Oral Presentations

Preparation: Carefully choose the information that you will include in your presentation. Detailed content is often less critical in a verbal medium than in a written one. Create an outline and highlight the set of main points which you would like to convey. After each main point, construct a transition, which will lead you to the next step. Note instances where examples, demonstrations, or visual aids will be useful. As a general rule, use one visual aid every two minutes – keep them simple, visible, and attractive. Be sure to consider how much time each step will take – one of the most common mistakes is speaking too long.

Organization: The martini glass method.
1. **Tell 'em** what you're gonna say:
   - Start broad; then narrow your field of interest until you get to your olive (thesis statement, purpose, etc.). Identify it and explain how you will develop it in your presentation.
2. Then **say it**:
   - Proceed through the body of your talk point by point, being sure to organize facts as they are relevant to your points. Do not repeat facts.
3. Then **tell 'em** what you said:
   - Summarize your specific points; then broaden your field of interest and conclude with more general statements. Refer back to your olive. Don’t use phrases like “to conclude” or “in summary.”

Delivery: Speak extemporaneously. Don’t read or memorize your presentation. Have a brief outline of notes which will keep you on track. The most important rule of delivery is PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE! When you practice, you should time yourself, use your visual aids, and ask a friend to watch and give you feedback. Take advantage of one of the oral communication studios on campus.

Fear: Fear is a natural human reaction to situations involving public speaking. The most effective cure for stage fright is the recognition that EVERYONE has it. In fact, a degree of nervousness can help to promote adrenaline flow which is often necessary for delivery of a dynamic and captivating presentation. View your nervousness as a challenge and be rational – you are all doing this to learn, not to impress one another. Here are some guidelines to avoid a mental meltdown:

2. Breathe – Before you begin, breathe deeply.
3. Interact with your audience – Don’t just speak to your audience, communicate with them. Eye contact is vital.
4. Channel nervous energy – Focus any physical nervousness into smooth, controlled movements and voice modulations.
5. Communicate confidence – Show your audience you’re in control.
6. Don’t memorize your speech – It can be disastrous!

Listening: Turn-about is fair play. Be an attentive and respectful audience member.

Grading: The following criteria may be used in evaluating your oral presentation:

Content: accuracy / appropriateness / handouts or visual aids
Structure: introduction / statement of thesis / points and transitions / conclusion
Delivery: vocal style / physical presence / length