

Individual Oral Presentation

Public Speaking Tips

1. Be completely prepared. The more prepared you are, the less nervous you will be.
 - Do NOT, under any circumstances, try to memorize your presentation. Spouting out a memorized speech is not only boring to your listeners, but is also extremely stressful for you. With a memorized speech, you run the risk of forgetting what you were going to say and having an awful, embarrassing moment where you can't remember what you've already said or what you were getting ready to say. Take my word for it: Just don't try to memorize your presentation.
 - Make notes for yourself. Note cards work great for these kinds of notes, because they're stiff enough so that they won't wobble in your hand if you're a little nervous. Avoid writing complete sentences on your note cards, simply because if a sentence is there, you're likely to read it. Instead, write key words or phrases that will remind you of the topic and main points you want to talk about.
 - Practice your presentation OUT LOUD, IN FRONT OF A MIRROR, AT LEAST three times before you come into class. The more you practice, the less nervous you will be. Make sure you practice out loud, standing up, using your notes. Also, time yourself while you practice, and remember that you're aiming for a presentation between 10 and 15 minutes. If you know you talk faster when you're nervous, make sure to get your presentation over the 10 minute minimum during practice.
 - Imagine yourself successfully presenting your oral presentation. I know it sounds korny, but hey, it's worth a shot, right?
2. Dress appropriately. Wear loose but appropriate clothes that won't wobble, shake, or jingle if you get nervous. Don't wear clothing that is loose enough to actually fall off your body. Don't wear a pair of pants that you know the zipper falls down on. Don't wear a button-up shirt with a button that seems to pop open for no reason. Don't wear shoes that make you trip or fall down. If you look confident and well put-together, you'll feel confident and well put-together.
3. Get rid of your chewing gum. Nothing is worse than having to watch someone talk around his or her gum.
4. Don't lean, slouch, or fidget. Stand straight and tall and make good eye contact. Look at everyone in the room at least once. If you find the idea of looking into everyone's eyes daunting, try looking at their foreheads instead. Feel free to move comfortably around the room and use natural hand gestures. Don't stand in front of us nervously tapping your feet, shaking your leg, chewing on your hair, or doing anything else that will make your audience think you're a goof. Remember, you're trying to convince us that you're intelligent, so present yourself convincingly.
5. Put this assignment into perspective. This is something everyone in this class HAS to do. It isn't something anyone really, truly WANTS to do. It's a few minutes of your life, not a few years. It will not kill you. I've taught this type of presentation more times than I can count and I've never seen people throw up, lose their pants, urinate, defecate, drool, or die from doing oral presentations. Neither will you.

6. Use the correct “linguistic register.” “Register” refers to your correct and appropriate use of vocabulary (including literary terms), tone, sentence structure and idiom (where appropriate). Use a formal register that appropriately represents your intelligence and correctly conveys your point.
7. Understand that when I grade your presentation skills, I am thinking about the following:
 - Did you seem prepared when presenting your oral presentation?
 - Did you seem educated and intelligent about your work?
 - Did you look around the room and try to make eye contact with everyone in the room?
 - Did you do anything I’ve listed above NOT to do (fidget, slouch, lean, chew gum, wear inappropriate clothing, etc.)?
 - Was your linguistic register appropriate and intelligent?
8. Not feeling super-confident? Fake it. Here’s how:
 - Modify your voice – try to keep your voice at a nice, low, even pitch.
 - Modify your pace – you will appear intimidated and frightened if you rush through your speech.
 - Get comfortable in your body – take some deep breaths, loosen your lungs, lower your shoulders, relax your knees, stand up straight and suck in your tummy (even if you don’t have one). Just generally acknowledge all the little areas in your body that hold tension, and make a conscious effort to relax them.
 - Make natural and comfortable gestures with your hands – this is a great way to keep your lungs relaxed. Moving your arms slightly up and out forces you to relax your middle back and shoulders, which in turn makes it easier to breathe (always a good thing!).
 - Don’t lock yourself behind a podium, table, or chair. It’s OK to stand behind the podium – just don’t grip onto it like your life depends on it! You will look defensive and intimidated if you try to “hide” behind something. Your audience deserves to see all of you; stand before them with no fear!

Being a good audience member is also crucial!

- As an audience member: be sympathetic, supportive, and polite to anyone giving a presentation. In other words, treat the speaker like you want to be treated when you’re the speaker. Make eye contact with the speaker and respond appropriately. Be thinking, as you listen, of any questions that you may want to ask.
- DO NOT do any work while others are presenting. While others are presenting, you should be dedicated to listening and following along.