



PRESENTATION SKILLS CENTER RECORDING SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS

Creating a professional recording of a speech or presentation can be challenging, so it's very important to think carefully about your recording set up well in advance of the actual recording of the speech or presentation. *Most importantly, test all of the factors that could affect the quality of the recording well in advance of recording your presentation.* It is essential that you consider the many issues that will affect the quality of both the visual and audio aspects of the recording. The following recommendations will help you make decisions about how and where to best record a presentation from home.

The Setting

When choosing a location in which to record your presentation, be sure to select a recording space in which you can control the lighting and background and minimize sound reverberation and distracting noises (car horns, ductwork fans, etc.). When selecting a setting for your presentation, consider how the following factors will affect your recording:

Size of the space: The space needs to be big enough to accommodate you, your visual aids, and any audience members you may have.

Lighting: Never choose a space with a window or bright light behind the presenter. Light sources should come from in front of the speaker, behind the camera, or above or to the side of the presenter. The light should help spotlight the presenter, but check to make sure the lighting isn't too dark or too bright to show up well on your camera.

Background: Choose a quiet indoor space with a neutral, light colored background, such as a blank or minimally decorated wall, to minimize distracting visual cues. The area behind the presenter should be plain, and a color different from the clothing of the presenter to provide visual contrast. Any objects visible in the background should be appropriate for a professional audience. If you lack an appropriate neutral background, you may be able to create one by taping or pinning a solid colored flat sheet across a doorway or closet. Do not record outdoors.

Sound: Make sure that the sound quality allows a viewer to hear you clearly with no need to strain to make out what's being said. To be sure your particular recording device is adequate, first create a test video and ask someone unfamiliar with your presentation to repeat back words from the recorded presentation. Be aware of and when possible, eliminate distracting sounds that distort the sound captured by the camera. Traffic, ventilation fans, and sounds from nearby rooms are common noises, but there are many more.

Audience members: If you will have an audience watching your presentation, your audience will need to be seated at least 8 feet away from you. If you have access, a conference room might work well; local libraries often have small rooms available for free public use. Remember that the camera needs to have a clear view of you from at least the waist up, leaving some space above you in the frame, so you might want to create an "aisle" for the camera in the middle of the audience. Generally, the camera will need to be about 10 to 12 feet away from the speaker.

The Camera

Ideally, recordings would be made using actual video cameras such as a digital video recorder (DVR) or personal video recorder (PVR). If you don't have access to either, your cell phone or webcam can be used, but these devices are often limited in terms of their sound quality, as their microphones are designed to pick up sound only in close proximity (< 3 feet). Make sure that the camera produces a video showing you in clear focus. Finally, you must use a tripod or related firm steadying device to keep the camera steady. Place the camera at eye level with the speaker.

Practice and Rehearsal

It is crucial that you work out all of these issues before you record your speech for submission to your instructor. Making sure the technology works well is simply part of presenting online. Test out all the important options (like lighting, noise, seating, visual aids, etc.). Record yourself without an audience and check the recording for video and sound quality. This will be a great way to improve your performance and check your timing, too.

Recording the Presentation

Arrange for a camera operator: Have someone else who has practiced with the camera manage the camera. You have plenty to do as a presenter, so just relieve yourself of that responsibility. Now, you don't have to worry about setting up the tripod, turning the recording on and off, framing, zoom, or the camera being able to follow you. Practice with your camera operator to make sure they know how to use the equipment and when to start and stop.

Focusing and zooming in: Most video cameras have automatic focus, but make sure this is the case and that you are recorded clearly. You should also determine what level of zoom is correct given the distance the camera is from you.

Framing the speaker: The presenter should be slightly to one side of the center of the shot. We should see the person's body from at least the waist up to the head. Leave some space above the head in the shot. As explained above, if you have an audience, you may need to put an aisle down the middle of the audience so their heads don't block the camera's view of you. Raising the tripod height might help here, too. However, make sure to set the camera so it is easy for you to look at it, but also so it is easy for you to look at the audience.

Capturing the audience: If you need to demonstrate the presence of an audience for your presentation, here's how: prior to starting the presentation, start recording, introduce yourself, and pan across the audience as they turn to look at the camera. Pan the audience again at the end before turning the recording off. If the camera operator is one of the people being counted as part of the audience, just have him or her announce this fact to the camera.

Charging batteries: Always make sure the battery for the camera is completely charged. If your camera can be connected to wall outlet, consider having a cord available just for insurance.

Presentation Tips

Dress appropriately: Dress for your presentation as you would if you were delivering it in the classroom or other professional setting. No pajamas!

Get a good stance: If delivering a speech or presentation, stand up and get a good, slightly wide stance. Avoid swaying or nervous foot movements. For interviews in which you'll be seated and closer to the camera, limit gestures as they can be distracting when close to the camera.

Make eye contact: *Make eye contact with the camera*, as well as with any audience members in the room with you. Remember that the camera represents the audience you *can't* see. Eye contact with audience members, whether or not you can see them, helps them feel connected to you and your presentation content.

Speak slowly and clearly: Speak at a normal rate, projecting your voice to be clearly heard on camera; rehearse your volume in your test recording. Aim for a conversational (not rehearsed) tone infused with enthusiasm and energy.

Eliminate likely sources of distraction: If you have pets, perhaps move them to another room while you record. If you have children, ask someone to supervise them in another room while you record. Both pets and children are lovely, but their surprise appearance in your recording distracts you and your audience and will not add to the professionalism of your presentation.

Avoid distracting yourself: Some phone, laptop, or tablet apps (such as FaceTime, Skype, Zoom) include a small window with the view of you from your device's camera; if this small window distracts you, look to see if you can turn off this feature in your app. If not, cover the small window with a sticky note!

Sending the Recording to Your Instructor

Recorded presentation files are large, often many megabytes or gigabytes in size. Therefore, they are too big to be emailed. Have a plan for how to deliver your presentation to your instructor.

Uploading your recording: If you have a Google Drive, OneDrive, or Stream account with sufficient storage space, you can upload your presentation to this drive, then share the link with your instructor. Alternately, you could upload the recording to YouTube, set the video to "unlisted," and email the link to your instructor.

Do not edit or doctor your presentation recording: If presented in class, you would not have the opportunity for multiple "takes," and the goal is to show what you can do in person in one continuously recorded presentation. Therefore, do not edit or manipulate your video in any way.