

Presentation Skills Center

308 Park Library

Delivery

Speaking isn't just what you say, but also how you say it. Delivery is about nonverbal communication, or how a person uses his or her body and voice to express the ideas. This includes: speaking intelligibly, establishing eye contact, and movement.

Speak intelligibly:

There are three parts to speaking intelligibly: volume, pitch and voice inflection, and rate.

- **Volume:** Your volume should be adjusted based on the acoustics of the room, which means you should practice in the room beforehand with someone in the very back. If they can't hear you, your volume must go up. Remember that you sound louder to yourself than you do to the audience, and watch for their reactions to determine whether your volume is appropriate.
- **Pitch and voice inflections:** Pitch is highness or lowness of the speaker's voice. Inflections are changes in the emphasis of delivery and bring a presentation from monotone to dynamic. If you sound bored with your speech, chances are others will be bored, too. Look at the speech and determine where various inflections should be placed for various effects. Record yourself and listen or have someone listen when you practice to ensure proper pitch and inflection.
- **Rate:** Rate is the pace at which we speak. Just like pitch, your rate can be varied for different effects. Nerves tend to make us speak faster and higher. Speak slowly to explain something complex (like a definition) and faster when it is already known to the audience. A good way to judge rate is to perform the presentation out loud and time it.

Choose the correct delivery style:

- **Extemporaneous delivery:** Extemporaneous speaking from a thorough outline is the most engaging and flexible style of delivery. You should create a keyword outline, practice many times with that outline, and then (preferably) transfer that outline to note cards for the presentation.
- **Manuscript delivery:** Be sure to create a speech manuscript (don't just read sections of an academic paper), practice reading the manuscript several times, and then maintain eye contact and make it seem conversational when you deliver the speech. Use underlining, highlighting, and cues ("eye contact," "slow down," "pause") to guide your reading. Place one hand on the manuscript while you are reading and follow along in order to keep your place when you look up. Practice turning the pages of the so that you can do so discreetly. Use a minimum font size of 14 and double-space your manuscript.

Establish eye contact: Eye contact is an easy way to gain a rapport with the audience and gauge their reactions to what you have to say.

- Make eye contact with the entire audience—in a small group, look briefly from one person to the other; in a larger group, scan rather than trying to make contact with everyone.
- Keep yourself from falling into a dead, blank stare; make eye contact that is confident, warm, and friendly. Changing the direction of your focus every few sentences is a good frequency to maintain during delivery.

Movement: Movement during a speech is meant to demonstrate the purpose of going from point to point in our presentation and to add emphasis to important points in our delivery.

- To prevent swaying and other nervous behavior, keep your feet evenly distributed, stand tall with good posture, and walk with confidence.
- Use the “Speech Triangle” to arrange your movement during a speech. Start at the top of the triangle for your introduction, move towards the bottom right for your first point, to the left (towards the middle of the base of the triangle) for your second point, to the left again for your third point, and back to the top of the triangle for your conclusion.
- At the end of your conclusion, pause after your last line to let your words sink in, then collect your notes and walk off confidently.

Gestures: Gestures are another form of movement we use with our hands and arms to emphasize points in our presentation. Gestures should:

- Enhance the speech, and not distract the audience from the message.
- Appear natural and spontaneous, adding to the conversational nature of the speech.
- Be kept above the waist, in order for them to be easily visible to the audience.

In addition:

- Use an open hand when gesturing, as a closed grip as seen as adversarial.
- Hands should be kept out of one’s pockets at all times and at one’s side when not gesturing or holding notecards or a manuscript.

Other considerations when speaking:

- Note any places on your speech outline where you want to adjust the rate, inflections, pauses, or volume during your delivery.
- Avoid vocal fillers, such as uh, like, er, or um. Never chew gum or mints during a speech.
- If you’ve lost your train of thought, take a deep breath and continue.
- Be sure to review your speech for words with unfamiliar pronunciations; determine how to pronounce them before you speak by doing a web search or checking a dictionary.
- The best way to determine if your presentation is successful is to have someone else listen to you practice (such as the Presentation Skills Center) and provide feedback or to record your speech.

Adapted from:

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