



How to Make a Speech or Presentation

When called upon to make a speech, consider the following suggestions to help make your speech more interesting, worthwhile, and fun for both you and your audience.

• **Prepare.**

- Find out about your target audience. Consider their interests, their ages, their needs, and anything else about them that will help you connect with them.
- Write down the purpose of the speech (or review the learning objectives), and decide on the ideas that should be covered.
- Research the subject, taking brief notes.
- Talk with others who know the subject, and make notes of their ideas.
- Outline your speech, including only the most important points. Put them into a logical sequence.

• **Practice.**

- Rehearse your speech until you have it well in mind. Some presenters like to use a tape recorder so that they can hear themselves.

- Write in your notes the time allotted to major points. This will help you stay within the time limits.
- Put your outline in final form so that it will not be cluttered with discarded ideas.
- Try to be ready for extemporaneous speaking, with an occasional look at your outline. Do not memorize or read it word for word.
- When you are well prepared, you will feel more at ease during the speech. Also, it helps to take a few deep breaths before you begin.

• **Personalize.**

- Make each person feel that you are talking to him or her. Look at the audience as individuals, not as a group. If you are nervous, find a friendly face in the audience, and direct your remarks to that person for the first few minutes.
- Watch the group's reaction as you go. Stay close to their interests.
- Use thought-provoking questions. This will help stimulate everyone's thinking. It also will help you get feedback from participants, which will tell you whether they understand what you are saying.

• **Illustrate.**

- Use a chalkboard or flip chart to list your main points, or draw diagrams or sketches while you talk. Training aids help make your speech more interesting and reinforce the learning process.
- Balance what you say with what you show. Don't let the visual aid be so elaborate that it is distracting.
- Show the equipment and materials needed to do what you are talking about.
- Show literature resources on the subject.
- Illustrate your important points with human-interest stories, preferably something that actually happened. True stories, not necessarily funny, are excellent. When interest is waning, an amusing story usually helps.

• **Pace yourself.**

- Stay within the time limit.
- Stay on the subject; don't get sidetracked.

• **Summarize.**

- Restate the main idea or problem, its importance, and the major points you have made.
- Give your listeners a chance to ask questions either during or after the speech.