Oral presentations assignment

Oral Presentations Speech is one of the three fundamental communication modes. The ability to communicate through effective speaking is as important to language skill development as is the ability to write effectively. Competent, effective speaking is perhaps one of the best money-making skills a person can acquire. Such skills are important whether we are involved in casual conversation, explaining how to operate a machine to a fellow student, presenting a paper to a group of colleagues in a technical meeting, or attempting to convince your employer that you are grossly underpaid.

Organization An oral presentation consists of three main parts: the introduction, body, and conclusion. The Introduction An introduction is a must. It " sets the scene" and engages the audience by motivating them to listen by relating the topic to their interests. The simplest introduction— merely letting the audience know who you are and what your presentation is going to be about—is inadequate for most audiences, topics, and assignments. Although a well-crafted introduction should be " succinct, " it should provide the audience with several pieces of information: • • • • • • •

Who you are and an accurate pronunciation of your name; Your qualifications to speak about the subject; The type of presentation (informational, instructional, problem-solving, etc.); Background information as needed; Your thesis; A preview of the the main ideas to be covered in the body; The procedure(s) to be followed during the presentation. The purpose of an introduction is to quickly build rapport with your audience and gain their attention. You want the audience to be able to easily follow your thought

process as you lead them into the body of the presentation. The Body The main part of the presentation is the body.

The body must expound, explain, support, and defend the thesis revealed in the introduction. All main points must be covered. Use examples and illustrations for statements that are difficult for the audience to understand. Graphic illustrations and other visual aids not only help to clarify your message, but also add color and credibility. The Conclusion The presentation should conclude with a well-planned ending. The following four points should be considered as you plan your ending. • • • • Summary: A clear summary of your purpose and main points will insure that the audience gets the big picture.

It should answer the question, " So what? ", telling the audience what was important about the information you conveyed. Use the same key words used in the body and make a fresh, brief, and concise re-statement of your case. This helps to drive your main points home and insures that your listeners have a clear understanding of your intentions. Emotional Response: If your speech is designed to arouse an emotional reaction, plan to make a strong appeal in the conclusion. Recommendations: If your presentation includes a recommendation, particularly one requiring action on the part of the audience, state it clearly as part of your ending.

Plan the precise words you will use in your recommendation. Let your audience know exactly what you want them to do. Exit line: Do not flounder at the end. Make a crisp statement and end your presentation on a positive note. Plan and memorize the ending statement, then use it. Delivery

Methods There are at least four methods for making an oral presentation. The best of these is the extemporaneous method; the worst is the impromptu method. The Toolworks Dictionary [CD ROM] defines extemporaneous (adj.) as " spoken with . . . reparation but not written out or memorized" and impromptu (adj.) as " without preparation or advance thought; offhand. " In between these two are the memorization method and the reading method. The extemporaneous method involves significant effort but results in a degree of quality that tells your audience that you care about them. It requires • • • The detailed laying out of the presentation from beginning to end. Doing your homework to fill in your knowledge gaps. The use of 3 x 5 cue cards or similar method to jog your memory on specifics and keep your presentation on track.

The impromptu method is characterized by poor organization and incompleteness. It tells the audience that you are indifferent about them. The memorization method is risky; you can lose your place or leave something out and, in a panic, you might revert to the impromptu method, resulting in disaster. Finally, the reading method might be acceptable if you are presenting a discourse on some technical topic about which you lack expertise. An example could be in presenting a paper at a technical meeting for a colleague who might be ill. Preparation

Irrespective of the method of delivery, the presenter must consider the following parameters in preparing for the presentation: knowledge of the audience, knowledge of subject, use of time and rehearsal, and personal appearance and grooming. Additionally, the preparation and use of visual aids is an important element of any effective presentation. • • • • Knowledge

of the Audience: Do not patronize your audience! Neither speak down nor speak up to your audience. How much do they already know about your subject? Know the age level of the audience as well as its members' level of educational sophistication and special interests.

Tailor your presentation accordingly. Knowledge of Subject: Whether you use notes, manuscript, or strictly memory, you must know your subject well. If gaps exist, do your homework and hit the books! Use of Time and Rehearsal: Time limits are to be observed! Even if no time limit is given, you should strive to do justice to your subject in as little time as possible (KISS principle #1: Keep It Short and Sweet), but not at the price of an incomplete presentation. You must decide which aspects of your presentation are to be treated with detail and which aspects are to be included for additional information and color.

The key to effective and efficient use of time is rehearsal! Use a stop watch and rehearse, revise, rehearse, revise, and rehearse until your presentation is within the target time limit. When you rehearse, do so in a manner similar to the actual presentation. Have an audience (even your cat!), stand up, speak in the same volume you will use, etc. When possible, use a video or audio recorder and then critique yourself. (If you do, please don't be too critical; everyone sounds awful and/or looks absolutely horrible upon playback. Don't worry. Personal Appearance: Your personal appearance affects your credibility. Informal clothing is rarely appropriate for a professional presentation. Pay significant attention to personal grooming. Presentation Delivery OK, so the big day has arrived. You have prepared a well organized presentation and now it is time to actually deliver it to a real

audience. To make sure that you reap the full benefits of your efforts, during the presentation pay attention to your poise and enthusiasm, eye contact, the use of voice, and the use of time. • •

Poise and Enthusiasm: People tend to upgrade or downgrade the case a speaker presents to the level of the speaker's competence in presenting the material. Be well prepared and strive for muscular control, alert attention, vibrant interest in the subject, and an eagerness to communicate. Avoid distracting mannerisms, but don't stand in a " frozen" position. Moving about, if not excessive, can accentuate your enthusiasm. Eye Contact: Eye contact is analogous to plugging into your audience's brain. At some time during your presentation try to make eye contact with EVERY person in the room. • •

Avoid fastening your gaze on your notes, on your chart or screen, or on some point in space above the heads of your listeners. Use of Voice: Don't speak too softly, too fast, or mumble! Your audience must be able to (1) hear what you say (voice amplitude) and (2) understand what you say (speech, word resolution, and clarity). Use voice emphasis to stress important points. Modulate, enunciate, and use tonal variety. A good speaking voice is not harsh or nasal, but has a pleasing melody. Open your mouth and enunciate clearly. Pay particular attention that you do not garble your words, run words together, or mumble.

