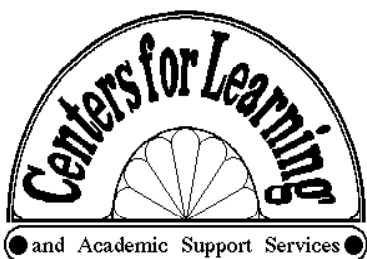


Oral Presentations



Presented by The Advising Center
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ORAL PRESENTATIONS

As a college student, you may encounter certain courses or instructors that will require oral presentations. Here are some basic tips to get you started.

The main elements in oral presentations are:

Preparation

- Evaluating time
- Selecting a topic
- Collecting your data
- Organizing/wording your speech
- Formatting/Mechanics
- Documenting

Rehearsal

- Practice
- Practice
- Practice

Delivery

- Reducing anxiety
- "Must have" Techniques
- Techniques to avoid

Reflection

- Self and classmate evaluation
- Review

PREPARATION

Evaluating Time

The issue of time is two-fold when dealing with an oral presentation: first, how much time will you have to prepare for it and second, how much time will you have to actually present.



* **Time before Presentation**

Your instructor will give you a date to present and the first thing you will want to do is create a time line. Begin right away. An oral presentation cannot be effective if you try to prepare it the night before. Divide your work up into smaller tasks and allot a time frame to complete each task. Overestimate your time schedule so as to avoid the possibility of running out of time. And finally, stick to it—do what you scheduled to do—otherwise, it defeats the purpose of creating a time schedule. Also, you'll feel much better in the long run.

Sample time line to prepare

Select topic	2 days
Collect data	7 days
Create an outline	2 days
Write rough draft of speech	5 days
Revise/edit/proofread	2 days
Develop references (index cards or final draft)	2 days
Rehearse	<u>5 days</u>
Total time	25 days

Estimate 4 weeks until presentation

Notice how the total is only 25 days and the presentation is in 4 weeks. This allows room to fluctuate—you may run into a snag with some of your researching and find you need more time to revise. Remember, this is only a sample. Create what works best for you.

* **Time during Presentation**

Be aware of how much time you have been allotted to speak. Develop a rough outline for how much time each part of your presentation will take. Once you get into the rehearsal stage you can time yourself to see if you have to adjust any of the segments.

Sample time line to present 20-minute presentation

Introduction	2 minutes
Main content of topic	8 minutes
Video (supplementary)	2 minutes
Conclusion	3 minutes
Question & answer period	<u>5 minutes</u>
Total time	20 minutes

Selecting a Topic

* **Assigned Topic**

Occasionally, your instructor will give you a topic on which to base your presentation. In this case, some of the work has already been done; however, your job will be to try to find the most effective and interesting way to present the information to your classmates.

* **Choosing a Topic**

If you are not sure what you would like to present, begin by making a list of things that interest you. You can use techniques such as brainstorming, freewriting, and mindmapping to help generate ideas and get those creative juices flowing. Don't pick a topic just because it seems easy; typically, you will give a much better presentation if you are genuinely interested in the topic.



* Try to **narrow your topic** by asking yourself some questions about the ideas you have generated:

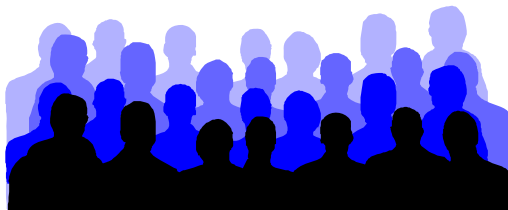


- * What do I know about the subject?
- * Is it too broad/narrow?
- * Is there enough research material?
- * Can it be presented in the time allotted by my professor?
- * Can I prepare it adequately in the time frame given?

Make sure the topic you pick is relevant to the course and has been approved by your instructor.

* **Know your Audience**

While you are deciding on a topic, you must keep your audience (classmates and instructor) in mind. There will be times when your audience has just as much if not more knowledge on your subject than you do. When this is the case, your job is to present the information in a different and interesting way.



