

HOW TO BE A  
DIVA  
— AT —  
PUBLIC  
SPEAKING

Chapter 1 - The DIVA  
Speaking System

**THE STEP-BY-STEP SYSTEM TO ENGAGE YOUR  
AUDIENCE AND PRESENT WITH CONFIDENCE**

SHOLA KAYE

# HOW TO BE A DIVA AT PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Step-by-Step System to Engage Your  
Audience and Present with Confidence



Shola Kaye

*How to be a DIVA at Public Speaking: The step-by-step system to engage your audience and present with confidence*

By Shola Kaye

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# Definition and Dedication



*DIVA: Italian, literally goddess, from Latin, feminine of divus divine, god (Merriam Webster)*

To all the women reading this book: you don't need to be rich, famous  
or glamorous to be a DIVA

# Introduction



Before we plunge into the tips, tools, and techniques that will help you unlock your inner DIVA speaker, let's look at why you should read this book, who this book is for, what inspired me to write it, and how to use it.

## Why Read This Book?

If I asked you to create a speech, would you be flustered and anxious, or excited and enthusiastic? Many would see it as a huge, long-winded task. The delivery of the speech would be a whole other issue. Worries about coping with nerves, stage-fright, what to do with your hands, and much more, might well pop up.

I could recommend that you study Dr. Martin Luther King's *I have a dream* speech ([sholakaye.com/ihaveadream](http://sholakaye.com/ihaveadream)). You could watch a YouTube clip of Michelle Obama ([sholakaye.com/obama](http://sholakaye.com/obama)) or even one of Margaret Thatcher ([sholakaye.com/thatcher](http://sholakaye.com/thatcher)), to find out how it's done. For most people, however, it's pretty difficult to break down the key elements of what makes a speech—or a speaker—

great, and then apply those lessons to their own work. Besides that, it's better to be brilliant versions of ourselves than a poor version of someone else. We need to find ways to develop our own style.

As speakers we can learn a lot from the performances of top pop singers. They work the stage in their own unique way. They hold our attention. Their songs have emotional highs and lows that keep us gripped, coupled with catchy lyrics that we remember easily, sometimes even after hearing only once.

More importantly, we've been listening to pop songs since we were little kids. How could we avoid them?

They were played on the radio, on TV, we chatted about them at school. And we watched singers perform. Even if we couldn't get to gigs and shows, we would see them on TV. We'd notice that some artists always sang ballads and didn't move around much; that others paced up and down the stage like caged animals and were full of energy. We'd realise that we liked some songs more than others and it was OK. We didn't need to go deep and analyse how many times the lead singer sang the song title, or where she stood to deliver the verse and the chorus. We just watched, absorbed and enjoyed.

In this book, I will draw parallels between pop DIVAs and their songs vs. public speaking and speeches. These analogies and references will help you see that public speaking can be fun and accessible. That it doesn't have to be an intellectual activity. That you can apply a few simple techniques that you most likely already know from watching YouTube, MTV, or Top of the Pops, and those techniques will lift the quality of your public speaking ten-fold.

Also, it's rare for people to aspire to be great public speakers from a young age, but most of us, at some point or another, have pretended to be a pop DIVA.

I'd like you to recapture that playful energy, the spirit of adventure and abandon that comes with grasping a hairbrush, a vacuum cleaner handle, or a Coke bottle and pretending you're on stage with thousands of fans calling out your name.

Here are some of the many similarities between public speaking and singing. Both speakers and singers may need to:

- Warm up the audience
- Form a bond with the audience
- Work the stage
- Craft a chorus or ‘throughline’
- Build in highs and lows
- Create intimate moments
- Be vulnerable
- Get the audience to buy ‘stuff’—whether that be ideas, products, or merchandise
- Be larger than life
- Inspire audience participation
- Create a signature style
- Develop a stage persona
- Manage their own and the audience’s energy
- Learn lyrics/lines
- Create an unforgettable experience

- Prepare for Showtime
- Perform a post-show analysis

## **Continue with This Book If:**

- You'd like to apply a framework that will make public speaking a pleasure rather than a pain, giving you the tools to write and deliver a well rounded, satisfying presentation.
- You want to energise your speaking and give your talk all the thrills and excitement of a pop concert from your favourite performer (even if you talk about something complicated like tax or law).
- You want to be guided through the speech-writing process and given step-by-step instructions on what to do before, during and after your presentation.

Maybe you'll never sing live at London's Wembley Stadium. Nevertheless, there's no reason why you can't receive glowing praise for a work talk, or move people to buy your products (merchandise) after you've promoted your business at an event (gig).

