |
| Practice writing speeches..... | 11 |
| Delivery Techniques | 11 |
| Voice..... | 11 |
| Volume | 11 |
| Clarity | 12 |
| Emphasis..... | 12 |
| Variety | 12 |
| Presence | 12 |
| Speakers Aids..... | 14 |
| More Practise..... | 14 |
| Notes | 15 |

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to give you the skills and knowledge to help you:

- Control your nerves;
- Prepare for speeches; and
- Deliver speeches.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course you will:

- Understand how to construct a speech;
- Understand how to deliver a speech;
- Understand the source of your nerves and how to better control them; and
- Have put into practice the tools and techniques taught in the course.

Prerequisites

Nil.

About this book

This book is for everyone who feels uncomfortable about speaking in public (glossophobia). It is crammed full of hints to start you off, and tricks of the trade from accomplished speakers. This book deals with YOU the performer and your nerves.

Speaking is an art similar to playing a musical instrument. You can learn the technicalities from courses and books but you have to put your hands on the musical instrument and practise regularly to be a musician. Speaking is similar. You can learn the tricks of the trade but you have to speak to an audience regularly to gain the skills and experience.

About Rostrum WA

Rostrum is a public speaking organisation that provides people with an opportunity to develop their speaking skills in a friendly and supportive learning environment. Rostrum clubs meet regularly and have a varied speaking program aimed at developing each club member's skill level with the different speaking exercises. The speaking program is supported by the structured development programs of:

- Personal Development Program;
- Intermediate Development Program; and
- Advanced Development Program.

At the end of each meeting an accredited club critic or tutor will help you and others improve by providing constructive feedback in a helpful and non-destructive manner.

Practise what you learn in this book in front of an audience such as a Rostrum club. Remember speaking needs practice just like an accomplished musician needs practise, followed by more practise.

Your Nerves and You

Speaking in public is an experience most of us feel petrified about undertaking. Well respected research by many universities over time has shown that most people are more comfortable facing their fear of heights, flying, deep water, spiders or death than facing an audience. Why are we so frightened by the thought of speaking to a group of people?

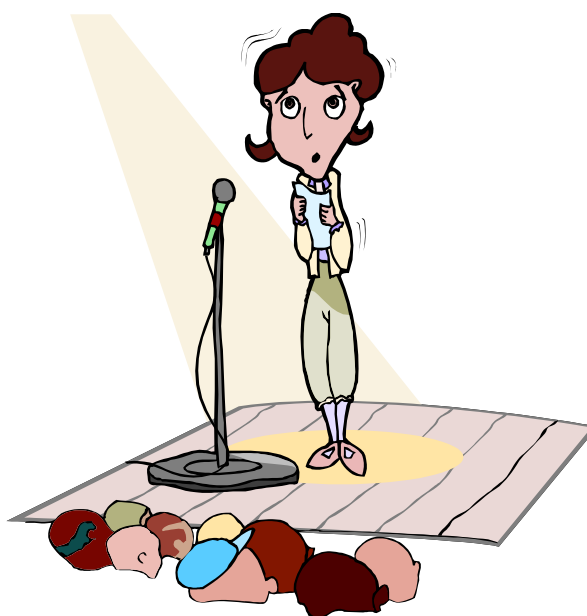
Fear is the key. We are frightened of failure. Making a fool of ourselves (and in public) is a real fear. Here are some common fears:

- What if I make a mistake?
- What if I forget what to say?
- What if I'm boring?

These are all common responses people use to justify why they can't speak to an audience and the reasons why the palms sweat, the stomach churns and we go into a kind of jelly state.

Most of these fears are real and can be described as "butterflies in the stomach". The nerves will not go away. Experienced performers will tell you that no matter how many years they have been working in front of a live audience or on camera sets they still suffer, and sometimes horribly, with pre-performance nerves.

Is there any hope for most of us mortals then? The simple answer is **YES**. The trick is to gather those butterflies and get them to fly in formation by using some simple preparations and activities that will not only help us to perform but also to enjoy the experience. When we have finished there is no more powerful medicine than the feeling of elation bought on by the round of applause offered by our audience.



