

Delivering Presentations

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CareerTech Advancement

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Printed in the United States of America by the
Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education
Stillwater, OK 74074-4364

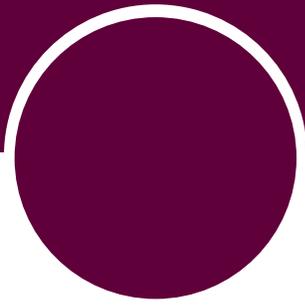
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Delivering Presentations



OBJECTIVES

- Identify guidelines for presenting speeches.
- Determine the difference between paralinguistics and body language.
- Deliver a tool-based presentation.
- Discuss the elements of extemporaneous speaking.
- Determine the best method for preparing for extemporaneous speaking.
- Discuss how to prepare for questions and answers.
- Discuss techniques for answering questions.

KEY TERMS

authenticity
body language
extemporaneous
nervousness
paralinguistics
prefatory
visualization

What makes a presentation great? When a speaker really connects with his or her audience, what creates that connection? When an audience member is deeply influenced, informed, or entertained, why does this happen? These are the questions this unit is designed to answer. As you begin your journey of creating high-impact, highly-effective presentations, imagine the following items. You might even want to write down a few words that come to mind when you think of each.

- The coolest building you have ever seen
- Your favorite song
- The most interesting piece of art you have ever seen
- Your favorite movie
- The last time you watched a great live performance like a play or band



Each of these represents a collection of creative work. Someone, somewhere, had an idea, an inspiration, or a thought that ultimately resulted in you being impacted, influenced, informed or entertained. The process of delivering a presentation is similar in that you start with an idea of what you want to say, and the end result needs to be your audience being impacted, influenced, informed, or entertained. The critical concept here is that each of the creative works listed above delivered in the moment what they needed to strike you. This should reinforce in your mind that you can have the best speech in the world on paper, but if your delivery strategies aren't sharpened and ready to deliver, your presentation is going to fall flat.

Yes, your delivery techniques are paramount to your presentation's effectiveness. There are a million different avenues available to get from point A to point Z. This unit offers strategies for making this journey easier, more efficient and more effective.

Guidelines for Presenting

Every speech ever delivered in the history of time contained a start, an end, and something in the middle. Even one of the shortest famous speeches ever, a Harrow School commencement speech by Winston Churchill in 1941, contained all three elements.

"Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never. In nothing, great or small, large or petty. Never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy." ~ Winston Churchill

Authenticity, or the quality of being real or true, is your number one goal. The best communicators know who they are, have a real-life bond with their content, and strive to make a genuine connection with their audience. The biggest challenge on the road to speaking success is getting out of your own way and letting the best of the real you shine through. This involves not only telling truth, but also telling your truth. How do you feel about your topic? What is your opinion? What is your personal experience with your subject area? When you make your presentation more authentic, it becomes more memorable and unique for your audience.

What does being genuine, real, and authentic do for your presentations? Authenticity makes your presentations more memorable and powerful, gives space to focus on more important things, and allows you to tap into a deep pool of creativity.

Memorable

This is accomplished primarily through the power of stories. If you are being authentic, you are using your unique walk through this world as a reference for your points, opinions, and examples. The most effective way to get your uniqueness into the presentation is by telling stories. Storytelling is an art, and there are entire blogs and books written just on this subject. Learn how to get your stories into your presentations and people will remember what you say longer.

Powerful

Power in generic terms isn't necessarily an objective metric to use when rating a presenter's performance. However, when you think about power in terms of your ability to effectively accomplish the core goal of your presentation, it can be a very effective success measure. If the goal of your presentation is to persuade someone to stop smoking and that happens, your message was powerful.

Focus

As humans, we can only hold one thought in our mind at a time. Effective presenters do not waste this precious real estate on their content or what's going on in their head. They are so authentically connected with their content and who they are as a presenter that they don't have to think about it either. This lets them think more about their audience and the connection with them.

Creativity

It is easy to Google something and tell someone else's stories, opinions, or facts. It is a greater and more rewarding challenge to dig deeper, think longer, and develop your own ideas. A few extra hours of planning time can make your presentation authentic, different, unique, and incredible.