## **What Makes This Book Different?**

Over the years I have read many public speaking books written by speaker coaches and voice experts; by business people and actors.

There weren't any books written by singers—books that showed how to be a DIVA speaker and have a good time in the process. Books about how to learn from your favourite pop stars—people who are more accessible (at least via gigs and YouTube) and who



you're far more likely to know about than professional speakers who are often only known within their niche or in the worlds of politics, business, and public office.

This book will help you develop your own DIVA style, whether you're a Beyoncé, an Adele, a Taylor, or a Gaga. These singers are all world-class mega stars and each in their own unique way. It's time to learn how to be a uniquely fabulous speaker and excel at being YOU on stage, playing to your strengths and building on your weaker areas to create a rich and valuable experience for your audience.

The book also deals with your mindset and takes you through everything you need to consider on your presentation journey. As you read, keep in mind your favourite gigs, your favourite performers and start figuring out what your DIVA persona is. We'll translate that into your speaker persona and all that comes with it. By the end of this book, I hope you'll be raring to perform on stage and give your next speech!

## Who Should Read This Book?

- Perhaps you're an entrepreneur and want to grow your business.
- Or maybe you need to speak to your community?
- You speak to groups at work during meetings or presentations.
- Or perhaps you would like to have more influence and be seen as a leader within your group or organisation.
- You know you need to communicate more powerfully and are figuring out how to do just that.
- Do you like having attention focused on you?

- Do you enjoy expressing yourself with words and actions?
- Do you have something to say and would like to channel your inner DIVA to get that message across in an exciting way?
- Have you already tried public speaking and want to improve?
- Are you frustrated that you're unable to get your point across with impact and energy?
- Is there a bigger and more exciting you, waiting to emerge from the wings?

If you identify with any of these scenarios, then this book is for you.

Whether you run a business and want to get out and speak to drum up more leads and customers, or for personal reasons, *you just know* it's time for you to be seen and heard, there are tools and tips here for you.

There's no reason to bore your audience. Just because you've seen many dull speakers, you don't have to be one too. Make people feel they've had a great experience and they're more likely to want to get to know you and do business with you. You'll be seen as a leader and will have more influence over those around you.

One of the unique aspects of this book is the DIVA Speaking System™. It's not unique to have a system. You may have heard of 'The 6 Cs' or 'The 3 Ts' or something similar.

I created the DIVA Speaking System™ as an easy way to remember all the main skill areas that are required to be a well-rounded and effective speaker.

But first, let me tell you my own story of how I went from timid introvert to professional singer and award-winning speaker.

## My Story

*“I’m sorry Shola. You’re fired.”*

I don’t think I’ll ever forget those words, delivered in my boss’s broad Yorkshire accent.

What? M-m-m-me? Fired? H-h-h-how?

As a young girl, I’d always worked hard and been a good girl, if a bit geeky. I’d studied the sciences, and had been happy to lurk in the background. I kept a low profile, while producing solid—if uninspiring—results that got me into university, through the process of becoming a qualified teacher and then into a master’s degree programme. Eventually, I ended up working in the USA as an IT/management consultant. Returning to London, to the role of Account Director at a small print and design agency, I’d been required to manage meetings with senior board-level clients; to take the reins and run with them and speak persuasively in front of groups.

It was here that I discovered that I was scared. I was scared to speak up. Scared to express myself. So frozen and afraid of being seen by my peers and bosses that my mind turned to mush. It was horrible and debilitating.

Over time, I developed a three-part strategy to try to get away with my lack of contribution and general uselessness during meetings. Firstly, I would scribble down plenty of notes – it made me look busy. Secondly, I’d smile—no, grin—at everyone who spoke, hoping it was enough to be likeable and enthusiastic. Thirdly, I would nod my head so vigorously that once or twice I developed a migraine. Seriously.

I thought I’d got away with it. I was wrong.

Eventually, my client complained to senior management that his account director—err, yes, me—was not doing a good enough job to warrant the fee they were paying for my services.

So, I was out.

There I was, having to move out of the smart Central London flat I'd been sharing, and in with my little sister. A year before that, I'd been living the life in a brownstone apartment in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, daily retracing the steps of Carrie and the other fabulous ladies from the TV show 'Sex and the City.'

How things had changed. Now, I slept in a single bed in my sister's small spare bedroom while I contemplated my next career move and wondered what had gone wrong. For a while, the only steps I retraced were the ones to the local job centre.

Looking back at that time, I'm grateful for it. Firstly, because it made me realise that I was in the wrong career and secondly, because it was during my spell out of work that I finally decided to take the singing lessons I'd dreamed of since I was a young girl.

