



# Center for Writing and Speaking

**P NO. 3 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES**

## General Tips for Improving Your Presentation

### **Outline:**

Create a speaking outline that is different than your writing outline. You will need to reorganize the information for the presentation, making sure that the audience can follow your argument. Also, do not read your speech. Most beginning (and some seasoned!) speakers are not good at reading speeches from a manuscript. Instead, sketch out an outline for the speech and talk to your audience based on that outline. For particularly complicated parts, you can read small sections. This takes practice, so give yourself plenty of time to work on practicing the presentation. In addition, note cards are great tools and are still professional if used in moderation.

### **Provide Background Information:**

Translate for your audience. Don't get wrapped up in your own paper. Think about who you are speaking to and what type of background information they do/do not need.

### **Support Material:**

Use support material to keep your audience interested. Develop your ideas with stories, examples, vivid descriptions, statistics, etc.

### **Delivery:**

Start and end with a bang. If you seem unexcited about speaking, your audience certainly won't be interested in listening to you. Have an interesting and well-practiced introduction and conclusion ready to go. Start and end with good energy, eye contact, and volume.

### **Visual Aids:**

Don't use a visual aid (PowerPoint) for shorter speeches (2-5 minutes). If it doesn't add something to the speech, there's no reason to use it. However, it may be a good idea to use visuals for longer presentations.

### **Practice:**

Practice your speech in front of someone else. They will be able to give you feedback and assure you that you are communicating effectively. The Center for Writing and Speaking staff is happy to listen to speeches.

### **Time Yourself:**

Make sure that you know the time limits/expectations for the speaking occasion and that you stick to them. Also, be aware that different people react in different ways to nervousness. Some people talk a lot more when nervous, while others speed through their presentations.

(continued on reverse)

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## **General Tips for Improving Your Presentation, Continued**

### **Speak up:**

Volume makes you appear to be more confident (even when your stomach is doing flip-flops) and can make that shaky voice go away. Don't forget to breathe—it makes all the difference.

### **Record yourself:**

Take a video or a voice recording to hear how you might sound to the audience. This will also allow you to catch any excessive vocal fillers (um, uh, like, etc.) or long pauses.

### **Dress Appropriately:**

Take note of your appearance on the day of the presentation. Think about what you are wearing (some suggest dressing one step above your audience), how you are standing, how you are using hand gestures, etc.

### **Fight Speech Anxiety:**

Deal with nervousness by being well-prepared, visualizing yourself giving a successful speech, and taking deep breaths.

**Remember, for more specific advice, visit the Center for Writing and Speaking and/or consult out other Public Speaking handouts.**

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