

## Part 2: MAKING YOUR PRESENTATION

Honestly, the best preparation for a presentation is a lot of experience and practice in public speaking. The Department of English Language and Culture strongly recommends that you consider taking both conversation and public speaking courses (such as our currently-offered Public Speaking and Debate courses) prior to attempting your presentation in the Speech Contest.

Presuming you have taken a public speaking class, this will be review for you. This paper is not really a replacement for a public speaking course, because the class gives you opportunities to practice. But it should give you some ideas for how to prepare for the Speech Contest by practicing a lot.

### **1. Practice Really Presenting...**

We don't mean just practicing giving presentations in your bedroom mirror. Try to practice in a way that is close to the experience of the real presentation. Pick a date and time with some friends, and then meet and give your presentation the way you plan to give it. Dress up on that day, and try to use a big classroom like the one where the presentations will be held. Have your friends sit in different groups around the room, and after you speak, ask them for feedback. If you meet with other people giving speeches, you can all help each other with advice.

You should also practice giving your speech many, many times so that it's easy for you to run through it mentally. Even if you are using notes or an outline to support you, it's good to be able to remember most of your main points and ideas without it -- so that if you get nervous and lose your place, you can remember what comes next in your speech.

### **2. Work On Your Eye Contact**

Making eye contact with the audience helps them to feel interested in your speech. If you don't make eye contact with your audience, they will be less interested in your speech and stop paying attention within a minute or less.

A great way to practice this with your group is to have them raise their hands when they feel you are looking at them. Try to make sure everyone raises his or her hands regularly during the speech. Sooner or later, you will become a natural eye-contact master!

### **3. Smile!**

You might be surprised how much smiling helps people to feel comfortable and interested in your speech. A smile helps people relax, and feel more connected to you as a public speaker. So remember to smile!

#### **4. Be Confident (Or Seem Like You Are)**

Nobody feels confident about public speaking without a lot of serious practice. That's a simple fact of life. However, if you can act as if you are confident, then the audience will respect and trust you. There are a few great ways to develop confidence as a public speaker:

- practice in front of people a LOT
- know your subject well, and be well-prepared for your presentation
- do confidence-building exercises, or use positive reinforcement (write a note on your bathroom mirror in English, that says, "I am a great public speaker" and read it out loud every time you see it)

If you haven't got time to do these things, the best thing you can do is work to control your feelings, and try to seem like you are confident. It will do wonders for your presentation.

#### **5. Emphasize Your Main Ideas**

The most important part of your presentation is the ideas you will be expressing. You should try to make sure you emphasize those ideas during your speech.

You can do this a few ways:

1. **Remember, you're supposed to express ideas, not show us how huge your vocabulary is.** Often, public speakers use slightly simpler language in their presentations, because listeners won't have to work as hard to understand.
2. **Use keywords** -- words that quickly describe the most important ideas in your arguments, and which you repeat several times during your speech -- to help the listeners remember what your arguments are.
3. **Use your Powerpoint strategically.** Put only major keywords and images on the Powerpoint, to emphasize the importance of those words and ideas. One great example is Lawrence Lessig's powerpoint (presented as a flash file) here:

<http://randomfoo.net/oscon/2002/lessig/free.html>

4. **Use your voice.** You can emphasize keywords carefully by leaving a little silence on either side of the word when you say it, by

saying it louder, or by stretching the word a little -- that is, saying it more slowly. This is a hint to your listener that the keyword you just used is an important one.

- 5. Use the pace of your speaking to suggest important ideas or sentences.** More important sentences will be just a little slower than less important sentences.

All of these are subtle tricks to help the audience know what you think is important and to help them understand how you think and feel about a topic.

## **6. Be Engaged**

Love your topic. Be passionate about your topic. If you seem like you don't care about your topic, then we won't care either, so you need to show some emotion. Help us to understand why your topic is so important that you decided to take up ten minutes of our time talking about it.

## **7. Slow Down! or Watch Your Pace!**

When you are nervous, you may want to speak quickly. A lot of people who do this speak so quickly that the audience has trouble understanding them.

## **8. Make 'Em Laugh.. or Smile, At Least**

When an audience has fun, it makes them happy to listen to you. If you approach the presentation as a scary, serious, painful experience, then probably the people listening to you will also feel it is scary, serious, and painful. So why not have a little fun? A good sense of humor is a sign of intelligence, and besides, if people are having fun, they will listen more carefully too!

You don't have to be a comedian. But if you can surprise people, make them laugh, or otherwise refresh their minds briefly, you will be helping them to listen and enjoy your presentation!

## **9. Dress Up**

Dressing up on a big day has a useful psychological effect on most people. When you dress up, it's a way of boosting your confidence, of putting yourself in a slightly different mindset, and it also helps your audience to take you seriously. Dressing up won't save a bad presentation, but it can help you perform better!

## **10. Take a Deep Breath**

On the day of your speech, you *will* be nervous. It's impossible to avoid it. However, one very common way to control your anxiety is to take a deep breath and count to ten slowly before you exhale. This will help you get control of your anxiety and let you give a great speech. If you need a moment, take it. We'd rather see you pause briefly and give a great speech than to hurry nervously through a so-so presentation.

### **11. You Can Do It**

Remember: Every student in our department will be standing where you are standing on presentation day. Dozens of students have already achieved what you are trying to do. You can do it too. Hopefully this can inspire some confidence in you.