

Project 10.9

Oral Presentation Tips



While it can be a frightening and very nerve-wracking experience, there are a number of things you can do alleviate the fear of public speaking. By following the tips below, you will be on your way to having the tools and know-how to delivering dynamic, jaw-dropping presentations.

Oral Presentation Tips

Introductions

Be sure that you begin your presentation by introducing yourself and other members of your group, if applicable.

Practice, Practice, and More Practice

Of all the things you can do, this tip is the most important. Rehearse your presentation in solitude and in front of a “mock” audience. Keep practicing until you know your presentation like the back of your hand.

Use Visual Aids

Visuals, such as computer presentations, posters, and other props, help spread the attention around. You should look at visuals as your “silent partner.” You can turn and speak towards them during your presentation, which can give you a quick break from speaking directly to your audience.

Proofread for Grammar and Typos

Nothing spoils a presentation worse than a typo. Have several trusted people proofread your presentation for spelling and grammar prior to presenting.

Share the Stage

If you are presenting in a group, share the floor. Oftentimes, one member of the group will tend to dominate the presentation. Practice sharing equal responsibility during practice sessions.

Speak S-L-O-W-L-Y

Most inexperienced speakers tend to speak much too quickly. Remind yourself that your audience has never heard your presentation. Think and speak like a turtle, not a rabbit.

Project 10.9

Use Index Cards	Prepare notes that paraphrase and prompt you of what you want to say.
Keep Visual Content Short	If you are using a computer presentation (or any type of visual aid for that matter), keep the content clean, legible, and concise. If your audience is struggling to read what they are seeing, they will quickly lose focus on the presenter. Take the “less is more” approach when creating your visual content.
Don’t Read Slides	Rather than read your slides word-for-word, paraphrase (summarize) what the message on each slide is. It’s okay to read a few of the points to add emphasis, but avoid reading all of them.
Dress for Success	If you want your presentation to look good, then you need to look good, too. Remember, before you even begin speaking, your audience is already evaluating you. And remember, being well-groomed is also part of dressing for success.
Manage the Clock	If you have a minimum or maximum amount of time to hold the stage, be sure that you have recorded and timed your presentation. Remember that while practicing your presentation, you will tend to go much more slowly than when in front of a live audience, so be sure to subtract some time from your recorded rehearsals.
Circle the Crowd	Inexperienced speakers tend to get “head-lock,” meaning that while speaking, they fixate on only one part of the audience. By circling the crowd, you will likely have a much more captive audience, which will boost your confidence during the presentation.
Be Yourself	Don’t try to be someone you are not. Show confidence and be passionate about your topic, but don’t overdo it. Your audience will see right through you.

Project 10.9

Watch Your Body Language	Avoid slouching, fiddling your hands, and folding your arms. Each portray an "I don't really want to be here" message.
Make Eye Contact	This is a tough one for inexperienced speakers. Making eye contact with your audience says, "I am confident and well prepared." The best thing you can do to ensure you make eye contact with your audience is to practice it during rehearsal sessions. As a tip, try dividing your audience into equal thirds. Focus on looking at each third every 10-15 seconds during your presentation.
Speak Professionally and Appropriately	Use words that are audience appropriate. Using fancy, scholarly terms and phrases your audience doesn't understand will surely put them to sleep. Conversely, don't use vocabulary that is 'below' your audience's knowledge base. Avoid using slang words like "ain't" and "gonna." Speaking professionally and appropriately will keep your audience attentive.
Avoid the "Umm and Ahhs" Syndrome	Being nervous is natural, but it can be controlled. Many inexperienced speakers tend to fill pauses in their speech with "umms" and "ahhs." The best way to eliminate this is to practice. When you find yourself "umming and ahhing," develop a method, like pausing for a moment or two.
Finish Strong	Always close your presentation with a "thank you" and well thought out summary. You want your audience to be captivated from start to finish.
