

Preparing an Oral Presentation

An oral presentation offers the opportunity to present facts or opinion, and to stimulate discussion. It can be used to inform, persuade, inspire or entertain the audience.

DETERMINE THE PURPOSE

Defining your presentation's purpose is essential to giving a good presentation. Your purpose will help you select materials and arrange your talk, showing you what is and isn't important.

ANALYZE THE AUDIENCE AND TIME LIMIT

Once you have defined the purpose of your presentation, consider the age, size, background knowledge, and interests of the audience. How much can you convey within the time limit?

PREPARE THE PRESENTATION

1. Research the topic

The more you know about your topic, the more confident you will feel when presenting. Sources of information include books, periodicals, newspapers, encyclopedias, the Internet and people.

2. Make an Outline

Three principles of a good presentation are accuracy, brevity and clarity. The outline should include: Title, Purpose, Analysis of Audience, Introduction, Body and Conclusion. Every presentation should have a beginning, middle and an end. Think of an interesting way to open your talk. Catch your audience's attention with significant facts and fresh, stimulating material in the body of the speech. Humor should be relevant and tasteful. Build to a climax and close with an effective ending. To close, consider summarizing main points, drawing conclusions, calling the audience to action, making a prediction, using a quotation or props or visual aids, telling an appropriate joke, relating an anecdote, clarifying the story, or a personal application. Avoid the error of talking after you come to a good ending. Always keep your basic outline in mind and do not omit any of the essential parts of the presentation.

3. Prepare Notes

If you are using PowerPoint, you can use the notes section to type your notes. It is important to choose a format that helps you to extract the information quickly and easily, such as large note cards with one idea on each card, or a notebook with several columns that contain progressively more detailed information from left to right. When making notes, use key phrases, not complete sentences. Provide more detail in notes where needed.

The opening and closing, statistics, quotations and anecdotes should be written out in detail. Make notes easy to read by typing or printing boldly and clearly. Rely on your notes as needed.

4. Multimedia Presentations

Software programs such as PowerPoint and other presentation aids can increase comprehension and general effectiveness, save time and improve speaker delivery. Multimedia presentations should be relevant, simple, visible and of good quality. Audiovisual material should be short and pertinent. Presentation slides should add, to the presentation, rather than distract the audience.

Presentation aids include PowerPoint, audiovisual material (videos/DVDs, films, filmstrips, slides, cassette tapes, overheads), mounted visuals (charts, graphs, tables, pictures, diagrams), chalkboards, flip charts and handouts. Always preview material and confirm bookings. Test the equipment to ensure that you know how to operate it and to make sure it is working properly. In addition, check the room you will be using to ensure that it is suitable and has proper connectivity if you are using the Internet.

PRACTICE THE PRESENTATION

Two or three run-throughs should be enough to familiarize without losing spontaneity and the interactive quality of a good presentation. Practice from the outline. Don't write out the speech or it can sound stilted. Generally avoid memorizing the entire speech or reading the presentation word for word. The presentation should sound natural and spontaneous and have an almost conversational quality. Use natural speech, short, simple sentences and contractions. Speak with enthusiasm, exhibit genuine interest in the topic, and use gestures when appropriate.

Practice the speech aloud and, ask someone to listen to you and make suggestions, or use a tape recorder. Practice your delivery techniques with attention to voice (pitch, pace, clarity, audibility), eye contact, body language, gestures and posture. Practice once in front of a mirror or film yourself to check gestures and posture. Check your timing, including the audiovisual portion of the presentation. Allow time for questions and discussion. Have a few questions prepared if the audience is initially unresponsive.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The library has many books and videos/DVDs on presentations.

To find a list of books and videos/DVDs, search for public speaking, oral communication, or business presentations in the Find Books search box.

You can also browse the library shelves using the following call number ranges: PN 4121 or P 95. A sample of our most recent books and videos are listed below:

5 Communication Secrets that Swept Obama to the Presidency (DVD) PN 4129.15 F58 2009	R
Beyond Bullet Points: Using Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2007 to Create Presentations that Inform, Motivate, and Inspire HF 5718.22 A87 2008	ONLINE BOOK
I Hate Presentations: Transform the Way You Present with a Fresh and Powerful Approach HF 5718.22 C367 2008	S
What Every Student Should Know about Preparing Effective Oral Presentations PN 4192 S78 C69 2007	S
And Death Came Third! The Definitive Guide to Networking and Speaking in Public HD 69S8 L67 2006	C
How to Write and Deliver Great Speeches: Toastmasters International Guide to Public Speaking (DVD) PN 4129.15 H69 2006	R,S
Principles of Public Speaking PN 4129.15 P75 2004	L,R,S
Conquering Stage Fright (video) PN 4121 C65 2002	L

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