After a while, I trained to be a life coach and that gave me the courage to embark upon a career as a singer. A slightly introverted singer, but a singer nonetheless. Over the years, I learned—sometimes the hard way—to be in front of audiences numbering from a handful to thousands. I also discovered how to write catchy words in the form of song lyrics, and to engage people in my shows.

Eventually, I had to tackle my fear of public speaking.

I was reading Brendon Burchard's *The Millionaire Messenger* and had reached the chapter on becoming a personal development trainer and speaker. I was in for a big surprise!

While I was reading the chapter, I felt tears well up in my eyes and I started crying.

But these weren't tears of sadness. More like tears of excitement, hope, and anticipation! Something deep within me stirred, and a part of me I didn't realise existed effectively sat up, and said, "Listen to me!"

I wasn't quite sure where being a speaker would take me. I didn't even know what I wanted to speak about! But I felt I owed it to myself to explore and honour those emotions. To cut a long story short, I eventually listened to that voice and, two years later, I joined Toastmasters, the worldwide public speaking and leadership organisation.

To my surprise, I found that I LOVED public speaking. Soon I was being paid to speak. I won a couple of awards. Thankfully, I realised that to be a decent speaker you don't need 'the gift of the gab' nor to be slick and fast spoken. With good intentions and the audience's interests at heart, it is possible to create and deliver a message that can entertain, inspire, and transform.

And then, in a single week, at a public speaking club, I heard three women—all kick-ass, successful women—saying that if they could have been in their dream career, they'd much rather have been a singer.

What?

These people had already enjoyed plenty of public speaking opportunities and yet still wanted to sing? I figured that if I could explain how similar speaking and singing actually were, there would be a number of results:

1. We would realise what a great privilege it is to speak in public.
2. We would enjoy the public speaking experience so much more and treat it as an exciting way to make a connection with our audience.
3. We would take the opportunity to channel our inner DIVA and have a delicious time on stage instead of allowing fear to take over.

So, my own public speaking programme, *Speak Up Like A DIVA* ([www.sholakaye.com](http://www.sholakaye.com)), was born. I now train people to be better presenters at my London-based public speaking club, online, and in the corporate world.



Read on if you'd like to release your public speaking DIVA, enjoy the enormous privilege of speaking to audiences and deliver huge value on stage.

## Chapter By Chapter

You can either read the entire book from cover to cover, or jump to the parts you're most interested in.

Do you feel your speeches lack excitement and energy? Then start with Chapters 2 and 3 on how to be **DYNAMIC**. If you're just starting out, it might be an effort to incorporate more than a handful of the tips in these sections. That's fine. As you master each tip or technique, plan to add more to your arsenal and you'll become stronger and more confident over time.

If you struggle to involve your audience and want to create a deeper connection with them, go to Chapter 4, be **INSPIRING**. This will

teach you about storytelling and inclusive language that engages your audience.

Want to find out how to structure your content so you can provide your audience with lasting value? Then go to Chapters 5 and 6 that show you how to be **VALUABLE**.

If you feel you're a bit of a fake on stage, or you're not sure 'who you are' when you're up to speak, start with Chapter 7, and uncover your **AUTHENTIC** self.

The latter part of the book, from Chapter 8 onwards, "Writing Your Speech", "Finding Speaking Gigs", "Preparing For Showtime", and "Showtime and Beyond" are about the nuts and bolts of writing and delivering your speech.

If you're planning a presentation, I definitely suggest you read these latter chapters, as they will provide you with the many fundamentals of speechwriting and stagecraft. You can then supplement this information with some of the tools and tips from the DIVA Speaking System™ detailed in Part 1.

At the end of each chapter is a **DIVA CHALLENGE**. These tasks will move you forward on your speaking journey and will help you consolidate what you've just learned. A workbook containing these challenges and other exercises can be found at [www.sholakaye.com/divabookcourse](http://www.sholakaye.com/divabookcourse).

So, DIVA, I hope you enjoy this book and get real benefit from it. Get ready to sing your song, speak your words, and be your magnificent, fabulous self!

## For The Men Reading This

Fellas, this book is not intended to alienate you and you can still benefit from the DIVA system, described in chapters 1 – 7, and all

the chapters in the second half of the book on crafting and delivering a speech.

I did think about presenting the system for both genders and using the terms DIVA/DIVO, where DIVO is the male counterpart. Eventually, I decided against it.

There are plenty of public speaking books out there and many of them quote from the great male public speakers without giving women much of a look in. In this book, the majority of examples I use are of women performers or indeed from my own experiences on stage, as both a singer and a speaker. It doesn't mean that men can't learn from those examples too.