Everyone makes the odd mistake

Let's look at cold hard reality. Write down on the back of a folded postage stamp all the names of people you know who do not make mistakes. I suspect that you haven't written a single name. This is simply because we are all human and do make the odd mistake here and there. Why then are we frightened of making a mistake when speaking to a group of people when making mistakes is a perfectly natural human trait? Why do you want to be perfect? Forget about making a mistake because you will be speaking to humans. Expect to make a mistake or two sometimes they are even funny.

Your audience wants you to succeed

Standing in front of an audience seems like an experience worse than water torture, all those people looking at you waiting for you to fail. Well the reality is quite different. Your audience believe it or not, wants you to succeed. Your audience wants you to succeed because if you don't then they have wasted their time, and their reason for being there is lost. Consider addressing an audience of colleagues or business people who want to hear what you have to say to make them better at something. A Father of the Bride speech is perhaps daunting but your audience wants you to succeed because they are there to have a good time and you are part of their memorable experience.

Carry a lifebelt to help you remember

Always carry a lifebelt, even when you become an experienced speaker. The lifebelt may be one or more palm sized cards on which is written key words in the order that you need to express your ideas. Carry them in the palm of your hand or have them in your pocket. Don't be ashamed to reach for the cards if your mind suddenly goes blank. Another important tip is to try and remember the sequence of your ideas rather than remember your speech word for word.

Choose an interesting topic or angle

Find a topic or an approach to a topic that will interest as many of your audience as possible. Having found interesting material, aim to deliver it with an interesting voice and in an interesting manner.

Other hints and tips to better control nerves

Here are some more tricks you can use to help; be ready for your appearance and when called make your way out front. Don't rush. While you make that long walk take a deep breath, hold it for several seconds, let the air out slowly and take another deep breath. Continue until you have reached your "talking position". Stand up straight and look at the audience. Say nothing. Look at your audience and you will find just ordinary people. Look for a friendly face and smile at them, give the butterflies somewhere to go. Now start your delivery. Keep looking for friendly faces and talk to them one at a time. Suddenly you will find a host of friendly faces. You will quickly gain confidence because there are only friendly faces who want you to succeed. Your material will roll off your tongue because you have practised it as described later in this book. You are winning and the torture is waning.

Speaking to an audience with confidence is a practiced art. You can learn the technicalities from courses and books but you have to stand there in front of a real audience to learn how to get those butterflies to fly in formation. Practice needs to be a regular activity or the butterflies forget how to fly together.



Getting Together Something to Say

Most speeches have a purpose within the reason for the speech, such as a presentation, a Toast to the Bridesmaids or a delivery on the new product. The trick is to identify the purpose of the speech. Some speeches may have more than one purpose. For example a wedding speech will toast the Bridesmaids and also entertain the audience.

