

## Writing Center Tip Sheet

### 5 Steps to a Strong Presentation

Oral presentations are a struggle for many students. Some are uncomfortable speaking in public, others aren't sure how to organize, and there never seems to be enough time to write a paper and create a presentation.

Here are five ways to enhance your presentation skills:

**1. Manage your time well.** Oral presentations are basically two projects—whatever needs to be handed in (paper, research, etc), and whatever you are going to present. Be sure to allow yourself enough time to complete both tasks. You can't spend all your time on the paper and expect to get a good grade on the presentation, too. A good rule: for every page in length of your paper, spend 45 minutes planning your presentation (so a four page paper = three hours of presentation creation)

**2. Find your presentation style.** Are you comfortable speaking in class, or do you clam up when an instructor calls on you? If you're shy in class, you'll be shy when presenting. Prepare accordingly: write out what you're going to say. If you're more comfortable speaking in an impromptu situation, you might only need to use note cards or an outline when in front of a group.

**3. Short and sweet.** This applies to your sentences and your timing. Use clear, direct language and short sentences when speaking so your audience can easily follow along. Additionally, make sure that your presentation stays within the allotted time period—you'll bore everyone and take time from others if you go on too long (rule of thumb: it takes the average person 2 mins. to read a page of double-spaced text). Going over allotted time can even negatively affect your grade.

**4. Practice, practice, practice!** The more comfortable you are with your delivery, the better your presentation will be. Present your material to roommates, pets, the mirror—anyone who will listen and even to things that can't. If you practice enough, your body will be more relaxed when it's your turn for real.

**5. Delivery.** How you present can be just as important as what you present. Your topic can be inventive and fascinating, but who will know or care if you spend your time staring at a piece of paper and mumbling? Practice making eye contact with your audience members, smiling, and speaking slowly. The only thing worse than someone who mumbles is someone who talks too quickly. Don't forget to ask questions—get your audience involved!

The most important tip of all: *have fun*. Choose a topic that interests and excites you, and that excitement will transfer to your audience.

Lastly, visit the Writing Center for more presentation tips, or just to practice your speech.