

Oral Presentations

Freshman Seminar, Ellet High School

Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance!

1. **Start preparing early; don't wait until the last few days to prepare** (prepare it early, let it rest a little bit and come back to it; practice your entire presentation-including your slides; if you can practice it before a group of colleagues or friends)
2. **Think about Your Audience:** (who are they and why are they here; what are their interests; what do they know; what do they want to know; what is a worthwhile investment in their time)
3. **Be clear about your purpose:** (are you informing or persuading; tell them what you are going to do, tell them, tell them what you told them; what do you want the audience to know, feel, or believe afterwards)
4. **Use an Effective Introduction:** (orient the audience; explain why it is important; set the tone; establish a relationship between the speaker and the audience; establish credibility; avoid weak introductions such as apologies, jokes, rhetorical questions)
5. **Organize your presentation clearly and simply:** (prioritize topics and allocate time accordingly; stick to only 3-5 main points; have a well thought pattern (examples are problem/solution, chronological, cause and effect, topical); use transitions to move smoothly from one point to the next)
6. **Use supporting materials to flesh out main points** (Use examples, statistics, expert opinions, anecdotes)
7. **Compose for the Ear, not for the Eye:** use simple words, simple sentences, markers, repetition, images, personal language ("You" and "I")
8. **Create an Effective Conclusion:** summarize, set final image, provide closure; don't trail off; don't use trite phrases; don't just present data or summarized results and leave the audience to draw its own conclusions; you have had much more time to work with your information than your audience; share your insight and understanding and tell them what you've concluded from your work
9. **Sound spontaneous, conversational, enthusiastic-** (use key phrases in your notes so you don't have to read, use the overhead instead of notes; vary volume, don't be afraid of silence, don't use fillers like "um"...)
10. **Avoid reading:** (tell it to your audience, don't read it to your audience)
11. **Involve your audience:** (think of ways to have your audience participate in your speech)

12. **Practice, Practice, Practice**
13. **Maintain Eye Contact**
14. **Use Body Language Effectively:** (relaxed gestures, eye contact; don't play with a pen don't block visual aids)
15. **Use Visual Aids to Enhance the Message:** (you will probably need to use overhead transparencies in your presentation but to be effective, they must be designed and used properly; use visuals to reinforce and clarify, not overwhelm; keep visual aids uncluttered; use titles to guide the audience; if you use tapes or disks, make sure the equipment is compatible)
16. **Analyze the Environment:** (check out size of room, placement of chairs, time of day, temperature, distractions; check out AV equipment ahead of time; have a spare bulb)
17. **Dress appropriately:** (dress for the occasion; remember your appearance gives the audience their first impression)
18. **Use Gestures:** (use your hands to emphasize main points)
19. **Cope with Stage Fright by Remembering:** (it's normal; it can be helpful, everyone feels it)

Works Cited

HA Program/Political Science Department, Auburn University. *Guidelines for Oral Presentations*. <http://www.auburn.edu/~burnsma/oralpres.html>

Making Effective Oral Presentations. *A Checklist for your Presentation*.
<http://web.cba.neu.edu/~ewertheim/skills/oral.htm#concl>

University of New Castle Upon Tyne. *Communication Skills-Making Oral Presentations*.
<http://lorien.ncl.ac.uk/ming/Dept/Tips/present/comms.htm>