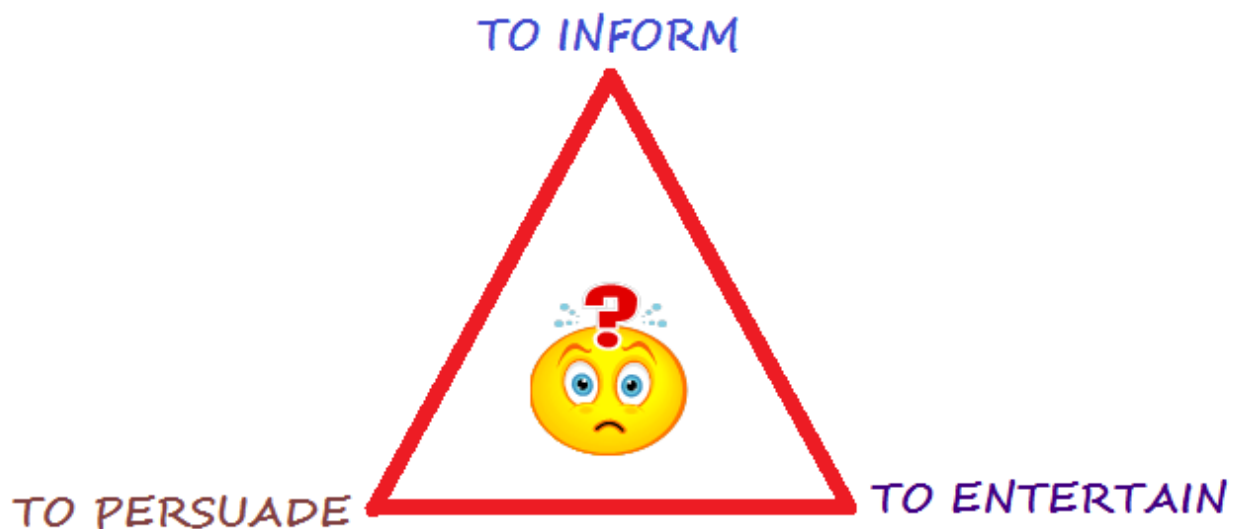
Purpose

The first thing then is to write the purpose down on a sheet of paper. Write the words; "the purpose of this speech is to. . .and . . .". It is so much easier to find the right things to say when you know why you are saying these things.

Understand Your Purpose

Ask yourself:

- What am I trying to achieve with this presentation?
- If I am successful, what will be different?
- What would be my indicators of success?



Speech Construction

You have most probably heard of the adage that simply states the way to deliver a speech. Tell them what you are going to say. Tell them. Tell them what you have told them. Sit down. In other words to coin a phrase - "Stand up, speak up, shut up". While the adage has been around for a long time it does simplify and clearly states how a speech should progress.

First there is the beginning; Tell them what you are going to say. Then there is the detail of what you need to say; Tell them. And the closure, peroration; Tell them what you have said.

Start at the end

Where to start? The recommendation is to start at the end. Tell them what you told them. Here you will, in a sentence or two, cover all the matters you need to say. Write this down. It is difficult at first, but persevere to get it into a couple of sentences. No detail just the outline of what you need to tell them. The detail comes later. This is your ending. Remember the road map; you can't study where to go unless you know your destination.

Then work on the beginning

Here you need to capture the attention of your audience. You entice them into wanting to know what you have to tell them. One method is to find what is special about your speech and start with that. The Father of the Bride may start with; "Now I know what being proud is all about". The launch of a new product may start with; "This is the beginning of new commission payments of your dreams". Your first words invite your audience to want to know what you are to tell them.

The beginnings of your speech will also, in general, signpost the matters you are to cover. This primes your audience. This is the; Tell them what you are going to say. The Father of the Bride may go on "it's been a big day, many have helped, we have a new son-in-law, and you will agree the Bride is nothing less than special".

The launch of a product may continue, "This is something that will almost sell itself, has good profit margins and will turn around our flagging sales".

Speak Up Speak Out

You may not be able to write your start at first until you have developed the main part of the speech. Put this task aside then until you have developed the meat of your delivery.

Develop the main part of the speech

The main part of the speech will take some time to work through. Firstly write down the points you want to cover. For instance the Father of the Bride may write a list like this:

1. Beautiful bride;
2. Her Mum and I are proud;
3. Welcome new son in law to the family;
4. Thank people;
5. Thank Aunt Mary for the cake;
6. Wonderful day; and
7. Get my own back at son in law and drink his beer instead of him drinking mine.

Now look at your list and group items together in logical groups say 1, 2 and 6, then 4 and 5, then 3 and lastly 7. Now you can get some words together.

Editing and Polishing

Next comes the editing and polishing of the ideas into three or so distinct stories and finding ways you can link each story to the last. The Father of the Bride may talk of his pride and the beauty of the bride making this a wonderful day that couldn't have been possible without the help of many people then go on to thank them.

Write out your speech in full. Count the words. You can deliver about 100 to 110 words per minute. Now see how long it will take you to say all those words. Too long? Back to the editing part to get the words down to the time you need to speak for. This may require you to rethink your list of points you need to cover. Repeat the exercise until you have the detail and the time right.

This exercise seems difficult but if you have prepared your closing you have a game plan to assist you in getting the items together. You may well revisit the ending and the beginning several times as you build your speech. Experienced speakers know that the first 30 seconds of a speech is the crucial time to get the audience's attention and to focus its attention on the key material. The end of the speech is the last chance to communicate with the audience. It can and should be the most important section because it is likely to be what the audience will remember most.

