

TO GIVE AN ORAL PRESENTATION OR TO RUN THE GAUNTLET

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Abstract: Seminars, practical courses, projects, oral exams- all need preparation and the skill of speaking in front of many people. Glossophobia- the fear of speaking in public, is a condition that should be overcome by the students as quickly as possible. Taking apart the psychological factor, there are some points to take into consideration if one intends to deliver a good oral presentation.
Key words: Speaking, plan, practise, presentation.

Introduction

Preparing an oral presentation must follow some steps in order to be successful. Apart from the well-known three main parts structure - the introduction, the body and the conclusion, there is no doubt about the amount of work one must do before the presentation itself. The six issues that are to be approached refer to: selecting and narrowing the topic (take into consideration that the presentation should be 7-10 minute long), determining the purpose of the presentation (to entertain, to inform or to persuade), deciding on the main idea of the presentation (which is to be given in the introduction), gathering information, organizing the ideas in the presentation (in a chronological or topical pattern), outlining the presentation (it may be written in one of the two forms: a topic outline or a sentence outline).

Content

There are four main kinds of speech delivery: impromptu, extemporaneous, manuscript, and memorized. Impromptu speaking involves delivering a message on the spur of the moment, as when someone is asked to "say a few words." It is usually a short speech based on personal experience or concepts, related to the person delivering the speech.

Extemporaneous speaking consists of delivering a speech in a conversational fashion using notes. This is the style most speeches call for. It is the type of speech we mostly ask from our students.

Manuscript speaking consists of reading a fully scripted speech. It is useful when a message needs to be delivered in precise words.

Memorized speaking consists of reciting a scripted speech from memory. Memorization allows the speaker to be free of notes.

The last two types do not present any interest for us as we are mainly concerned about increasing the level of English, not the way our students read a speech or memorize it.

To be proficient in English means to be a good speaker, therefore to be able to give an impromptu speech or a well prepared oral presentation. When dealing with oral speech, students tend to block, remain speechless, or even refuse the task. This is the reason a teacher must unveil some tricks and build students confidence. Our personal experience showed us that students of Engineering deal better with schemes, pinpoints, any type of synthesized information. To meet their needs we came up with the following list of things to be passed through. Giving an oral presentation is related both with the preparation of the presentation, but also with the three keys that ensure an efficient delivery.

1st Key: How To Make A Positive Impression

As you start your presentation, do the following things to earn the audience's confidence and trust:

- 1) Look sharp but relaxed on the platform
 - Be neat in appearance.
 - Stand comfortably in full view of the audience and don't block your visual aids.
 - Show confidence. Be positive, forthright, enthusiastic, and businesslike. Don't make excuses about yourself or your subject.
 - Don't draw undue attention to yourself and away from your message.
- 2) Start promptly, slowly, deliberately, and in a friendly way
 - Begin slowly and on time.

- Let the audience adjust gradually to your speaking speed.

- 3) Establish and maintain strong eye contact
 - Smile at your audience.
 - Look at your audience. Evaluate their reactions to what you are saying.
 - Avoid patterns in looking at the audience. For small groups, look at each person periodically. For larger groups, look at areas.
- 4) Sound like an expert in your subject area
 - Memorize your opening.
 - Avoid using note cards during your opening.
- 5) Control your movements and body language
 - Stand still at first. Then start moving naturally but don't pace back and forth,
 - Move to signal transitions.
 - Use your hands naturally but don't distract the audience.

2nd Key: A Winning Introduction

At the beginning of your presentation, you should do the following five things:

- 1) Introduce yourself
 - State your name and organization if your audience doesn't know you.
 - State your credentials to speak if you feel it's necessary
- 2) Get the audience's attention
 - State an unusual statistic,
 - Tell an interesting story.
 - Ask a provocative question.
 - Use a surprising gimmick
 - Present an interesting quotation.
 - Present a relevant historical fact
 - Make a statement to show you care about the audience.
- 3) Motivate your listeners
 - Tell them your purpose in speaking and how it benefits them.
 - Give them a reason to want to hear you speak.
 - Get them involved in your topic right away.
- 4) Preview your topic
 - Briefly announce the title of your presentation
 - In general terms, tell the audience what information you will cover.
- 5) Preview your procedures
 - Make the audience comfortable about what's going to happen to them
 - Announce what you plan to do during the presentation.
 - State the main idea of your presentation in clear, concise language

3rd Key: A Winning Conclusion

At the conclusion of your presentation, do the following to end in a positive and crisp fashion:

- 1) Review the main points
 - Recap the 4 or 5 important ideas you want the audience to remember.

- Use a training aid or handout that wraps up the key points
- 2) Present a memorable closing statement
- Make a summarizing judgment about your topic.
 - Issue a call for action.
 - Look to the future; make a prediction.
 - Ask a thought-provoking question.
 - Use an interesting quotation.
 - Echo your opening remarks.
- 3) Conduct a productive question-and- answer session
- Listen carefully so you'll answer the specific question asked
 - Don't fidget or nod enthusiastically during the question so you don't signal wrongly how you intend to answer.
 - Treat all questions equally. Don't say "Great question!" to, it infers the omen weren't so good
 - Repeat positive questions and make sure everyone can hear them.
 - Paraphrase negative questions so you stay in control of tone
 - Never repeat inaccurate questions. Correct the errors and move on.
 - Respond directly and honestly. If you don't know the answer, say so and promise to find out. Then get back to the person with the answer.
 - Illustrate your answer with your own personal and professional experience, quotations from experts, facts, comparisons, or examples.
 - Connect your responses to the overall objective of the session.
 - Keep eye contact with your questioner and audience.

Besides the above guiding lines we usually present the most common mistakes our students tend to do while delivering a presentation. We consider it very helpful,

because presenting the mistakes forewarns them and sets the limits for a good delivery of presentation.

The most common mistakes during a presentation are of two kinds:

- a) Mistakes in content:
- Not adequately introducing your subject to your audience
 - Not having a clear purpose for your briefing
 - Talking over the heads of your audience
 - Talking down to your audience
 - Not defining key terms, acronyms, or technical language
 - Covering too much information in the allotted time
 - Repeating yourself
 - Stretching out the presentation to meet the time
 - Going into too much detail
 - Not using transitions between the key points
 - Using too many or too few training aids
 - Not allowing for questions or discussion
- b) Mistakes in delivery:
- Not speaking enthusiastically about your topic
 - Speaking too fast or too slow, too loud or too soft
 - Playing with your note cards or the pointer
 - Reading from your note cards word for word
 - Not making eye contact with the whole audience
 - Trying to be "cute" with the audience
 - Using language the audience doesn't understand
 - Making apologies for mistakes
 - Trying to cover up mistakes
 - Saying "umm" or too much
 - Moving around too much or being too stiff
 - Hiding behind the podium or projector

Conclusion

We all know that effective, confident public speaking should look effortless. In real life, most people need time and practice before they can talk in front of an audience, even if that audience is on their side, wants them to succeed. Using the techniques and tricks we have presented to overcome 'stage fright' anyone facing the situation of delivering a speech could present oneself confidently and keep the audience engaged.

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