

MONTSERRAT COLLEGE OF ART WRITING STUDIO TIP SHEET

Five Steps to a Strong Presentation

Everyone is nervous about speaking in front of a group, even if they are passionate and excited about their topic. The key is to turn that nervousness into good energy so you can focus on the excitement part! Here's how:

→**CHOOSE.** Unless you've been assigned a topic, choose a topic that interests you. If you have been assigned a topic, choose an element of that topic that you can get excited about.

→**PREPARE.**

- Allow enough time to create your presentation.
- Research, outline, write (using clear and concise language), photograph, find images, and if applicable, create a well-organized and professional-looking slideshow. You can also incorporate (tasteful) jokes or anecdotes to grab your audience's attention, if it reflects your voice or the tone you'd like to convey.
- After you've drafted your presentation materials, decide whether you need to write out your entire speech or if you work best from notes.
- If you're using a slideshow, each slide should serve as a prompt for your speech (but is not the speech itself). Slides are meant to offer a visual point of reference to support your speech: a chart, graph, image, statistic, and/or bulleted list, etc. Don't forget the "speaker notes" function to help you remember your talking points.
- If you're not using a slideshow, consider preparing index cards. Often when we're nervous we don't think as clearly, and having prompts can keep us on track.

→**PRACTICE.**

- Give your speech to a live audience—friends, roommates, yourself (in the mirror), even pets. Or try it out with a Writing Studio tutor! In other words, don't assume it will all magically work out in the end. The only way to guarantee it will turn out well is to know your material well.
- Time your presentation. Is it too long? You might be surprised at how long it takes. Don't assume you'll be able to finish up fast if you start to run out of time. Watching a speaker race to the finish line is agonizing for an audience, and they might even lose the thread of what you're trying to say.
- Is your presentation too short? If so, you might just need to slow your presentation down. If your presentation is still too short, add another slide (or slide element), or perhaps you can incorporate another example or two to support your ideas.

→**PRESENT.** Take a moment to get comfortable. Take a deep breath. Speak to the back of the room or find a friendly face in the audience to focus on. Make sure you look up and out, not down. Ask your audience questions to keep them engaged. If you stumble, keep going. Remember to breathe.

→**ENJOY!** You love your topic. Your presentation is interesting because you took the time to make it so. You know what you are going to say because you practiced. You're not worried about sticking to the time limit because you timed it. Your audience respects you because they know you worked hard to give them your best.