When preparing to present, **nervousness** is perfectly natural and normal. You actually want to be nervous before you speak. This is simply your body's mechanism for responding to an external threat; in this case, the possibility of something going wrong—you forget the words, the audience doesn't like you or respond to you, they will ask you a question you don't know the answer to, and so on. Your first line of defense against nervousness is to understand that it is perfectly normal and that you don't want to get rid of it. You want instead to learn to control it.

Chemically, nervousness and excitement are exactly the same. To the human body, there is no difference between being very nervous and very excited. Don't worry about getting rid of your nerves. Begin down the path of controlling your nerves by simply thinking about them differently. Accept that it is okay to be nervous, and leverage your nerves to keep you on your toes. The better you know your presentation material, the more you can focus on your audience during the presentation. Both of these strategies will help you control the butterflies. You can also control your nerves by controlling your body language.

Zig Ziglar said it best, "Don't get rid of the butterflies. Get them to fly in formation."

Your frame of mind is critical. You know you need to be effective, but does "effective" necessarily mean to win the contest or does effective mean to do your absolute best on the day of the contest? The contest winner is not necessarily the best speaker in the group. The contest winner is the speaker that performs the best that day in relation to the other speakers. Therefore, you must focus on simply doing your best. Once that is accomplished, you have won.

Positive self-talk is very powerful in the days and moments leading up to a public presentation because you spend so much time creating the actual experience in your head. The power of **visualization**, or seeing yourself delivering the presentation perfectly, is an effective preparation tool. However, if you tend to be a negative self-talker and tell yourself "I can't do this," "something bad will happen," or "what if they ask me a tough question," this strategy can work against you. This is why it is even more important to remind yourself that you can be good and continually build up your own self-confidence for your performance.

Paralanguage and Body Language

The best written speech in the world fails if it is delivered poorly. When you think of powerful speeches you have heard, you recall the tone of voice and the actions of the speaker. You don't recall the supporting details, but you do recall that this person believed in what she or he was saying and convinced you to believe as well.

Paralanguage

The content of a speech is an important variable that determines whether a presentation is effective or not. However, the most important variable is not what is said, but rather how it is said. **Paralanguage** is everything associated with the voice except for the words said. Voice pitch, volume, tempo, rate, and quality, along with body language, comprise the majority of the message sent from a speaker to a listener. There are only a few messages carried by your words. However, your paralanguage and body language send hundreds of messages, and your audience picks up on all of them, either consciously or subconsciously.

Variety is the key here. Think of a boring speaker. Part of their "boringness" can probably be attributed to their monotonous voice. Variety doesn't just help with interestingness. Changing your paralanguage can also be used to emphasize a point or to refocus the audience's attention. Planned pauses, changes in speaking tempo, and emotional shifts all add to the variety of a presentation.

The Planned Pause

When a speaker is talking for even more than a few seconds, it becomes routine for the listener to actually listen. You can leverage this dynamic to gain or regain attention by inserting a planned pause. This is a simple technique where you stop talking for anywhere from one to three seconds right before or right after you make a key point. You will notice more than one audience member respond to this pause with eye contact.



The Brick Wall

You see this technique used all the time with speakers who have a very energetic style. They will be talking very fast while telling a story or running through a list of facts and then all of sudden their pace will slow to a crawl. This "brick wall" technique allows them (and you) to intensify the audience's attention on the slowly spoken words.

The Emotion Scale

It is a common misconception that the emotions of happy/sad, calm/angry, etc., are on opposite ends of the emotion scale. In fact, the scale goes from non-emotional to very emotional. This means that anytime you and your audience are in a very emotional state during your presentation, this is the best time to flip the emotion to make a point. For example, if you have your audience laughing about something, this is the best time to insert a serious point (and vice-versa).

Body Language

Your **body language** sends thousands of messages while your words only send a few. The majority of your message is being delivered through your non-verbals. Effective presenters not only invest a ton of time getting their words right, they also get their body language congruent with their message. This can only be accomplished by knowing what to change, practicing to make the right habits of movement, and then delivering on those good habits in the moment. The phrase you want to remember is this, "It takes practice to be natural when giving a speech." This might sound counter-intuitive, but it is true. Presenters who look natural up in front have practiced for many hours to look that way.