Timing

When working out the timing you should consider devoting two thirds of your speech to the body of your speech and the remaining one third divided between the introduction and the conclusion. Therefore, for a three minute speech allocate:

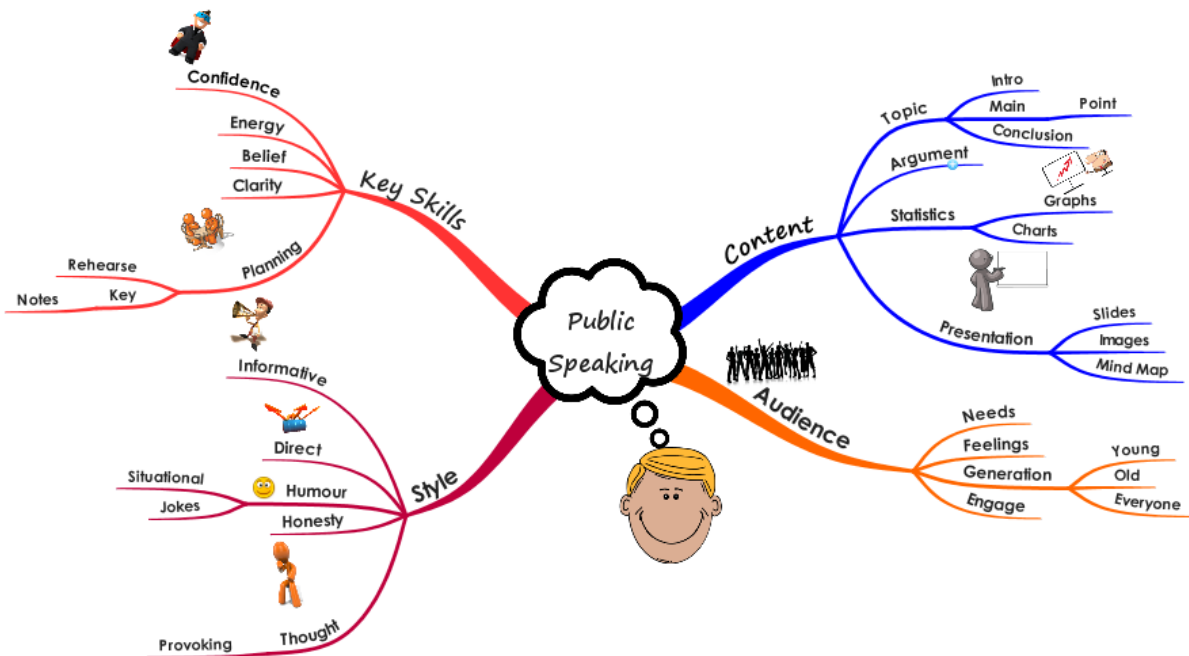
- Thirty seconds for the introduction;
- Two minutes for the body; and
- Thirty seconds for the conclusion.

Mind Maps

You may think that you know little or nothing about the topic of your speech but you would be surprised how much general knowledge you have. A “Mind Map” will help you organise your knowledge. This begins with a main concept or idea that the rest of the map revolves around, so choosing that idea or topic is the first step. Begin by creating an image or writing a word that represents that first main idea. From that main idea, create branches (as many as needed), that each represent a single word that relates to the main topic. It’s helpful to use different colours and images to differentiate the branches and sub-topics.

Then, create sub-branches that stem from the main branches to further expand on ideas and concepts. These sub-branches will also contain words that elaborate on the topic of the branch it stems from. This helps develop and elaborate on the overall theme of the mind map. Including images and sketches can also be helpful in brainstorm and creating the sub-branch topics.

The example below may be a result of you planning a speech on ‘public speaking’!



Word Pictures

Effective speakers stimulate the attention of the audience by imaginatively involving all their senses. Descriptive phrases paint pictures in words that shows – not tells – what a person, place or thing is like. The purpose of descriptive phrases is to paint a picture with words for the reader so that they can clearly envision what you are talking about, e.g. “I took a trip to the mountains.” Or “I visited the snow-capped peaks of the Canadian Rocky mountains, where I stayed at a skiing resort.”

