**Tips for Conducting an Oral Presentation**

Preparation and practice will improve the quality and success of your oral presentation. This list of guidelines is intended to help you create and deliver an effective oral presentation. Remember if you are nervous you are not alone.

In order to prepare an oral presentation that is effective please consider the following critical elements and key questions.

# Planning

**Be Clear About Your Purpose:** It is critical to be clear about your purpose in the communication.

* Are you informing or persuading?
* Focus on getting one to three key points across
* Repeat key points: Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you told them
* What do you want the audience to know, feel, or believe afterwards? What is the “take home message”?

**Think About Your Audience:** Tailor your message to the audience.

* + Who are they?
  + What are their interests, knowledge levels, and attitudes toward your topic?
  + The audience needs the answers to questions such as:
    - Why should I care about this issue?
    - I agree with the significance of the topic, but how are you justifying your ideas?

# Use an Effective Introduction: Your introduction sets the stage for your presentation.

* + Orient the audience, explain why it is important, and set the tone
  + Establish a relationship between the speaker and the audience and establish credibility
  + Avoid weak introductions such as apologies, jokes, and rhetorical questions

**Keep it Simple:** It is important that you organize your presentation clearly and simply.

* + Prioritize topics and allocate time accordingly
  + Stick to a few main points
  + Have a well thought pattern (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, problem/solution);
  + Use transitions to move smoothly from one point to the next
  + Use examples, anecdotes, graphics, images, & statistics to illustrate main points & to maintain your audience’s interest
  + Use simple sentences and language because listeners have only one chance to hear your talk

# Create an Effective Conclusion: Your conclusion cements your presentation in the audience’s minds.

* + Summarize and set final image
  + Do not trail off
  + Do not just present data and leave the audience to draw its own conclusions
  + Share your insights and tell them what you’ve concluded from your work

**Be Prepared Early:** The earlier you are done with the creation of your presentation the better.

* + Prepare early and practice often
  + Practice from start to finish to ensure your presentation meets the time requirements
  + Practice with friends and peers
  + Check available equipment to ensure compatibility (e.g. flash drive, computer, speakers, projector, dry erase markers)
  + Be prepared to answer questions
    - What will you do with your research in the future?
    - What made you think of this research?
    - How can your research be applied to the real world?
    - Has your research changed your opinion on the subject you’re studying?

**Have a Backup Plan:** Be prepared to adapt your presentation in the event that technology fails.

* Have a hard copy of your presentation
* Save your presentation in multiple formats and in multiple places (e.g. flash drive, e-mail, cloud based storage, Google Docs)
* If your presentation utilizes handouts, be sure to print at least 40 handouts

# Delivery

**Presentation Style:** It is important to remember that *how* you present is as important as what you present.

* + Be yourself, relax, and practice some deep breathing techniques
  + Sound conversational and enthusiastic
  + Use key phrases in your notes so you do not have to read them
  + Vary volume
  + Don’t be afraid of some silence and do not use fillers such as “um”
  + Nervousness is usually invisible, most people will not notice small changes in your voice or occasional mistakes
  + Use body language effectively (e.g., establish frequent eye contact with the audience)
  + Concentrate on the message
  + Begin with a slow, well-prepared introduction and have a confident and clear conclusion
  + Don’t read your slides
  + Practice, practice, practice