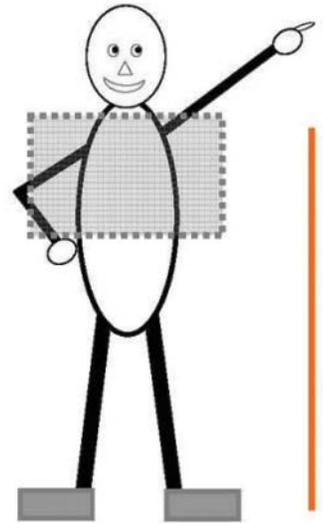
Eyes

The eyes are the most honest and transparent element of body language. You can say that you are passionate about your presentation's topic, but if your audience can't see it in your eyes, that passion won't transfer to them. Additionally, direct eye contact is a must for effective presentations. You want to look your audience members in the eyes long enough to deliver either a full point or a portion of a point. This will generally be between five and 10 seconds, depending on the size of your audience and their proximity from you. If you aren't confident giving talks, this will take some practice. However, it is practice that will pay large dividends in terms of developing your confidence, helping you to make your points and helping the audience feel like you are genuine and authentic.



Hands

It is very natural to use your hands when talking in a conversation. However, for some reason it becomes very unnatural to use your hands when in front of a crowd. The most common question among rookie presenters (other than the nervousness question) is, “what do I do with my hands?” Your hands should be “Playing in the Box.” Your hands should be loosely gesturing while staying in this area the majority of the time. You can leave this area in two situations—to make a big point or to put your hands at your side. When you make a big point, your hands will leave the box, but only temporarily. Your hands should never be behind your back, in your pockets, playing with your hair or jewelry, or touching for more than just a moment. If you are speaking behind a podium, your hands should only touch the podium briefly. Variety and moderation are two important keys when it comes to your hand gestures. You don’t want to do the same gesture over and over, nor do you want to have too many gestures.



Walking

Movement is an important element in presentations. It helps the audience know when you really need them to listen to you, and it keeps the audience engaged. Walking is similar to hand gestures in terms of its two important elements—variety and moderation. The best times to walk during a speech are between important main points, or for memorized talks, you would walk between paragraphs. It is also important not to over-walk. Too much movement can be even more distracting than not enough walking. When you are delivering a speech, it is best to pick an eight-foot wide rectangle at the front to middle of the room and stay within its boundaries during your speech. Only walk side to side. If you walk forward, you will have to walk back at some point and that will be awkward. You also don’t want to risk getting too close to the judges.

Feet

Quiet and heavy should be the best words to describe your feet. You do want to move around and use walking to help keep your audience’s attention, but when you stop, your feet should stop with you. If you are nervous, it will show in your feet. You will either look like you are watching a tennis match (leaning side to side), dancing, or needing to go to the bathroom—all are bad body language during a presentation. You can turn your body from time to time when you aren’t walking. When you do that, it is appropriate to have your feet pointed in the same direction as your body.

Delivering a Tool-Based Presentation

A tool-based presentation is any presentation where the speaker communicates using more than just their person. PowerPoint, flipcharts, props, music, and handouts are some tools that can be used to enhance a presentation. It is important to remember that a tool is not always needed for a presentation, and too many tools can actually detract from the message.

Basic Ground Rules

Keep it simple. Delivering a presentation is already a complex exercise. Your tools should be simple to use and simple to fix if something goes wrong. Be very familiar with them. Practice is even more important when using a tool. Think of it like a hitter in baseball. The player doesn't have time to think about how to use the bat at the same time he is trying to hit a fastball. The swinging of the bat has to be second nature. How to use your tools needs to be second nature as well.

Only use a tool if it strengthens the message. A good example of this is the use of PowerPoint or Keynote. Many presentations would be just as effective, if not more effective, if these tools were not used and the presenter just spoke directly to the audience and the audience put their full attention on the presenter.

