

How Can I Make Good Eye Contact If I Need to Use a Script?

When you must read a text to a group, making good eye contact with your audience--as well as with your notes--gets tricky. When reading something aloud, your natural tendency is to keep your head down. With just a typewriter or computer printer, however, you can devise a homemade equivalent to a teleprompter. First, type or print out your speech with three to seven words per line. It will look like poetry, not prose, on the page, with the line breaks at places where you would naturally insert a slight or a significant pause while reading. For example, you might arrange this paragraph like this:

When you must read a text
to a group,
making good eye contact
with your audience
--as well as with your notes--
gets tricky.
When reading something aloud,
your natural tendency
is to keep your head down.

Because each line contains only as many words as you can take in at a glance, you'll be able to look at the audience more often, with less chance of losing your place.

Here are some other tips for preparing a script for effective delivery:

1. Use only the top 3/4 of each page so that your eyes won't need to go down too far.
2. Add accent marks or underlining to words and phrases you want to emphasize.
3. Break words that are hard to pronounce into syllables or spell them as they are pronounced.
4. Make sure the words and the sentence structures you choose are conversational. Shorter words and shorter sentences are easier for audiences to comprehend when read by a speaker. When you practice, revise any sentence that trips you up.
5. End each page of notes with a complete sentence to avoid having to turn a page mid-sentence.