

Notes on Presentation

General Guidelines:

- Know your material thoroughly.
- Put what you have to say in a logical sequence.
- Ensure your speech will be captivating to your audience.
- Know the needs of your audience and match your presentation to their needs.
- Dress appropriately for the occasion.
- Speak to the entire room.

Practice and rehearse at home or where you can be at ease and comfortable, preferably in front of a mirror, then in front of an audience: your family, friends or colleagues. Use a tape-recorder and listen to yourself. Videotape your presentation and analyze it. Know what your strong and weak points are. Emphasize your strong points during your presentation.

When you are presenting in front of an audience, you are performing. Rehearsal is essential, just as it is for actors. How you are being perceived is very important. Present the desired image to your audience. Look pleasant, enthusiastic, confident, proud, but not arrogant. Remain calm. Appear relaxed, even if you feel nervous. Speak slowly, enunciate clearly, and show appropriate emotion and feeling relating to your topic.

Body language is important. Standing, walking or moving about with appropriate hand gesture or facial expression is preferred to sitting down or standing still with head down and reading from a prepared speech. Use digital aids and hard copy props if appropriate and necessary. Do not over-design with excessive use of graphic elements, animation, sound clips, or gaudy colors which are inappropriate for your topic. Do not put too much text up on screen. Headlines and bullet points only, and use images when you can.

Speak with conviction; persuade your audience. The material you present orally should have the same ingredients as that which are required for a written research paper, i.e. a logical progression from INTRODUCTION (Thesis statement) to BODY (strong supporting arguments, accurate and up-to-date information) to CONCLUSION (re-state thesis, summary, and logical conclusion).

If you need notes, use them. Find a system that works for you. Some use cards. Some rely on the digital presentation. One of my students once used a small sketchbook, with key points written out. She'd just flip the page as she moved through her topic, and it kept her focused and direct.

Maintain sincere eye contact with your audience. Use the 3-second method, e.g. look straight into the eyes of a person in the audience for 3 seconds at a time. Have direct eye contact with a number of people in the audience, and every now and then glance at the whole audience while speaking. Use your eye contact to make everyone in your audience feel involved.

Speak to your audience, listen to their questions, respond to their reactions, adjust and adapt. If what you have prepared is obviously not getting across to your audience, change your strategy

mid-stream if you are well prepared to do so. Remember that communication is the key to a successful presentation. If you are short of time, know what can be safely left out. If you have extra time, know what could be effectively added. Always be prepared for the unexpected. Check your technology well in advance. All plays have a "tech" rehearsal before the dress rehearsal. The tech is checked, and then double-checked during the dress. Whenever possible, have backups available.

Pause. Allow yourself and your audience a little time to reflect and think. Don't race through your presentation and leave your audience, as well as yourself, feeling out of breath. Pacing is essential.

Add humor whenever appropriate and possible. Keep audience interested throughout your entire presentation. Remember that an interesting speech makes time fly, but a boring speech is always too long to endure even if the presentation time is the same.

Have handouts ready and give them out at the appropriate time. Tell audience ahead of time that you will be giving out an outline of your presentation so that they will not waste time taking unnecessary notes during your presentation.

Know when to STOP talking. Use a timer (there are many free timers in the widget shop and available for smart phones). Just as you don't use unnecessary words in your written paper, you don't bore your audience with repetitious or unnecessary words in your oral presentation. To end your presentation, summarize your main points in the same way as you normally do in the CONCLUSION of a written paper. Remember, however, that there is a difference between spoken words and written words. When done, thank your audience and take questions or sit down.