

# Oral Presentations

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## Step 1: Understand your assignment.

- Read your assignment and ask your instructor if you have questions on what is required.
  - Who is your audience? What is your purpose? Let this guide your topic, tone and style.
  - How long is the speech? Are you using presentation software such as PowerPoint, or do you need visuals or props? How many sources are required?

## Step 2: Select and focus your topic. Begin preliminary research.

- Brainstorm topics until you find one that truly interests you.
- Do some preliminary searching on the Internet or in the Libraries to find material that can serve as background and evidence for your ideas.

## Step 3: Begin to organize or outline your speech.

- Group your remarks and evidence to create an informal outline. It may be useful to include:
  - An introduction (including purpose and overview)
  - Content or body
  - Conclusion
- Begin crafting a strong title, opening and key sentences.

## Step 4: Draft any visuals. Gather additional research.

- Select the types of evidence to support your ideas including quotes, statistics, and facts
  - Gather your evidence from credible sources and include the source in your speech--this will make your speech more authoritative.
  - Draft PowerPoint or visual materials. Gather images, videos, or other media if needed.
  - Draft any handouts or bibliography, if needed.

## Step 5: Write out your talking points

- Start with your most important points.
  - What is the "take home message" you want your audience to understand, believe, accept or do after they hear your speech? Write this out in one or two sentences. What evidence supports your "take home message?"
- Draft transitions between your thoughts. Include attention-getting ideas:
  - Novelty: an unusual fact or surprising image
  - Conflict: an opposing viewpoints on the issue
  - Humor: an amusing play on words or exaggerated remark
  - Suspense: such as asking a provocative question
- Determine how you are going to organize your thoughts as you speak.
  - Index cards (be sure to number cards)
  - An outline
  - Presentation slides

### **Step 6: Plan out the timing of your speech.**

- Add timing to your talking points.
- Revise your talking points, PowerPoint slides and transitions.
- Delete talking points and/or PowerPoint slides that are not crucial. Pairing down or eliminating content will enhance clarity and improve the speech overall.

### **Step 7: Rehearse your speech for content and timing.**

- Be aware of your body position, foot placement, breath and eye movement.
- Videotape or record a rehearsal to identify problems, distracting habits, etc.
  - Avoid reading every word--you should be presenting not reading.
  - Avoid common verbal habits such as "um", "like", "you know", "kinda", etc.
- Practice your speech many times until you feel comfortable with the content and timing.
- Review the scoring or evaluation guide to be sure you are meeting the requirements of the assignment.

### **Step 8: Rehearse your speech in front of an audience.**

- Gather a few friends or classmates and deliver your speech.
  - Try to avoid the following common behaviors: fidgeting, looking at the computer or screen and not at the audience, rustling your papers, gesturing too much, or pacing.
  - Ask for feedback on your delivery (such as eye contact, hand gestures, speech habits, etc.) and content
  - Ask what they identified as the most important points. Do these match yours?
- Edit or revise the speech based on the feedback.

### **Step 9: Continue revising. Prepare for any anticipated questions.**

- If your speech includes a question and answer session with your audience, spend some time to anticipate questions and briefly plan answers.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question when you are presenting.

### **Step 10: Continue to rehearse. Get ready to give speech.**

- Make sure you have all your materials together including note cards, outlines, visuals, handouts, bibliography, PowerPoint on Flash drive, etc.
- Be aware you may have feelings of anxiety. This is very common and a few strategies that may help including:
  - Arrive early
  - Practice on the day of your speech so you are comfortable with the content.