Remain calm when something goes wrong because giving presentations is not a perfect science. They are delivered in the real world where things do and will go wrong. When a mishap occurs, remain calm. If the problem prevents you from going on, address the situation as quickly as possible. If you can continue in spite of the problem, do so as if nothing happened, and fix the situation at a break, when the audience is busy doing something else or after the presentation.



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Extemporaneous Speaking

Extemporaneous speeches, unlike impromptu speeches, are prepared and practiced in advance. They differ from prepared speeches in that the exact wording is chosen at delivery. The speaker uses only a brief set of notes and has not practiced the speech word-for-word before presenting. Believe it or not, once you know a topic inside and out, speaking about it will be very natural.

Extemporaneous speakers speak from content they know and understand. The best word to describe the relationship between the extemporaneous speaker and his content is “internalize.” They don’t have it memorized word for word, but they know their subject so well, this doesn’t matter. They can still deliver it almost seamlessly and without hesitation. In extemporaneous speaking, the audience and judges give more leeway for small verbal blunders because they know the words are not memorized. However, this does not excuse the extemporaneous speaker from preparation. In fact, the extemporaneous presenter must prepare more than someone delivering a prepared presentation because of all the variables involved. This is also one of the most rewarding elements of extemporaneous speech. It is a great challenge, and when done successfully, delivers great satisfaction.

Typically, an extemporaneous speech is four to six minutes long with questions following. Before presenting, each speaker is given time to prepare.

There are a variety of ways in which organizations conduct extemporaneous speech contests. The main idea is that the speaker does not know the topic before the contest, and preparation is done directly before speaking.



Preparing for an Extemporaneous Speech Contest

The interesting dynamic of preparation is you don’t know exactly what the topic list is going to be. Therefore, the best material preparation strategy is to plan like you are walking into a question and answer session on the organization or group for which you are presenting.

Material Collection

You need to keep two things in mind when putting together your collected material for extemporaneous speaking. First off, you don't know exactly what topic or topics you are going to receive, but you can make an educated guess based on the topics that are hot in the world or in your organization today. Therefore, you need to include reference material on as many topics as you can. Secondly, you will only have a short time to prepare your speech. This means you need to have your material as organized as possible, and you need to be very familiar with the layout and location of your material.

The best strategy for preparing your collection of material, folders or notebooks is to make a list of all the topics for which you want to gather material. Then put together facts sheets and stories for each one. The number of facts and stories you collect will depend on the complexity of each topic. Organize your facts and data in bullet point lists for quick scanning and recovery. Organize your stories by bullet point lists as well.

Organize your folders into major genres and put these titles on the outside of your folders. Label your topics as sections and create tabs for each section that you can quickly flip through. Create a table of contents at the front of each folder. If you handwrite your notes, write legibly and large.

Introduction Options

A great preparation strategy for the introduction of your extemporaneous speech is to prepare two to four options that you can use for almost any topic you receive. These introduction options should follow the same format as good prepared speech introductions: interesting, in story form and anywhere from 15-30 seconds in length. They should also be generic in nature so they can be used for almost any topic you draw. The main point of the introduction could be facing a difficult challenge, enjoying success, making a tough decision, or trying to figure out a difficult solution. You will also want to prepare a short closing for each speech that ties back into the introduction. These introductions/closings need to be memorized and practiced. Just remember that when you deliver them in the room, there can't be a big difference in your voice tone and pace between delivering this memorized content and delivering the extemporaneous content.

In the Preparation Room

You will be given a set amount of time to prepare. You need to spend half of this time outlining your speech and half of it memorizing your flow.

When you begin to prepare your speech, start by pulling out a sheet of blank paper and writing down your topic. Then brainstorm a quick list of words that come to mind, which will potentially be main points or a section in your material collection. Begin to go through your collection material and look

for potential facts, data, and stories that you might use in your speech. List as many as possible. You may end up with five or 25, but the main purpose of this step is to filter through all of your material and narrow it down to the elements that might make it into your speech.

After narrowing down your material, you should focus on the three parts of your presentation: introduction, main points, and closing. You can pull your introduction from one of your pre-developed options. Your main points will come naturally from your available research and need to be simple and easy to remember. These are going to be the hooks on which you will hang your speech's material. Your closing should tie back into your introduction.