There will be other times when the audience will have little or no knowledge of the topic, so your main focus will be to inform while at the same time keep it interesting.

Collecting Your Data

* **Resources**

Don't feel restricted to using hard bound books from your library to find your information. There are several places right here on campus or close by that you can turn to for the best assistance, information, and guidance.

- * your **professor**—may point you in a straight line to the best place to find appropriate information so you won't be zig-zagging through useless material
- * your **classmates**—research, refine ideas, and discuss approaches with fellow students
- * **others**—you may want to interview an expert in the subject area of your research
- * the **library**—a variety of research resources exist at your fingertips: books, encyclopedias, periodicals, microfilm and microfiche, computers, etc.
- * Public Access Catalog (PAC)—look up materials by subject, author, or title
 - * Internet—World Wide Web Search—access information nationwide
 - "Quick guide to Electronic Library Resources"—everything that is available right here at UMass Lowell.
 - * Media Center—view videos or make videos

- * The Centers for Learning and Academic Support Services (**CLASS**)
 - * Writing tutors are available (no, they are not editors)
 - * Computer Labs—type your paper or research over the Internet—lab assistants are available.



Organizing/Wording Your Speech

A basic rule of thumb in preparing your speech is, "tell them (your audience) what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them." This may sound a bit confusing, but it simply means to organize your speech the same as you would a paper, divided into three main parts—an **introduction**, the **main body**, and the **conclusion**.



* **Introduction** —Tell them what you are going to tell them.

* Remember, your introduction should contain your **thesis** (the main idea of your speech and how you will develop it).

* A good introduction has three goals: to win attention, to gain good will and respect, and to pave the way for the body of your presentation.

If you are stuck on your opening, try one or more of the following devices:

- * **a simple reference to the subject or problem** — state your topic and then plunge right into your first main point
- * **a reference to the occasion** - refer to the occasion which prompted the presentation
- * **a personal greeting or reference** — a personal word that is cordial, sincere, and modest, but not apologetic
- * **a rhetorical question** — a question which prompts the audience to seek an answer in their own minds
- * **a startling statement of fact or opinion**— jar the audience into attention using unusual phrasing
- * **a quotation** — cite a quotation which aptly states the theme to be developed
- * **a humorous anecdote** — tell a funny story or relate a humorous experience—be sure you tell it well and that it emphasizes the central point
- * **an illustration** — real-life incident, story taken from literature, and/or hypothetical narrative—be sure it is interesting in itself and is closely connected with the central idea

Taken from Principles and Types of Speech, by Alan H. Monroe & Douglas Ehninger

* **Main Body** —Tell them.

The main body of your presentation is where you develop your speech in a logical, organized fashion, much like the written paper. Transitions are important to signal your audience when you will be changing points. In long speeches, recap from time to time and preview what is to come (this should be done effectively—don't just repeat yourself). Use facts, descriptions, expert opinions, statistics, and other concrete details—vague generalizations are boring and ineffective.

* **Conclusion** — Tell them what you told them.

The end of a presentation should convey to the audience a sense of completeness or finality — let listeners know it's the end.

Some effective methods to end a presentation are:

- * **challenge or appeal** — whatever your topic, remind listeners of their responsibilities in taking what you've presented beyond the classroom

- * **summarize** — review main points
- * **quotation** — cite a quotation if it directly reflects the central idea or strongly suggests the attitude or action you, as a speaker, wish listeners to take
- * **illustration** — real-life incident, story taken from literature, and/or hypothetical narrative—be sure it is interesting in itself and is closely connected with the central idea
- * **inducement** — quickly review the most important ideas then supply *additional* reasons for accepting the belief of taking the action proposed
- * **personal intention** — state personal feelings or intentions to act on what your speech represents

Taken from Principles and Types of Speech by Alan H. Monroe & Douglas Ehninger

Formatting/Mechanics

* **Verbal/Visual Combination**

- * Use props such as overheads, charts, videos etc., because a percentage of people rely on verbal processing only.
- * Visuals add variety and help make the presentation more interesting.

