

Giving Effective Presentations

This handout will help you prepare and conduct an effective speech or presentation.

Before the presentation

Determine the type of speech delivery you are giving. The type of speech delivery influences the strategies you will use to practice the speech. The four types of speech delivery are:

Impromptu: A speech that has no advanced planning or practice.

Extemporaneous: The speaker prepares notes or an outline, with embellishment. This kind of speech allows the speaker to adapt to the audience's reaction and sounds more natural and conversational than scripted speeches.

Manuscript: Reading a scripted speech word-for-word without any memorization.

Memorized: Memorizing a scripted speech to present without having to rely on reading the script.

When thinking about how you will deliver your speech, consider:

Articulation: Find the right pace for your speech in order to retain clarity and be easily understood by your audience.

Nonverbal communication: This can include posture, eye contact, facial expressions, and movement that can be used to reinforce or modify your speech.

Effective voice: Strive for a conversational, casual voice at a volume that people at the back of the room in which you are presenting can comfortably hear.

Below are some simple steps to take in practicing for your speech or presentation:

Stand up: Gives you the chance to practice in a similar stance you will hold while presenting your speech.

Speak out loud: Similar to standing up, reciting your speech at a similar volume to how you will present in class is another effective method of practice.

Practice without looking at the text: Even if you are not required to memorize your speech or presentation, practicing without looking at your text to see if you lose your train of thought.

Make your script easy to read: If you are planning on reading your speech from your script or notecards, format the words in a way to make them easy to reference while you are presenting. Try these formatting tips:

- Use a large font (14 pt. or greater) for text and numbering your pages.
- Leave blank lines between paragraphs or sentences so you can easily find your place.
- Refrain from stapling pages together or printing double sided, which makes your pages more difficult to organize during the presentation.
- Highlight words or lines that are important to you to ensure you deliver them during the presentation.
- Copy down presenter notes on paper from any PowerPoint or presentation slides in order to refrain from staring at a screen during your presentation.

Record yourself and listen to the recording: Recording yourself provides a way for you to gain an outside perspective of your presentation. Create a list of items you want to improve upon for your next trial run and practice again.

Ask yourself questions: The next step in building confidence in presenting is to evaluate your progress in being precise. Ask yourself:

- Where did I have trouble speaking clearly and/or emphatically?
- Did I stay within my time limit?
- Do I feel the need to delete or edit anything?
- At what point did I feel the most confident?

Practice in front of an audience: Grab a friend, group member, family member and recite your speech or presentation in front of another person. This will help you bounce ideas off of someone and give you the chance to practice in front of people with whom you feel comfortable.

Try the Wonder Woman pose: It may feel funny, but some studies suggest that standing with your legs apart, hands on your hips, and chest out (much like Wonder Woman) for two minutes before a stressful event can build feelings of confidence.

During the presentation

When it comes to the day of the presentation, it is natural to experience feelings of nervousness or anxiety but remember you have practiced for this presentation and be confident in what you have accomplished. Here are some tips on how to calm nerves in the moment and manage anxiety:

Arrive prepared: Make sure you have everything you need to give the presentation. Need your computer? Make sure it's charged. Are you reading off a script or notecards? Pack them with your things the night before.

Breathing exercises: Try 4-7-8 breathing to slow down and calm the mind and body. Inhale quietly through your nose to the count of four; hold your breath to the count of seven; exhale with sound through your mouth to the count of eight.

Maintain eye-contact. This will help you stay engaged with your audience and hold their attention during the speech. The goal is to make eye contact or maintain the illusion of eye-contact with members in the audience at all times you are speaking to them. An effective strategy for maintaining eye contact is to shift your focus between different areas of the audience (room) every few seconds.

Incorporate movement. Consider incorporating movement into your presentation. Movement can help support your message, connect with the audience, and dissipate nervous energy. Some tips for incorporating body movement include:

- Moving through transitions. For instance, stand firm when delivering a point, move to a separate place as you transition to another point, and stand firm when delivering your second point).
- Stepping forward when delivering a key takeaway message.
- Walking toward the audience during a participatory part of your presentation, for instance, a Q&A session.

Engage your audience. Present in a way that is engaging through:

- Knowing your audience
- Pacing yourself
- Using a sense of humor
- Starting off strong
- Asking questions or use anecdotes to peak interest

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