

Tips for Oral Presentations: Media, Ed and Mkt

(Practice deep breathing five minutes prior to presentation to reduce nervousness.)

- Tell us your central idea at the outset.
- Organize your content into 2-4 engaging points, which you preview for us.
- Try using a “hook” of some kind at the outset: a question you will answer, a passionate quote you remember and will explicate; whatever you can imagine that works to pique interest. Test it on a friend: *does* it hook her?
- Use your hands expressively (not nervously). Find a comfortable posture and again, practice before a mirror.
- Use eye contact with the audience, as if you’re telling each of us, one by one, the “story” you are presenting. Confidently you’re leading us to a place we’ve never been, and we will love it!
- Assume a friendly reception (softens anxiety), and be personable in presenting.
- Humor helps and relaxes you as well as your audience.
- You are playing a role here, as an actor does, so you become a kind of official voice or storyteller. Mimic your ideal speaker, or the vitality and confidence of a good speaker you’ve heard. Pretend for the moment to be him/her, not yourself.
- Other speaking goals should include: animation in your delivery; varying tone, volume and emphasis for certain points or turns in your story/argument.
- Pause (take a breath) for important ideas you want your audience to pay special attention to, hear clearly or think about. Silence can be effective punctuation.
- Don’t be afraid of repetition or of unfilled silence. Pausing for emphasis can increase your power as a speaker. A nice pause after making a point or asking a rhetorical question intensifies drama and impact.
- Make a comic aside if appropriate. Add a personal note to drive home a point.
- Use a prop or visual to help to clarify ideas – and they definitely will, if you use them well. Words alone are not enough these days. A strong visual to clarify an important idea could be the one thing an audience takes away from your talk. Practice using your visuals (images, graphs, maps, powerpoints) comfortably. If you are nervous with them, it will be distracting and can siphon off your power. Consider using the blackboard if nothing else.
- Don’t rush; let us think about what you are saying. Comfortable pacing is critical for letting an audience have silent dialog with you. Another reason to rehearse aloud with a real audience in advance!
- Practice aloud with a couple of friends to sharpen and organize your content. Ask for their feedback, and don’t be afraid of their criticism. The more honest they are, the better you will become at this. Practice is critical -- few are “naturals.”
- Be concise and organized. Your main goal is stimulating interest in your evolving argument, through a few main ideas and clear descriptive detail. Do not try to cover too much territory. Usually students run out of time, which shows how little they practiced!
- Plan your conclusion and sum up your ideas with a smile.
- Wait for questions and maintain a calm, graceful stage presence. You’ll improve these skills with practice—like doing scales, gaming, driving, whatever.