* **Vocabulary**

- * Use words your audience knows.
- * Never use a larger word when a smaller one will do (George Orwell).
- * Remove clutter—any slang terms or cliches or any unnecessary repetitions.
- * Remember the three Cs: clarity, coherence, conciseness.

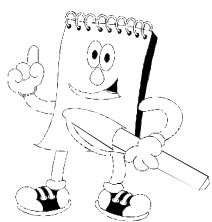
* **Complexity of Instructions**

- * Avoid compound, complex sentences because your audience may get lost.
- * Simple is better.

* **Rhetorical Devices**

- * Use parallel structure.
- * Know when to use repetition—some is meaningful; a lot is ineffective.

Documentation



Don't forget to give credit where credit is due. Just because you are not handing in your presentation doesn't mean you don't have to cite your sources. (Keep in mind too, that some instructors may ask for a hard copy of your presentation to be passed in for reference.)

Remember: Paraphrasing, using someone else's ideas but changing the wording, still requires citing your source.

Do I read my speech word-for-word?

Do **not** read your paper word-for-word because then you are isolating yourself from your audience. A presentation is an interactive process.

You may want to try one of the following. Practice will prove which works best for you.

- * Some people need their speech organized exactly like a paper and use the paper as a guide.
- * Some use 3x5 index cards with brief notes on the main points of the speech. It is important to number the cards so that if you drop them, they can be easily reassembled. Write the information clearly and large enough to be seen from a distance.
- * Others use an outline of their speech to follow.
- * If you can do it, you may want to memorize your speech.

REHEARSAL

Practice

* What do you mean by "Practice"?

Practicing your speech is a crucial aspect of the overall presentation process. Not everyone feels at ease when speaking in front of a group of people. By practicing your speech aloud, you have a better indicator of whether public speaking comes naturally to you or if it is difficult. Many people are turned off by practice because some *feel embarrassed to talk aloud to themselves*. However, this is the only true test to see how you will do, without putting yourself on the spot during the day of the presentation.

Practice

* Why should I rehearse?

- * To look and feel more comfortable.
- * To stay on track and finish on time.
- * To make it easier for you to anticipate and answer questions.
- * To relieve you of having to rely heavily on your notes.
- * To gain enough familiarity so that the right words come out effortlessly and naturally.
- * Because rehearsal may show some gaps in your information or holes in your logic.



Practice

* How should I practice?

Everyone is different, so try a couple of the following techniques and find what works best for you.

- * Practice in a loud voice.
- * Record yourself on tape or camcorder and play it back.
- * Listen for repeated phrases like "you know."
- * Look for distracting body language.
- * Practice in front of an audience, a friend or group of friends.
- * Don't deliver your speech word for word.

DELIVERY

Reducing Anxiety

A lot of what you do *before* delivery affects delivery, so here are some things you can do to help your presentation be as good as it should be.



- * Take care of yourself—eat right, get enough sleep, and exercise.
- * Try relaxation techniques—take deep breaths, meditate, and/or visualize success.
- * Detach yourself—let go of ideas that will only get you into trouble such as "I can't screw up, this has to be perfect."
- * Praise yourself—"I can do it," "This is easy."

* Practice—the more you practice the more confident and less anxious you will feel when it comes down to the real thing.

* Focus on the audience not yourself—you are prepared for their questions; this presentation will interest them, and they want you to do well, really!

REFLECTION

Self and Classmate Evaluation

Help improve your next presentation - get feedback from your classmates and instructor through casual conversation or, even more helpful, by preparing and collecting anonymous evaluation forms.

Review

Ask yourself questions:

- * Did I finish on time?
- * Did I cover everything?
- * Did I feel my presentation was effective? If not, why?