Have variety in your voice. You can give importance to what you are saying by a well-timed pause, lowering your voice, or talking deliberately, as well as by stressing your points. Use of Time: Without adequate preparation, it is

easy to become nervous and start rushing through a presentation. Instead, use the pacing established during your many rehearsals. You planned your presentation, now follow the plan. Don't suddenly decide to " wing it" and roar off on some tangent or skip a whole section and then find yourself needing to backtrack. Once you do such things, your sense of time and pacing will be severely compromised.

Pay attention to subtle audience feedback mechanisms. Should the level of coughing suddenly increase during your presentation, this is a signal from the audience that their patience is wearing thin. If appropriate, quickly wrap up this particular part of the presentation and move on to the next part making sure, of course, that no important points are left out. (This problem should never exist if you properly prepare.) Language It is important to remember that the language used in a presentation reflects upon you and your credibility. Use only professional language appropriate to the audience and the topic.

Make sure that correct grammar and word choices are used throughout the presentation. Avoid using colloquialisms such as incorrectly substituting ideal for ideaa common mistake in this region. A typical audience will be comprised of people representing many different social and ethnic groups. " Off color" remarks which you and your social peers find hilarious may be quite offensive to others. Once you have alienated an audience, you have lost them forever. When in doubt, don't do it. Visual Aids Visual aids can make or break your presentation; in a technical presentation they are absolutely required.

They can help you keep your presentation on track as well as assist your audience in following your main thoughts. They may be used as a guide in helping you to remember main points and their order. For example, you could either show a series of slides or transparencies or use a computer presentation graphics application such as PowerPoint™ and explain each visual as your presentation progresses). Remember, a good graphic can have a value equivalent to 103 words. Rehearse your presentation with the visual aids you will actually use during the presentation.

Don't read the slides to your audience, but use them to guide and focus your audience's attention, reinforce your main points, and provide detail. Finally, do not use a visual aid until the appropriate moment. Likewise, take down any visual aid as soon as you are finished. Slides, transparencies, and computer graphic displays Slides, transparencies, and computer graphic displays should have clarity, be informative, visually pleasing, and not-too-complex (KISS Principle #2: Keep It Simple, Stupid) the form factor of each slide, transparency or screen should have the following attributes: • • • • •

Letter-size (8 1/2 x 11) or similar aspect ratio; Landscape orientation (as contrasted to portrait orientation); Easy-to-read typefaces such as Times Roman, or Helvetica (a. k. a. Arial), with a minimum font size of 36 points (1/2 inch); Each frame should contain no more than five (preferably three) points. Color can be used quite effectively for emphasis and showing relationships, but remember that many persons cannot visually resolve colors. Show-and-tell articles (Props) Show-and-tell using actual articles (a. k. a. props; a. . a. touchy-feelies) can be effective for smallgroup audiences (especially if the props can be passed around) but are of little value if the

audience members in the back row cannot see the item. A video display, however, might overcome this shortcoming. Another problem associated with passing around props is the inevitable time lag betwen when you introduce the object and when it arrives in the hand of each audience member. If possible, have multiple objects on hand to minimize such delays. The DOs and DON'Ts of Oral Presentations

The following are some " DOs" and " DON'Ts" for good oral presentations: " DOs" • Prepare an audience analysis. • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • Organized the presentation to flow from one section to another. Prepare and rehearse the presentation. Visit the room where the presentation will be given ahead of time. Tell the audiencein the introduction your subject, who you are, and your qualifications to speak about the subject. State your main ideas at the beginning. Provide adequate support for your ideas. Integrate relevant, supportive, and attractive audio-visual aids into your presentation.

Use words that express your ideas clearly. Use acceptable language, pronunciation, and enunciation. Dress appropriately. Avoid distracting body movements. Maintain eye contact with the audience. Display enthusiasm and genuine concern for your subject. Use appropriate tone. Use transitional devices, words, and phrases coherently. Allow time for a question/answer period. Answer questions credibly. If you don't know, say so. Start and stop your presentation on time. " DON'Ts" • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • Don't be late for the presentation.

Don't be afraid to pause and take a deep breath or two before you begin (or during your presentation, if required). Don't hyperventilate; just relax and

breathe normally. Don't speak in a monotone or mumble. Don't slouch. (Your mother was right.) Don't read your notes. Don't sit or lean on the desk or lectern. Don't hide behind the lectern. Don't sway or rock in place. Don't pace back and forth. Don't forget your audiencedon't avoid eye contact. Don't use technical terms unfamiliar to your audience provide clear explanations and definitions.

Don't hold the pointer when you're not using it (but don't forget where you placed it, either). Don't stand in front of your visual aids. Don't leave the overhead projector, slide projector, etc. on if the screen will be blank. Don't leave a visual aid in place that is no longer relevant to the current topic. Don't forget that giving presentations is hard, but necessary if you are to be an effective communicator. And don't forget to have a bit of fun-you don't have to be boring. Source: http://www. etsu. edu/scitech/langskil/oral. htm