So guys, when you see the word DIVA, look at it as just that. A word. It doesn't exclude you because it's in the feminine. Break the word down into its constituent letters, D-I-V-A, apply the system, and prepare to rock the stage!

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So reader, what's *your* DIVA style? In the next chapter, we look at the DIVA Speaking System™ in more depth and explore how we can use the examples of pop divas to help us become better speakers!



# Part One





# Chapter 1

## The DIVA Speaking System™



Have you ever been to a show or watched a performance and felt there was something missing? Perhaps the performance was wooden, or it didn't touch your heart—there was no connection or excitement. Maybe you thought the speaker was going through the motions or their voice was dull and lifeless. Or they came across as fake or uncomfortable.

There are many moving parts to a good performance. You need to achieve the balance between being uniquely you and including crowd-pleasing aspects to make sure your audience has an enjoyable and valuable time. The DIVA system will help you create a well-rounded, entertaining presentation that allows you to be yourself while keeping the audience satisfied, too.

### *The DIVA Speaking System™:*

**D – Dynamic** – Be vibrant and energetic

**I – Inspiring** – Evoke a powerful emotional response

**V – Valuable** – Know your stuff—it’s all about the audience

**A – Authentic** – Be yourself

Think of each part of the system as one of the legs of a chair; perhaps a red, velvet chair with a luxurious furry cushion sitting on top! The kind of chair you might find in a DIVA’s dressing room. Before you speak, think about sitting on that chair, and all four legs being solid and supportive. Don’t consider going on stage without your seat being sturdy (as well as gorgeous and inviting). If you do, you may well find that your performance is less DIVA, more dull and dreary.

The DIVA system can sit alongside any framework you use to arrange your content because it’s about who you’re being and takes a holistic approach to your worth as a speaker.

For each of the four areas of the DIVA system, I’ve assigned some singers I feel would help explain the concept. Apologies if I’ve left out your favourite singer. I’ve chosen entertainers that almost everyone will have heard of, including a few who were very famous a while back and not as ‘of the moment’ as they once were. Hopefully, you’ll still recognise them.

### **Dynamic – Lady Gaga, Pink, Madonna**

These performers are quirky and energetic. Their goal is to put on a great show, all the while being creative and sometimes a little bit edgy. From Pink trapezing above her audience during her live show,

to Lady Gaga dressing up as a piece of steak, there's never a dull moment with these entertainers.

Perhaps you're the same. It's important for you to create a unique experience for your audience. You're fired up by the thought of designing some exciting slides. You love to use the stage as your playground. You hate the idea of being trapped behind a lectern and love the prospect of dramatic hand gestures, audience interaction, lots of vocal variety, and a gripping open and close to your presentation.

### **Inspiring – Taylor Swift, Ellie Goulding, Alicia Keys**

These singers are natural storytellers. They use their wordsmith's abilities to bring you into their world with moving stories and scenarios.

Are you similar? Do you enjoy drawing people close to you with touching, heartfelt, or exciting stories? Maybe from your own experience or from the lives of others? You're a natural at taking your listeners on a journey, showing your thought processes, and having them on the edge of their seats as you move to the conclusion of each anecdote.

### **Valuable – Beyoncé, Rihanna, Diana Ross**

These performers are the all-rounders; the entertainers who consistently put on a show with the audience in mind. It's all about delivering value, whether that's with sparkling stage sets, glittering costumes, or perfectly executed dance routines. The audience comes first and they know there'll be something to feast their eyes on during the show.

How about you? When you speak, is your mind set on delivering a high-quality experience to the audience? Is service your highest mission when it comes to speaking? Audience enjoyment, comprehension, and take-home value are the most important things to you and it's paramount for you to be liked and appreciated by anyone who hears you speak.

### **Authentic – Adele, Aretha Franklin, Celine Dion**

These singers are the balladeers. They use their big voices to create a spellbinding experience for the audience. Intimate moments are important to them and they wear their hearts on their sleeves. There may be less razzle-dazzle in terms of glittering sets and dance routines. They make up for it by connecting with the audience using vocal nuance, emotional delivery, and vulnerability.

Is this you? Is it hugely important for you to connect on a heart level when you speak? Do you feel deeply satisfied by showing your 'true' self? Are authenticity and vulnerability more important to you than coming across as crisp and confident?

The reality is that many performers—and speakers, too—fit into more than one of these groups. Once you've decided which group(s) you most identify with, mull over which area you would like to look at first to take your speaking to the next level. Maybe you want to consolidate who you are and read more tips on your predominant style. Or perhaps you want to become a better-rounded speaker and will turn to the sections that complement your natural ability.

