The

As Long as You Gotta Talk

You Might as Well Look Good

and Get a Good Grade

Handbook

Talking in front of a group is rated as people’s greatest fear. It doesn’t have to be. Your mission is to impress people and get a good grade. The mission really doesn’t change much the older you get. The grade may change form from a letter to a promotion to a bonus, but it still is a grade. So, get these skills down now, then continue to build on them and you will be successful. This handbook will focus on four (4) aspects of oral communication:

• Preparation
• Basic skills in front of the audience
• Visuals and their use
• Basic non-verbal communication

To get started, look at the next page of Myths. Accept the fact that you can be a good presenter and you need to be. Begin using the techniques presented here, but realize that these are skills. Just as in art or music or sports, skills cannot be mastered by reading about them. You will become an accomplished speaker only by doing it.
Mything Links
of Oral Communication and Stage Fright

Myth: I'm an engineer or a scientist or a writer or most other professions. I create stuff or fix stuff. Communication has never been a part of my job description.

Reality: Au contraire. Communication has always been implied in your job description. For you and your organization to be successful, you must be able to communicate to:
- share your ideas within a team
- explain your work to your boss
- explain technical concepts to non-technical people to sell a product, win a contract, win support for a project — keep your job.

If you expect to advance into management, you'll have to be a good communicator.

Myth: Speakers are born, not made.

Reality: Good speakers are confident. Planning, Practice and Perseverance develop confidence. Plan, Practice and Persevere and you will be a good speaker.

Myth: If I screw up, these people will think I’m a complete fool and I’ll never be able to face them.

Reality: Nahhh. If you stumble, you can work yourself out of it. Finish well and the stumble won’t be remembered. You won’t have to go into the Witness Protection Program. Most people are more concerned with their own lives to devote that much energy to you. Yes, you might actually look like a fool — for 30 seconds, at most. Lighten up! There’s no scientific evidence to support the fact that life is serious!

Myth: If you are scared of talking to a large group, picturing the audience wearing funny hats will relax you as you speak.

Reality: A room full of people wearing funny hats, now that's a terrifying image. Relaxation in front of an audience comes from confidence. Confidence comes from planning, practice and perseverance. Just do it!
What’s your Objective?

No, it’s not the grade, that is the result of meeting your objective, which is dependent on your assignment. In most cases, your objective is either to:

• Inform
• Persuade

How do you accomplish either of these? You first have to keep the audience listening. If the audience doesn’t listen, you can’t be successful!

Preparation

Get your act together in the beginning:

• **Define the goal of your presentation in one sentence**
  1- Be specific. (My goal is to inform my audience how an automobile transmission works, or My goal is to persuade my audience to support increased fuel economy standards.)
  2- Write the goal on paper and check that everything you say and all supporting materials help you achieve that goal.

• **Know who you’re talking to and talk to them**
  1- Use words at their level
  2- Don’t use fancy jargon you got out of an article just to impress them. It won’t work. They’ll stop listening. You lose.

• **Organize what you’ll say so the flow is logical.** That means, the audience can follow what you’re saying and keeps listening.
  1- Tell them what you’re going to tell them. This is an introduction. Have one.
  2- Tell it to them
  3- Tell them what you told them. This is a conclusion. Have one.

• **Less is More.** The less you tell them, the more they will hear and remember.
  1- Keep facts to a minimum.
  2- You don’t impress people with a bunch of facts. Facts are boring, high snooze factor.
  3- Only use facts that support your logical flow.

• **Know Your Subject**
  1- Know correct pronunciation of words.
  2- Be able to answer questions on anything you say. If you don’t understand something, don’t try to fake it.
Basic Skills in Front of an Audience

You must connect with your audience. *If they snooze, you lose.* Think about some of your teachers. Which ones kept you awake? Which ones taught you anything? Which ones did you think were good teachers? Audiences will look at you the same way.

- **Show some life!**
  1. Be enthusiastic! An audience will believe you if you look like you believe in what you’re saying. If you look bored, think how they will feel.
  2. Talk like you talk. You don’t talk in a monotone normally, why do it in front of a group?
     - Vary your pitch
     - Vary your tone
  3. Slow down and pause between thoughts. This allows your audience to absorb one idea before jumping on to the next one.
  4. *If you have to talk fast to get it all in, you’re trying to say too much.*

- **Don’t talk to the board, talk to the audience**
  1. Nothing raises the snooze factor like avoiding looking at your audience.
  2. Use overheads, if you can, and point to the overhead, not the board.
  3. If you must point, don’t talk with your back turned.
     - Stop talking
     - Look to the board to point
     - Point with the hand closest to the image (don’t cross your body to point)
     - Turn back to the audience
     - Resume talking
  4. *Make eye contact with one person to complete a thought then go to another person. Looking up, down, at the back wall, etc., doesn’t cut it!*

- **Look the part**
  1. Dress like a professional. If you don’t look like you think the presentation is important, how will you get anyone else to think it is?
  2. Don’t play with things while you talk. Pointers, cards, papers are distracting. The audience will focus on the motion, not the message. You lose.
  3. Don’t rock from side to side. A seasick audience isn’t listening.

