

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS!

While there are many ways to present information to a group, a handful of general principles underlie most successful teaching presentations. Watch your own teachers carefully, observing strategies that allow them to achieve their goals during class meetings.

As you hone your presentation, consider these bits of general advice:

- At the start of a presentation, it makes good sense to explain what you hope to impart, and how you intend to impart it. In other words, announce both your goals and your agenda. By doing so, you'll prepare your audience to recognize both the direction in which you are headed and your progress toward your destination. Indicating to your audience that you know how the presentation will end raises your *ethos*. In addition, you can never go wrong with an intelligent audience by telling it WHY you intend to do what you are about to do.
- The most common general pattern of effective oral presentations is to
 1. [at the beginning] Say what you're going to say
 2. [throughout] Say it
 3. [at the end] Say what you've said againThis pattern creates opportunities for reinforcement throughout the presentation.
- Always remember the knowledge gap that lies between you and your audience. While you have made yourself an expert on your topic, most of your audience will be encountering the material for the first time, so you'll need to be clear, careful, and patient throughout. You'll also need to work slowly, slowing down even further when presenting very complex ideas.
- Reveal your enthusiasm for your material. If you are not enthusiastic about your material, you should try to be. If you do not appear to be both confident and interested in your presentation, your audience will be less likely to respond favorably.
- Keep in mind that your audience contains many kinds of learners. The best presentations will offer the same material in many different forms. At the very minimum, try to put forward key information both visually and orally. In addition, repeat key points multiple times to increase reinforcement.
- Explore opportunities for demonstrating your creativity. Audiences love a little novelty, and will therefore allot you greater attention if you can present elements that they have not seen in similar presentation.
- As you move from one point to the next, provide clear transitions that summarize the previous point and indicate the arrival of the next point. Ask if there are questions before moving to a new idea, and then pause long enough to let people think. Well-developed oral transitions are even more critical than effective written transitions. One good pattern is
summary of previous point/activity → ask for questions → pause → introduce new idea/activity.
- Make sure your visual or other ancillary aids supplement your words and do not distract your audience from what you are saying.
- At the end of your presentation, summarize very carefully. One major difference between an oral presentation and a written essay is that your auditory audience cannot flip back to earlier moments to review. As a result, you may need to provide a better-developed, more recapitulative conclusion than a short essay would require.
- Always leave time at the end for questions and answers. Complimenting those who ask good questions helps to reveal your confidence, thus raising your *ethos*. When answering questions, actually answer the question. It's always OK to say you don't know when you don't know, but an even better strategy is to turn a question back to the audience to see what it might be able to contribute.
- If you're offering a lecture, practice many times, in front of a live audience whenever possible, before offering your presentation where it counts. Narrow or extend the scope of your presentation, if necessary.