For example, if you identify strongly with the DYNAMIC and VALUABLE groups, read the chapters on being INSPIRING and AUTHENTIC. This will help you become a more balanced speaker. Bear in mind that you have your own personal style and may not want to adopt all the suggestions listed. It's important to be yourself, and you need to be comfortable on stage. It's not about twisting and

contorting yourself into what you're not. It's about being the best version of you.

## What's In A Name: DIVA?

Most of the people I encounter love the name of my business, Speak Up Like A DIVA. They see it as vibrant, sassy, and unique. However, from time to time I meet resistance around the use of the 'D' word.

"I'd change that name if I were you. Divas are bitchy, difficult, mean . . . Why on earth would you associate yourself with that word?"

To those who share this opinion, I ask them to look up the origins and definition of 'diva'.

A quick look in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary says the following:

1. prima donna
2. a usually glamorous and successful female performer or personality <a fashion diva>; especially: a popular female singer <pop divas>

So yes, 'prima donna' fits with that more negative usage of 'diva' while the second definition ties in nicely with the theme of this book.

But, if we look at the etymology of the word, we see the following:

*Italian, Literally, Goddess, From Latin, Feminine of Divus  
Divine, God*

And synonyms of 'diva' include goddess, princess, and queen.

So DIVA originally came from ‘divus’ which means divine or god-like.

Would you like to be a goddess at public speaking? I know I certainly would! Indeed, although I’m not a religious person, to think that the divine inspires my speaking is very encouraging. In fact, in one of my early Instagram memes, I wrote ‘diva: a divine woman with a message for the world’.

So, please don’t think that being a DIVA speaker is anything besides a positive experience. I hope this book helps you become a goddess, queen, or princess of public speaking. Or maybe all three! Tap into the energy of your divine self as you speak authentically on stage and connect with your audience on both a human and spiritual level.

### **Anyone Can Be a DIVA**

In this book, I mention several examples of pop stars and famous individuals that fit into the DIVA model. It’s important to note that you can find DIVA influencers in all walks of life. In fact, some of the most inspiring speakers are ‘ordinary’ women who found their voice and spoke up at just the right time.

An example of an inspirational woman is Malala, the teenager who spoke up for the education of girls in Pakistan, and was shot by the Taliban. Against the odds, Malala survived horrible injuries and is the recipient of a Nobel Prize.

Then there’s Rosa Parks, the quiet seamstress who overturned years of racial segregation in the USA. She had been working tirelessly to secure voter registration for African Americans and to help those who had been victims of abuses. One night, on her way home from work, she took a stand by refusing to give up her seat on the bus to a white man, thereby breaking existing segregation laws. The rest is history.



In my own life, there was my courageous foster mother. She was an English woman who, several decades ago, raised three brown-skinned foster children during a time when the UK was far less of the melting pot that it is today. She risked rejection and snubs from family and neighbours, and yet was undeterred and showered us with her love and affection. Even at the age of 94, living in a nursing home, nearly blind and walking with a cane, I watched her come to the defence of my sister and me when a male resident, 20 years younger and twice her height, challenged our presence. She constantly showed selfless love and a determination to speak up for what is right.

*You don't need to be rich, famous, or glamorous to be a DIVA.*

Who are the DIVAs in your own life? These are the 'everyday' women who challenge the status quo and speak their heartfelt truths. Women who choose not to go with the flow, but take risks, often in the support of loved ones or a larger cause. These women do extraordinary things, despite having an 'ordinary' life, and it's important to acknowledge their courage. In doing so, we give ourselves space and freedom to be extraordinary too, whether it's on a bus, in a nursing home, or on the stage.

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In this chapter we looked at the DIVA Speaking System™ and what makes a DIVA.

So, it's time to take an in-depth look at the DIVA Speaking System™. Read the next chapter if you're interested in what makes a DYNAMIC speaker or, jump to one of the later chapters if you feel you have this covered. And get ready to be extraordinary!

**DIVA CHALLENGE: What's your predominant speaking style?**

- **Dynamic** – energetic, quirky, creative, lively
- **Inspiring** – earnest, seek to connect, tell lots of stories
- **Valuable** – put the audience first, want to give them a 'good show'
- **Authentic** – show your true self, wear your heart on your sleeve.

I hope you enjoyed reading the first part of this book.

If you'd like to read more, please go to [getbook.at/diva](https://getbook.at/diva) which will take you to your local Amazon store, where you can find both the kindle and print versions for sale.

Or to download **free resources**, learn about **online programs** or find out how to **work with me**, please go to [sholakaye.com](https://sholakaye.com)

Keep on speaking up!

Best wishes

Shola