Practice writing speeches

Constructing a speech that works for you and your audience is a work of art. There is no correct method and equally no incorrect method. Constructing your speech is an art. It is something you have to do yourself, unless you can afford a speechwriter. Each speech you compose gets better as your skill improves and you find what works for you. The only way to learn to write successful speeches is to write them again and again.

Delivery Techniques

How you deliver your speech is important because it's what makes you believable, heard and remembered. Famous orators practise these arts and became a success not so much for what they said but how they said it. Let's look a few important factors about your delivery.

Voice

Pace is the rate you speak and most of us speak way too fast. The spoken word when delivered is gone as soon as it is said. Your audience can't go back as they might when reading an article. It is important then to speak at a measured pace for your information to be heard and understood.

Rapid pace has two main causes. Firstly, it's just plain nerves. Most people when nervous talk faster. Remember to breath in and out consciously before you begin and look for friendly faces in your audience. The second reason for speaking quickly is because you have so much to say the words just blurt out. Recall the planning of what we are to say included a word count related to time. Remember the average speed of talking is about 120 to 130 words per minute. During your speech you should aim for about 100 to 110 words per minute. This gives you room to speak a little faster during an exciting part of your speech. Practise by counting 110 words in a book and read it with a stop watch to check your timing. Be confident that you can deliver the words without rush. Try to vary the pace of your delivery. Speak faster when you are excited and slowdown even more when the matter is important.

Pausation is a form of pace control. Use the "most powerful phrase" in your delivery. The most powerful phrase is saying absolutely "nothing". The pause gives your audience time to catch up and most importantly gives you time to think clearly. Saying "nothing" seems quite foreign when speaking but what seems like an eternity to you is really not noticeable to your audience. A pause slows down you delivery and makes your speech work.

Volume

Can you be heard? How do you speak loud enough? How do I know? All these questions hinge on the very art we learn't about you and your nerves. Look at your audience; look at the people right at the back. They will tell you if they can't hear. Their body language tells you even though you are not conscious of reading their body language. If the people at the back are leaning forward, frowning and perhaps have a hand to their ear then your natural response is to speak louder. You don't need to do anything more specific than look at your audience and your volume should mostly be suitable. Volume is dependent on delivery rate also, the faster you speak the louder you need to speak. Talk at a moderate pace and your voice will carry further even though it is softer.

Varying your volume adds impact to your material and stops the audience going to sleep listening to a monotone voice. Practise speaking in a loud strident voice for important words. Try speaking softly for important words. No this is not a misprint - dropping the level of your voice for important words works equally as well as a loud voice. The important thing is to have variation in your voice- soft, loud, slow or fast.

Clarity

An audience will quickly lose interest and switch their attention away from a speaker if they cannot easily understand what is being said. If you have an accent ensure you slow down and enunciate your words.

Emphasis

The audience needs clear signposts that point out the structure of the speech as a whole, and the sections of which it comprises. Without these signposts its understanding will be lessened and its concentration on the speaker will fall. Beside verbal punctuation, emphasis is used to highlight the important elements in the speech. The obvious way to use the voice for emphasis is to speak louder, but it is equally effective to speak softer. The emphasis comes from the variation from the ordinary tone level. Silence can be also used for emphasis. A perceptible silence before or after an important word, phrase or sentence will highlight it.

Variety

The audience needs variety in speaking style to maintain attention. This variety is created by change from the normal delivery style. There are many variations possible. Some obvious ones are speed of delivery, volume and inflection. The specific suggestions given in the two previous sections on using the voice for clarity and for emphasis are relevant in producing meaningful variety in vocal production.

Presence

Your presence is amplified by the way you look, stand, sway, gesture and SMILE.

Dress

How do you look in front of your audience? The obvious things such as dress suitable for the occasion, tie straight and hair done you can take care of with ease.

Smile!

Probably the last thing you can do while your nerves are twanging under the strain. But, there is hardly an occasion where a smile is unsuitable, even a funeral. A smile gives you a friendly face and the act of smiling puts you at ease and it shows. The use of appropriate facial expression can enhance any presentation enormously.

