

DELIVERING AN EFFECTIVE ORAL PRESENTATION

Delivering an oral presentation involves using **key qualities effectively** and developing appropriate **delivery strategies**.

KEY QUALITIES

Maintain Good Eye Contact

- Look at each person in the room at least once
- Don't stare or focus too long on one person
- Don't look exclusively at the professor
- Look down at your notes quickly to remind you of where you are, but **DO NOT** read your notes!

Use your Voice Effectively

- Be conscious of speaking a bit louder than you normally do: the larger the room the louder the voice (unless you have a microphone)
- Practice projecting your voice—be conscious of pushing the sound out from your diaphragm rather than from the back of your throat
- Vary your pace but, as a rule, speak slower rather than faster
- Pause briefly before complex, unusual or very important words
- Modulate your voice to add interest and expression—don't give a monotone delivery
- Speak clearly and limit your use of fillers (“umm”, “ahh”, “you know”, etc.)

Convey Enthusiasm

- Remember your purpose; remember who you are speaking to; remember that you want to share this information with them
- If you convince yourself that what you have to say is interesting, others will believe it is, too
- Give your voice an extra push, extra pep—this will help you to sound enthusiastic

Use Gestures Naturally

- Use gestures to emphasize and draw attention to key points
- Rehearse the gestures so that they feel natural—if they look forced they don't work as well
- Use the ten per cent rule—if you use a lot of gestures when you speak, use 10% less; if you use few, use 10% more
- Avoid useless gestures that detract from your speech—fiddling with pen, tucking hair behind ears, playing with jewelry, etc.

Attend to your Stance

- Stand up straight—this gives you a more controlled appearance and enables you to project your voice better
- Stand squarely on two feet—don't shift weight from foot to foot or stand on one leg
- If you have a podium, avoid leaning on it or clutching it
- Adjust the microphone before you start so that it is at a natural height for you so that you avoid slouching or straining towards it

Watch your Body Language

- **Arms:** don't fold in front of you (aggressive); don't place hands in pockets (too casual); don't place behind back (looks and feels awkward). A good guideline is to clasp hands loosely together in front of you.
- **Expression:** smile—people will like you more and listen better!
- **Movement:** if you want to move or pace, do (within reason); if you prefer to be completely still, do that—different things work for different people

STRATEGIES TO HELP WITH DELIVERY

Practice

- Never try to “wing” it!
- Be very familiar with the content and organization of your presentation
- “Live” the presentation for a day or two before: run it through your mind as you go about your daily life
- Rehearse—go through the material out loud, several times, but don't try to memorize it (IT WILL SOUND AS IF YOU ARE READING IT)
- Practice in front of others or alone; video/audiotape yourself, watch, listen and improve
- Be totally familiar with your introduction
- Focus on communicating ideas, not learning exact words and phrases
- Speak to them, not at them

Use Nervousness Positively

- Channel your adrenaline—use it to create and sustain enthusiasm
- Remember that you will appear much more confident than you might feel

Attend to your Appearance

- Dress to be comfortable and appropriately professional.
- Take a private moment to check clothing, etc., before you go on stage.

USE EFFECTIVE BEGINNING AND ENDING TECHNIQUES

- Approach the podium with confidence
- Pause before you begin—this gives the audience a chance to calm down, gives you a chance to take a moment to clear your head
- Take a breath, look at the audience, and begin
- Conclude in a definite way—don't leave any doubt that you have finished your speech, then ask for questions from the audience (if that is the format you are following)

Dealing with Difficulties

- Don't draw attention to your mistakes
- Practice difficult words several times out loud beforehand
- Use positive self-talk
- If public speaking truly scares you, work on relaxation and visualization techniques with a counsellor