- **Practice, Practice, Practice, Practice, Practice, Practice**
  1. All the tips in the world won’t make up for a lack of preparation.
  2. The more you practice, the more comfortable you become with the material and the more confident you will feel.
Visually and their Use

- If they can’t be read in the cheap seats, they’re not any good.
  1- Portrait orientation
  2- Maximum 5 lines
  3- 5-7 words per line, phrases are enough
  4- Large Font
  5- KISS (Keep it Simple, Students)

- Make all your visuals count.
  1- Each must support your purpose. If it doesn’t, don’t use it.
  2- Visuals can help you show instead of tell. (i.e. how parts go together, how something works, etc.)

- Talk to the audience, not the visual.
  1- There is nothing more boring than someone talking to the board. (Yes, this was said earlier. It’s that important!)
  2- Make eye contact with everyone in the audience.

- Don’t
  1- Copy tables, complicated charts or complicated diagrams out of books onto overheads. High snooze factor. Pull out what you need and make a new one.
  2- Stand in the way of the projector or visual. Arrange the room so everyone can see the visual

Basic Non-verbal Communication

- Know what your body language is saying.
  1- You often say more with your body than with your words. Learn the message your actions are sending. (That’s beyond the scope of this Handbook.)
  2- Make the non-verbal message match the verbal one.

- Read the message your audience is sending. Adjust if you are boring them.
  1- Don’t keep going on and on when audience members are staring out the window, doodling, closing their eyes or resting their heads on desks.
  2- Get the audience involved.
    - Ask a rhetorical question.
    - Ask a specific question and call on someone. Pick someone who is paying attention, you don’t want to embarrass a classmate in front of the teacher for not listening. No, you don’t. Paybacks will be worse on you.
    - If no one is listening, ask a question that you will answer coming up, and tell them you will call on someone to answer it. This may help to keep people awake because no one wants the teacher knowing he/she isn’t listening.
Conclusion

Presentations are important. Prepare it well. Practice it. Know how to give it. Read the audience and react to them. You will do well. You will get good grades, get good jobs, get big promotions and make lots of money. Be successful.

Attached is an evaluation form that will be used to evaluate your presentation. No excuses for not doing well.

Notes:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Rubric</th>
<th>Poor 1 pt</th>
<th>Fair 2 pts</th>
<th>Good 3 pts</th>
<th>Excellent 4 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information. No Introduction or Conclusion. Does not achieve stated Goal.</td>
<td>Audience has difficulty following presentation because student jumps around. Missing either Introduction or Conclusion. Partially achieves stated Goal.</td>
<td>Student presents information in logical sequence which audience can follow. Introduction and Conclusion obvious. Achieves stated Goal.</td>
<td>Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow. Creativity evident.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about subject.</td>
<td>Student is uncomfortable with information and is able to answer only rudimentary questions.</td>
<td>Student is at ease with expected answers to all questions, but fails to elaborate.</td>
<td>Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required) by answering all class questions with explanations and elaboration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graphics</strong></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student uses superfluous graphics or no graphics</td>
<td>Student occasionally uses graphics that rarely support text and presentation.</td>
<td>Student's graphics relate to text and presentation.</td>
<td>Student's graphics explain and reinforce screen text and presentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graphics Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student's visuals have two or more proofreading errors. Visuals are not readable from the cheap seats.</td>
<td>Visuals have one proofreading error. Visuals have small details that are not readable.</td>
<td>Visuals have no proofreading errors and are readable by entire audience.</td>
<td>Visuals have no misspellings or grammatical errors, are readable. Visuals hold attention and show creativity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eye Contact</strong></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student reads all of report with no eye contact. Student reads from OH or visual.</td>
<td>Student occasionally uses eye contact, but still reads most of report.</td>
<td>Student maintains eye contact most of the time but frequently returns to notes.</td>
<td>Student maintains eye contact with audience, seldom returning to notes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Elocution
- **Poor**
  - Student mumbles, and speaks too quietly for students in the back of class to hear.
- **Fair**
  - Student's voice is low. Audience members have difficulty hearing presentation.
- **Good**
  - Student's voice is clear. Most audience members can hear presentation.
- **Excellent**
  - Student uses a clear voice and correct so that all audience members can hear presentation.

### Mechanics
- **Poor**
  - Student repeatedly crosses body while pointing, blocks audience from seeing visual, fumbles with notes, plays with pointer while talking.
- **Fair**
  - Student sometimes uses Poor techniques.
- **Good**
  - Student occasionally uses Poor techniques.
- **Excellent**
  - Student does not demonstrate any Poor techniques

### Preparation
- **Poor**
  - Student hesitates and stumbles over words or thoughts repeatedly. Student does not meet time window. Materials are not prepared when student begins.
- **Fair**
  - Student hesitates and stumbles over some words or thoughts. Student does not know the correct pronunciation of any words. Student searches for materials during presentation.
- **Good**
  - Student occasionally hesitates and stumbles over words or thoughts.
- **Excellent**
  - Student presents smoothly with only minor hiccups.

### Comments:

Full credit for a presentation is all *Good* ratings (30 points). *Excellent* ratings are worth extra credit. Final presentation grade is the percentage of student score divided by 30, times the actual value of the presentation. (i.e. If the presentation is worth 50 points and the student receives a 27 on this rubric, the score would be 

\[(27/30)*50=45\text{ points}\]

*Based on* [http://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?sp=yes&b=%23%2D%5BC6%0A&](http://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?sp=yes&b=%23%2D%5BC6%0A&)