

Oral Presentation Skills

How to Give an Awful Talk

1. Make sure your audience can't see your face:
Do NOT read a script and fail to look the audience in the eye
2. Make sure your audience can't hear you:
Do NOT drone in a soft monotone
3. Make sure your audience worries about you--not your presentation:
Do NOT act flustered and confused
4. Make sure you bore the audience to tears:
Do NOT give a contentless and rambling presentation

Why Do Good People Give Bad Talks?

1. Because they're nervous
It's stage fright: people hide behind their sheets of paper
2. Because they misunderstand what a talk is
*It's a presentation and a performance.
It's not the reading of a journal article.
It needs to be interesting and entertaining.*
3. Because they try to wing it.
4. Because they are imitating a mentor—who has 30 years of experience

Remember: Oral communication is different from written communication. You need to keep your audience engaged and interested.

How to Make a Talk Interesting and Memorable 7 Rules of Thumb

It is better to:

- Talk than read
- Stand than sit
- Move than stand still
- Vary your voice's pitch than speak in a monotone
- Speak loudly facing your audience rather than mumble and speak into your notes or blackboard
- Use an outline and visual aids than present without them
- Provide your listeners with a roadmap than start without an overview

Determine Your Purpose

Ask yourself, what is my goal?

- To inform?
- To provoke?
- To entertain?



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To arrange a one-on-one consultation, contact:

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The Listening Process

In general, an audience only captures 20 to 40 percent of a lecture's main ideas. After three weeks, most students can remember less than 10 percent of a lecture's main ideas. What, then, can we do to ensure that your audience remembers what you want to convey?

Cognitive psychology identifies three phases in the learning process

- First, we decide what to attend to. Therefore we need to capture the audience's attention.
- Second, we organize the materials into a mental pattern or structure. The more you can provide your audience with a framework for understanding the material, the easier it is for them to assimilate and process the ideas.
- Third, to move this information into long-term memory, the audience needs to rehearse the new information and integrate it into a framework of knowledge.

Select Your Topic

Consider the audience

- What aspects of the topic will the audience find relevant? Interesting?
- What does the audience currently know about the topic (correctly or incorrectly)?
- What does the audience want to know?
- Will the audience be skeptical? Supportive? Critical?

Outline Your Presentation

1. Begin with a hook
 - Grab the audience's attention with a provocative quotation, a surprising fact, a paradox, an engaging question, or a vivid anecdote
2. Organize your presentation around a problem or question that you will investigate and solve
3. Address the "So What" Question
 - Explain why listeners should care
 - Demonstrate your topic's importance
4. Present your argument in a nutshell
5. Offer a roadmap
 - Share the structure of your talk with your listeners
 - Direct your audience's attention to the most important points you are making
 - Use verbal and visual cues to highlight major points and steps in your argument
6. Craft a narrative with a beginning, a middle, and an end
 - Make sure the organization is logical and flows smoothly from one topic to another
 - Be explicit about your transitions
 - Don't overload your audience with gratuitous information
 - Consider "breaking up" your lecture every 10-15 minutes to revitalize the audience's attention
7. Have a memorable conclusion

Use Visual Aids

Consider presenting information in multiple ways. Not just through speech, but with audio, visual, and simulations.

But avoid sensory overload. Don't give your audience two things to attend to at the same time (for example, a PowerPoint slide and a verbal narrative that do not directly connect).

And remember, about 20 percent of your audience has a visual impairment.

- Maps, charts, images, film clips add variety and reinforce your points

- Beware the perils of PowerPoint
- Rules for Success: Visibility, relevance, simplicity
 - Slides should be concise and uncluttered
 - 6 lines of text – tops
- Use light colored backgrounds
- Glitz is distracting and not very professional: fade-ins, transitions
- Plan for disaster

- Don't**
- Read your bullet points
 - Speak to one side of the audience
 - Speak only to those who seem responsive

Delivering Your Presentation

1. Be natural
2. Be lively
3. Be a pro
4. Use vocal special effects, including dramatic pauses, repetition, varying your pitch and volume

Engage and Involve Your Audience

Do not render your audience passive. Integrate active learning into your lecture.

1. Organize your presentation with a high-order question that you will answer
2. Make the material relevant
 - Use examples from real life, current events, or popular culture
 - Show how the information can be applied to real-world problems
3. Pepper your talk with challenging questions.
4. In a classroom lecture, consider using a cooperative learning strategy known as “turn to your partner.” Stop lecturing and have students briefly discuss an issue.
5. Consider making your lecture interactive. You might ask your audience to make a prediction or to comment on a controversy, a case study, or an illustration.
6. Use a visual or audio resource or a demonstration that the audience can respond to.

The Importance of Non-Verbal Communication

Students can predict a teacher's ratings with significant accuracy after watching a 30-second silent video clip of the teacher at work. Students pick up on extraneous motion, facial expressions, fidgeting, utterances, and other nonverbal behaviors so subtle that the speaker is entirely unaware of them.

1. Eye contact
2. Erect posture
3. Appropriate movement and gestures