Correct stance

One of the easiest things to do when speaking is sway, side to side. It unconsciously feels comfortable and when your nerves are butterflying everywhere a comforting thing is wonderful. Your audience will be mesmerised just as if they are watching a hypnotist putting them to sleep by moving his watch like a pendulum. Stand comfortably with your feet shoulder width apart rather than placed together.

Speak Up Speak Out

One trick used by experienced speakers to avoid the dreaded sway is to place your left foot at an angle to your right foot. This will give you a warning in your knees when sway; because it hurts.

Another trick is to imagine the lower part of your body is made of granite, like a statue. It is a mind game but it does help some people not to sway. Your presence in front of your audience will appear believable, authoritative and most importantly confident when you stand reasonably still from the waist down.

Gesture

The use of hands and arms is a vital part of expressive communication. Using your hands is something most feel self-conscious about because we feel silly. Look at people in conversation at a social event like a party. You will see that it is quite normal for someone who is talking to gesticulate and often enthusiastically while they speak. The same applies for a speech. You won't appear silly to your audience and you add power to what you are saying. Use gesture to explain how big something is, how short a person is, distance, time etc. The best advice is to use your gesture expansively and more deliberately than you might when talking face to face. The distance between you and your audience is further than talking face to face and so your gesture should be, like the pace you speak at, slower and more expansive. It may be helpful to write the gesture you use as you compile the words of your speech. Practise your gesture as you practise the words of your speech.

Gesture is that vital.

Try to avoid

- Hands behind back;
- Hands in pockets;
- Twisting hands together;
- Playing with some item of clothing;
- Fiddling with notes; and
- Touching the nose, ears or lips.

Eye Contact

Looking at the audience establishes a two way communication between speaker and audience. The speaker pays attention to the audience and it will usually reciprocate by paying attention to the speaker. In our culture it is a matter of courtesy to look at the person to whom you are speaking. An audience is a group of people, so treat them with courtesy and respect and they will treat you the same way. The speaker benefits from looking at the audience by getting immediate feedback on the impact of the speech. If the audience is responding enthusiastically the speaker will see it from facial expressions and body language and will be encouraged and inspired. If the audience is becoming bored, the speaker will see that too and will know that it is necessary to use greater variety of presentation to get its attention again. Making direct eye contact with as many people in the audience as possible is the single most important skill that will lift a speaker's effectiveness as a communicator. It does not appear to come naturally to most people and needs to be learned. Remember, if you don't make eye contact with your audience, they will also stop looking at you and automatically they will also stop listening to you. Once your audience's attention is gone you will have to work really hard to get them back into the palm of your hand.

Speakers Aids

More on using notes

Unless it is an oratory competition your audience will expect you to have notes. Using notes is OK. The trick is to use the notes to help you rather than impede your delivery. Large notes will become something you play with to the distraction of your audience. You will fold them, caress them and wave them around. All this distracts you and your audience. Use cards that you can comfortably hold in your hand. You will not be able to write your speech in full on cards so the best technique is to make headings on your cards. The headings will remind you of what you are to say rather than the words you will say. Hold the cards in one hand so that you have both hands to gesture.

Lecterns.

Avoid a lectern like the plague because the normal approach is to hang onto the sides of a lectern so tightly that your knuckles go white. A lectern will hold big notes that you can directly read. This will show your audience you are petrified and unless you are an accomplished politician your delivery will be a halting reading that puts the listeners to sleep. Try not to use a lectern until you are an accomplished speaker who can read a speech prepared by someone else with conviction.

Microphones, Power Point, Whiteboards.

These will be covered in later sessions.

More Practise.

Everything above strongly demands you need to practise your delivery to get your nerves in control, the gesture right, the voice right, the speed right the pace and pauseation right, the whole performance right. Practice is the key and when you have practiced; practise again and again.

Where do you practise? In front of a mirror. To your loved one. To the dog. To a live and sympathetic audience. Rostrum is an organisation that will give you that opportunity to practice in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. Remember, to be an accomplished speaker you need to be like an accomplished musician; practise, practise, practise.



Notes