

Oral Presentations

Analyzing audience

Who is the audience for your presentation? Clients? Senior management in the organization?

Are they technically proficient?

What are the needs and preferences of this audience?

Determining purpose

What is the purpose of the presentation?

Are you informing the audience about some facts?

Are you analyzing information to reach a conclusion?

Are you persuading the audience to accept your recommendations?

Gathering and selecting information

Audience profile and purpose will determine the nature and scope of information that should be included in the presentation

What kinds of information should you include?

How much information should you include?

Organizing the Content

Organize the information logically

The dynamics of an oral presentation are different from those of a written presentation

There is no need to talk about everything included in the written report

Alter the structure of the oral presentation

Get to the essence of the subject

Focus on the main points of interest

Get the audience involved

Dwell on the unique aspects of the topic

Introduction

The introduction will make a tremendous impact on the audience

The introduction should establish your credibility, and arouse the interest of the audience

You can begin with a story, anecdote, a current event, or sometimes even a joke

The choice of an opening will depend on the context and the subject of the presentation

Remember your opening should still sound professional

Avoid flippant remarks, jokes, etc. Exercise good judgment

The opening should quickly lead to the subject of the presentation

The opening should include a brief overview of the entire presentation

Establish the transition to the next part of the presentation - the body

Body

Do not overload the audience with too much information

They will get distracted, lose focus, and ultimately get thoroughly bored

Select 3 or 4 main topics (points)

Presentation should have substance

So, exercise good judgment in selecting the topics

Develop each topic (point) with a few details and explanations

Transitions

Make sure you establish the transitions between the topics (points)

This is not a written report

Listeners do not have the luxury of flipping pages

It is important that you create the verbal links as you go along

Don't overdo the 'transitions'

Some examples of transitions:

(i) Now that I have reviewed the facts of the case, I will describe the main accounting issue that the company needs to resolve...

(ii) Let me first describe the three major symptoms of this problem...

(iii) To summarize, the major issues are...

(iv) In the next part of the presentation, my colleague will describe the major factors that led to the reorganization.....

Summary/Conclusion

An oral report needs some sort of closure like written reports
Repeat your main ideas so that your audience can remember them

The three steps to an effective presentation:

Step 1: Tell them what you are going to say

Step 2: Say it

Step 3: Tell them what you have just said

Delivery

Eye contact; speaking v. reading

Make sure that you maintain eye contact with your audience

Find a friendly face and establish eye contact

Audience can distinguish between looking at them v. looking through them or past them

Do not stare at anyone; do not look out the window

Do not look at the ceiling or the walls

You have to talk to the audience; connect with the audience

Make sure you SPEAK, not read to the audience

Reading to an audience is boring and ineffective

Write the main ideas on note cards (in the form of phrases, not in the form of complete paragraphs)

If you have to refer to your notes, do so while you are pausing

Looking at notecards is acceptable - not for long, not very often

Get familiar with the subject; this will enhance your confidence

Do not memorize the entire presentation

The presentation should sound natural

Posture and Gestures

Stand straight; don't slouch; don't move from side to side

Avoid wrinkles on the forehead; have an open face

If you smile or laugh, make sure there is a good reason

Think about where you are going to keep your hands? Casually at the side? Yes

For holding note cards? Yes

In the pockets? Not always!

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Make sure that your hands don't shake

Think about the gestures

Some gestures enhance the presentation; others distract the audience

Voice

Make sure that you are not too feeble or too loud

Be sensitive to the acoustics of the room

Don't talk too fast; listeners will lose focus

Don't sound monotonous; vary the pitch and intonation

Eliminate the fillers - the 'ahm's, 'eh's, ...

Using Visual Aids

Power Point

Make sure that the presentation slides work

Create a set of slides (a few days before the presentation)

Check them out on the computer in the class room

Pay attention to the background colors

Some of these colors make the visual aids hard to read

Transparencies

Do not present too much information in an overhead

Include 3 or 4 main points

Make sure that the font size is appropriate

Do not block the audience's view of the visual aid

When you use a visual aid, pause for a few seconds so the audience can catch up

Then, begin your explanations

To make an effective presentation - The Magic Formula

1. Prepare, prepare, prepare - Content, Organization, Visual Aids
2. Rehearse individually and as a group
3. Get yourself videotaped; observe your delivery - voice, eye contact, posture, gestures, fillers, and use of visual aids
4. Time yourself as a group; there should be time for questions from the audience
5. Practice proper deep breathing techniques; they enable you to relax

Criteria for evaluating oral presentations

Content

- Is the information relevant?
- Is the information accurate?
- Is the information adequate?

Organization

- Is the presentation well organized?
- Does the presentation contain appropriate transitions to ensure continuity?
- Is the presentation easy to follow and understand?

Visual Aids

- Are the visual aids relevant, adequate, and accurate?
- Are the visual aids appealing?
- Are the visual aids easy to read?

Delivery

- Does voice (volume, pitch, tone) enhance effectiveness?
- Does the presenter speak? (or read?)
- Does the presenter maintain good eye contact with all sections of the audience?
- Does the presenter appear comfortable before the audience?
- Does the presenter sound natural? (or memorized?)
- Do posture and gestures enhance effectiveness? (or are they distracting?)
- Does the presentation contain fillers (eh, um, ahm...)?
- Does the presentation sound professional?