The next step is to start developing the outline of your speech. Create the first draft of your outline on a sheet of paper. A **draft** is a preliminary version of a piece of writing. Make the outline in bullet form, and only use a few words to describe each outline element. Then begin sifting through your list of facts, data, and stories to find supporting information for your main points. Include anything that is relevant to your point, interesting, fresh, easy to recall under pressure, and fully understandable because you could be asked a question about it.

The second draft of your outline should be on index cards. Each note card you plan to use during your presentation should be numbered in the top right- or left-hand corner. Use only one side of each card to avoid confusion during the presentation. Number your outline on the cards and write legibly and big. Use only a few words per outline element to remind you what is coming next.

After you have finished your note cards, it is time to begin the second half of your preparation—delivery. You should memorize the flow of your outline and say it out loud 10 times. See it with your eyes closed or write it on a blank sheet of paper.

Practice by saying out loud what you plan on saying in the room. Complete this as many times as you can. Put your outline to the side, and on a blank sheet of paper write down the points you plan on

Material Collection Example

Topic: Avian Flu

Title: Virginia Chicken Farmer/Former National FFA Officer

Source: Living On Earth, Feb. 16, 2007

Point of Story: A farm hit by avian flu and the farmer's concern about public opinion

Story:

- Potential pandemic flu crisis from avian flu, H5-N1 strain
- Valley Pike Farm, Shenandoah Valley, Gary (father) and Matt (son) Lohr
- Matt is former National FFA Officer
- Entire chicken farm lost to avian flu in 2002
- They have recovered but continue to be concerned that the public will stop eating chicken because of fear.
- Americans eat one million chickens per hour

making in your speech. This helps because it models the way you are going to have to think in the presentation room—extemporaneously. You need to clearly understand what you are trying to say with your speech and how you plan on supporting your points.

You will usually have a range of minutes to deliver your speech. Your target length of time should be in the middle of the range given. If your range is four to six minutes, aim for a five-minute speech. The tone of an extemporaneous speech is conversational in nature—just like the voice tone that is



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appropriate for question and answer sessions for prepared speeches. However, remember that you are still expected to be passionate and interesting. You can accomplish this by using variety in tone (serious/playful), volume (high/low), and pace (fast/slow). If you need to read directly from an index card for a quote or fact, that is acceptable. Just make sure you don't read for an extensive period of time. Extemporaneous contests are typically designed to mimic presentations in the real world, where notes are frequently referenced.

Preparing for Questions and Answers

As you are researching and writing your speech, you should keep a running list of potential questions the judges might ask you. Anything in your speech is a candidate for a question. If you say the word corn, the judges could ask you for the current price of corn. If you talk about your national association, they could ask you who the current president is or where the headquarters are located. You will develop the majority of the questions in your list; however, you can also seek counsel from three other key people.

Industry experts are a great resource to read your speech and give you a list of questions they would ask if they were a judge. This also goes for someone who has no knowledge about your topic. They will give you questions that might be similar to those contest judges who have no knowledge of your topic. Your teacher is also someone who could read through your speech and list possible questions.

The basic strategy for preparing for the question and answer session at an extemporaneous speaking event is to make certain you are prepared to answer a question about anything you put into your speech. You need to keep this filter in mind when you are preparing your outline in the preparation room.

Finally, keep some of the stories, data, and facts out of your speech and have them ready to use during an answer. It is very impressive to see a speaker use a piece of research data that wasn't in his or her speech.

Techniques for Answering Questions



Answering questions is commonplace in competitive speaking. The final portion of public speaking competitions is a question and answer section that can be several minutes in length. This is where contests are primarily won or lost because judges are able to accurately gauge your understanding of the content, the depth of your preparation, and your ability to truly communicate your thoughts in a clear, brief, professional, and comprehensive manner.

It is vital to understand that the judges are interested in your topic knowledge, as well as your ability to communicate effectively. This is why you shouldn't get rattled if you don't know an answer. They are going to be more impressed by a speaker who doesn't get nervous about a tough question they don't know than by a speaker who doesn't get nervous about an easy question. However, this doesn't excuse you from preparing fully for questions.

