

# Presentations

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This handout offers guidelines for preparing, practicing, and delivering presentations; however, remember to tailor your presentation to your assignment and audience.

## Preparing Your Presentation

Effective presentations are created with a clear purpose and specific audience in mind.

- Determine the **purpose** of your presentation by reviewing assignment guidelines and establishing desired outcomes for the presentation. Also, consider your role as a presenter. Are you informing, persuading, or requesting a specific action?
- Identify your **audience**. Be specific about who you are addressing, and consider their expectations, values, and needs. Knowing your audience will inform the content, organization, and tone of your presentation, which will help you communicate your ideas more effectively.

## Organizing Your Presentation

Once you have determined the purpose and audience for your presentation, focus on creating an outline or agenda to guide the organization of your presentation. Besides having an agenda, central idea, or guiding statement, your presentation should include an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

- The **introduction** should engage your audience, set the tone of your work, establish the context for your work, and make your central idea or agenda known. As part of your introduction, you may also need to introduce yourself and establish your credibility. The introduction should make a good first impression and provide momentum for the rest of your presentation.
- The **body** of your presentation should consist of clearly-focused content that supports your main idea. Divide content into smaller sections or ideas, making the content easier for your audience to understand. Include transitions between your main points, and connect your ideas back to the central idea or agenda for your presentation. Doing so will increase the clarity and cohesion of your presentation.
- The **conclusion** reminds the audience of your main ideas and connects them to the purpose of your presentation. The conclusion explains the implications of your work and provides a sense of closure. If time and circumstance allow, ask for questions from the audience at the end of your presentation.

## Preparing Visual Aids

Visual aids engage your audience and make information more accessible. Visual aids include slides, handouts, posters, or other objects. Remember the following as you prepare:

- Maintain professionalism and improve readability by proofreading your work.
- Limit the amount of text in your visual aids to avoid distracting your audience.
- Balance your use of color and images to engage the audience without overwhelming or confusing your audience or diverting their attention.
- Review your use of visual aids in conjunction with the rest of your presentation to make sure all elements are working together and supporting the purpose of your work.

## Practicing Your Presentation

Practicing before giving a presentation will help you polish your work and build your confidence. Remember these strategies as you practice:

- Practice your presentation as if you were really presenting, so you are comfortable with all elements of your work (e.g., technology, space, visual aids, timing, etc.).
- Reflect and seek feedback on your presentation. Review your performance with a peer or colleague. Watch a video recording of yourself presenting or reflect on your presentation, noting areas of strength and areas that need improvement.
- Eliminate filler words (e.g., *um*, *er*, *like*), distracting body language, and confusing or repetitive areas.
- Review the pace and timing of your presentation, making sure it does not feel too rushed or too slow in any areas. Time your presentation to make sure it will fit into the timeslot you have been given or have allotted for your presentation.

## Giving Your Presentation

Your presentation is a culmination of a lot of hard work, so try to relax and enjoy sharing your work with others. As you present, remember to

- Look at your audience while you are speaking. Try to avoid staring at one point in the room; instead, scan your audience and make eye contact with different individuals as you speak. If you need to look at notes or a slide to remind yourself of a point, do so briefly.
- Maintain good posture to look confident, relaxed, and composed.
- Speak slowly and pause occasionally so your audience can understand what you are saying. Pauses will also allow you to think ahead to your next point.
- Pay attention to the time. If you start to run out of time, remember that it's ok to skip some smaller points as long as you communicate your main idea and conclusion.
- Use body language and gestures to emphasize points. If you can, move around—this will help you to keep the audience's interest and to engage different sections of the audience.
- Be aware of the audience's body language and adapt your presentation as needed.
- Speak loudly enough for your audience to hear you.
- Dress appropriately, with your audience and context in mind
- Consider any special needs or physical limitations among your audience members to ensure that you accommodate everyone who may be attending your presentation.