Rookie mistakes

* Is this thing on? (You only get 785 sentences… you just wasted one. Take care of this during sound check and the moments prior to you taking the stage. Ensure AV team unmutes your mic during your intro; check mic by tapping the microphone with your finger)
* How’s everybody doing today? (What a wasted opportunity)
* Oh, come on, you can do better than that! How’s everybody doing today? (THIS SCREAMS AMATEUR)
* Can you hear me? (Pros don’t ask this. Pros KNOW you can be heard because they walked the venue with their microphone during sound check. You perform portions of your speech loud & soft from all corners of the room)
* Wow these lights are bright, I can barely see you. (If you’re a professional speaker, you should know that the stage lights are extremely bright. Have the AV Team turn them on during sound check so you can get used to being blinded by them.)
* Wow this microphone is loud. (Wow, you look new)
* Oh this slide is not supposed to be in there. (Well, this is all your fault. Did you check your slides prior to today’s speech? Pros do that.)
* How does this clicker work. (You should be bringing your own clicker and know exactly how the clicker works. See the equipment list for recommendations on the Logitech R800 and the Perfect Cue)
* Batteries dead in the microphone (Pros always carry their own AA, AAA, 9V)
* Slides that are too big or too small for the screen. (Always have 16:9, which is most common; as well as a 4:3 and make sure that you test the slides and examine each slowly during sound check to ensure that the audience can see the entire slide)
* Asking for a glass of water during your speech. (During your pre-show prep you should have positioned water on the podium)
* Text that is too small. (Follow the billboard rule: no more than 8 words per slide)
* Font that blends into the background of your slide. (Contrasting color is best, don’t get too fancy with fonts and colors. If the audience can’t read it, it doesn’t matter what is on the slide)
* Too many words on a slide. (This is the most common mistake I see speakers make: The try to put all their ideas on the slide. Then, speaker’s end up reading slides to people… this isn’t the mark of a professional speaker, I’d call that a professional reader)
* Reading to the audience. (Unless it’s a title or quote and you’re repeating it for emphasis, please don’t read to your audience)
* A video in your presentation and it does not play. (You should always test your multimedia prior to the gig. Test embedded video and audio. Set video to “Play automatically on click.” Always give the AV Team a thumb drive that has the MP4 or video file on it as a backup. There’s nothing worse than a speaker waiting for the video to play, standing there saying things like, “this is supposed to start playing now.” On the thumb drive, don’t give them a video embedded in a slide, but standalone have them open it on their computer. Open it on your primary computer and have it ready in case you have to run it from your desktop instead of in the powerpoint slide. Don’t rely on wifi to play video from youtube or vimeo. Download it and save the file to your computer. You can use sites like <https://www.clipconverter.cc/> to convert youtube videos to an MP4 you can save to your own computer.)
* Placing your laptop computer on the podium. (Get a second table next to the podium to set your laptop on. The person introducing you at that podium will inevitably knock your computer off the podium, accidentally close your ppt, or advance slides by resting their hand on the forward button while reading your introduction)
* Tripping over wires on stage because you didn't tape them down. (Pro speakers always carry their own gaff tape and tape down all trip hazards. ALSO, if the projector is run off a wall plug, check the wall connection. Many times, the extension cord is so heavy that the cord is almost coming out of the plug, leaving your connection hanging on by a string. Tape it to the wall so that it doesn’t fall out of the socket during your presentation. A projector that goes out is highly inconvenient, as you have to wait for it to cool down and warm up again. This may take up to 10 minutes)
* Showing up at a gig without the proper adapters cords for a flash drive in your pocket with the presentation loaded on it. (A pro speaker always has the VGA to HDMI connectors and multiples of them. Enough for your backup computer and your primary.)
* Not having a backup computer in case the unexpected blue screen of death appears. (Always set up your backup computer and have all your presentations open and ready. Hook up your extra adapter and your backup clicker to this laptop. You’ll thank me later.)
* Not having your business card taped to ALL your cords and adapters. (We travel so much we have no idea which hotel we left that adapter or power cord in. When you forget it you can call the hotel and it is very easy for them to find YOUR cord after the room teardown because it has your business card taped to it.)
* Not discussing the live feed camera desires with the AV team. (If you have a very specific timing to your slides or you have places in your speech where you need a zoom from the camera, you need to arrange a rehearsal and a script for the AV Team)
* Lighting that washes out your screen. (During sound check one of the most important things to check is the lighting on the screen. Many ballrooms have lighting settings that are too bright and will wash out the screen. Most hotels should have an extension handle that will easily unscrew the light bulb above your screen; that is, if they are can lights… sometimes fluorescent tube lighting directly above your screen are much harder to eliminate, as they will need a ladder to reach the high ceilings.)
* Not walking the venue. (Walk each and every move you make, up the stairs, down the stairs etc)
* Not interacting with the audience before your speech. (Build relationships with your audience before your speech starts!)