Your primary goal during the question and answer period is to answer the question as fully as possible. Some of your answers will have three parts and be a little longer. Some of your answers will be as short as one or two sentences. Unless specifically instructed by the judge, never answer a question with only one word. Always provide an explanation as to why you chose that particular word and be as conversational as possible during your answer. This is your chance to demonstrate your ability to communicate, not just deliver a speech.

Your lengthier answers should have a structure to them. You can use an anchor word to help your answer be clear and brief. As the question is being asked, think of the best one-word answer and give that at the very first. Then briefly explain why that word is the best. You can also answer with the list technique. For example, "There are three words that come to mind when I think about the future of the healthcare industry." This technique will not only help to keep your answers brief, it will also help you to stay on track during your answers.

You can also use a **prefatory** or introductory statement to buy yourself a little time at the beginning to think of the best content to use for your answer.

Example Prefatory Statements

- That is a great question and I am glad you asked it.
- I asked myself that question multiple times while researching my speech.
- There are many ways to answer that question. Let me quickly take you through three.

Sometimes your audience or the person asking you a question will have an entirely different point of view than you on certain issues. This type of situation requires a different style of answer. A diplomatic answer is one that not only correctly answers the question, but is also sensitive to your relationship with the audience.



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First, you should start with acknowledging the many different ways to view the issue and then state your point of view honestly and clearly. Next, provide one to three brief reasons why you hold this point of view. You should never judge or compare your view point to those held by the audience unless it is required to fully answer the question. A judge may look down on this comparison, which could affect your scores.

The “I Don’t Know The Answer” Question

There are two different types of “I Don’t Know the Answer” scenarios. When presented with a question to which you don’t know the answer, you may think to yourself, “I have no idea,” or “I don’t know that, but I do know this.” There are strategies to answering both questions.

If you have no idea what the answer is and you also don’t know anything directly related to the question, you need to tell the judges you don’t know the answer. There are variations to this answer (the best one being, “I don’t know the answer, but I am glad you asked, and I will find out the answer during my preparation for the next contest”), but all they ultimately accomplish is spending more time on an answer that you don’t know. Better to be brief, say you don’t know, and wait for the next question.

Many times the judges will ask you a fact-based question like, “Who is the president of this organization?” If you don’t know the specific answer to their question, say so and then tell them something related to their original question that demonstrates you know something about that area. For example, if a judge asks you what the current price of oil is and you don’t know, say “I don’t know the current price of oil, but I do know that it has plummeted drastically in the past few months. This has helped our industry by lowering the price of the largest input cost item—fuel.”

The main idea when answering questions is to be confident and honest in your answers. The more research you have tucked away in your brain, the better off you will be when it comes to an answer you may not directly know. You will learn and get better at answering questions through practice, and you should learn from each contest experience.

Unit Summary

Your words comprise 100 percent of what you say, but only 15-25 percent of what the audience hears. This is why we dedicated an entire unit to “in the moment” strategies. You will likely spend hours getting your words right for a speaking contest. However, you must remember that how you look and how you interact with your audience comprise the vast majority of the actual “communication” taking place while you are speaking. There are only a few messages being sent by your words, but there are thousands of messages sent by your paralinguage, body language, and presentation tools. Below is a recap of the main points of the unit.

- Authenticity is your No. 1 goal as a presenter. Are you telling the truth as you see it? Are you being genuine with your feelings? Are you saying things in your own words?
- Nervousness is perfectly natural and needs to be controlled, not eliminated. You can control your nerves by knowing your speech top to bottom, being an expert on your topic, and controlling your paralinguage and body language.
- The proper use of variety in your paralinguage and body language is an excellent tool to get and keep your audience’s attention, as well as to place emphasis on key points in your presentation.



- Tools, when allowed, are a great way to add meaning, context, utility, memorability, and enjoyment to your presentation. Just remember to keep them simple and become an expert on how to use them.
- The question and answer session during a competition is the judges’ chance to evaluate how much you actually know about your topic and how good you are at verbalizing your thoughts. The question and answer session is where contests are either won or lost.

Your Notes

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