

Introducing Expectations for Oral Presentations: A 55-Minute Lesson Plan

1. Do Exercise: Similarities and Differences Between Writing and Speaking

1. 3-minute free write about similarities between writing and speaking, especially similarities between writing a paper and giving a presentation
2. 3-minute free speak with peer partner about differences between writing and speaking
3. 5 to 7 minutes reporting out by addressing these two prompts:
 - *What are the most important similarities?*
 - *What is different about a presentation that can make it sometimes more effective than a paper?*

2. Brainstorm on board components/criteria for oral presentations.

Let students generate these in any order, but as you put them on the board, begin to group them in three columns (don't put the headers on the columns yet).

3. Categorize these components as related to *Content, Structure, or Delivery*.

Label the three columns Content, Structure, and Delivery. Explain importance of each and emphasize structure as perhaps the most important difference about speaking to which they should attend.

4. Discuss briefly how they (and you) might weigh the three categories when grading.

5. Create commentary sheets by dividing sheet of paper into three columns (for Content, Structure, and Delivery).

6. Watch a sample student presentation; use three-column sheet to take notes for feedback.

A sample presentation that works well is "True Blue: An Informative Speech" from the Belmont University Speech Lab: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHLIZ_Qy_CE

7. Solicit feedback from students; as necessary, steer discussion toward content and structure.

With the "True Blue" presentation, students often are initially fixated on what they see as the speaker's composure and entertaining demeanor; it may take some questioning to get them to think more deeply about, for instance, the organization of his argument.

8. Distribute "Content, Structure, Delivery" handout

9. Explain their assignment; distribute criteria/rubric (tweaked to reflect particular task).

See the reverse of this sheet for a starter template you can adapt for your use.

10. Provide now (or closer to presentation dates) questions for required self-evaluation.

Require students to submit their self-evaluations the class period after they present; don't write up a grade until you receive the reflection, and as much as possible refer to the student's own evaluation of their presentation as you offer yours (and the final grade).

Presentation Feedback

Content & Organization

Introduction

- Engaging (e.g., story, image, question, fact/stats)
- Clear focus/question
- Explicit preview of structure and content

Comments:

Body/Development

- Logical organizational scheme
- Ideas explained, terms and concepts defined
- Transitions/Flow between points
- Restatements and signposts

Comments:

Evidence and Research

- Points and ideas supported with evidence
- Sources **cited** in some way

Comments:

Conclusion

- Recaps and reinforces
- Closes strong

Comments:

Delivery

- Enthusiasm for topic
- Eye contact
- Gestures and body language reinforce message
- Voice: appropriate volume, speed, emphases
- Ease with notes and any visuals

Comments:

- Stayed within time limits?
- Prepared for **Question and Answer** period?

Audiovisual Elements

- Enhance presentation without dominating
- Integrated with what is being said

[Slides or poster:]

- “Less is more” – bullets, text, images
- Legible at distance; simple, uncluttered, consistent design
- Charts and graphs are clear, helpful
- Sources of images **cited**

Comments:

Final thoughts:

Presentation Self-Evaluation

I. CONTENT

- Was the purpose of the presentation clear?
- Was the presentation appropriate for the assignment (met time limits, covered the appropriate material, etc.)?
- Did I really pull the audience in with an attention-getting introduction?
- Did I make my theme clear and give background information?
- Was my presentation clearly organized and easy to follow?
- Did I have transitions between all of the main sections of my speech?
- Did I leave any gaps, not answer any questions, or leave connections unexplained?

II. DELIVERY

- Did I maintain eye contact with my audience?
- Did I have vocal variety (didn't sound monotone)?
- Did I control my gestures and facial expressions?
- Did I have too many vocal fillers ("um", "uh", "like", etc.)?
- Did I have good posture? Appear confident?
- Did I seem enthusiastic?
- Was I within the time limits allowed for this presentation?
- Did I rehearse this presentation beforehand?

III. VISUAL ELEMENTS

- Did the visuals add to the presentation?
- Were the visuals used well?

IV. OVERALL

What Were My 1 or 2 Main Weaknesses?

1.

2.

What Were My 1 or 2 Main Strengths?

1.

2.

Content, Structure, and Delivery: What to Say in a Presentation (and How to Say It)

THE WHAT: Content

- **Make a sentence outline**, either working from a draft or completed paper *or* outlining your main points for a project.
- Then, **cut out any of these sentences** that are not vital for you to make your point.
- Using your pared-down sentence outline, **find one or two specific pieces of evidence** from your research to support each.
- Don't overwhelm your audience by reading many long quotations from other sources; **one or two well-placed quotations** might help add some power and authority to your presentation.
- Decide which **statistics, facts, figures, or dates** are essential for you to discuss aloud. If you must show a progression over time or make a comparison of statistics, you might use a visual aid.

THE HOW: Structure and Delivery

- Work from **notecards** or a one-page **sentence outline**; don't read from a script or read slides.
- Write **one topic sentence** for each main point you want to cover, **and practice** it so it sounds polished and natural.
- Write out **transition phrases or sentences** between each main section of your talk and put them in bold or all-caps on your outline. **Rehearse these**, too.
- Include **signal phrases** to cite material drawn from the work of others ("As Bernard Smith has pointed out...").
- Write out a **short introduction** (approximately 1 minute) and a **short conclusion** (around 30 seconds).
- Then, **MEMORIZE your intro and conclusion**, as well as your transitions.
- Prepare ahead of time for **questions**.
- Perhaps consider **an interactive element**, something that asks the audience to respond to you or to each other.

...and asking WHY: Using Visual Aids

- Ask yourself the hard question, "**Why do I want to use slides (or handouts or other visuals)?**"
- Visual aids can be helpful if you need to illustrate complex concepts that are difficult to visualize or create a certain mood or tone
- Visual aids can detract from your presentation when they are overly detailed or flashy, simply serve as cue cards, or limit interaction with your audience.
- **Handouts** can be useful for showing data that you want everyone to look at several times or to gather quotations that you don't read aloud during your presentation.
- Avoid the temptation to simply read a handout straight through to your audience; even consider not giving the handout out until near the end of the presentation.
- **Slides or Prezi** might be preferable to handouts if you have many different data sets you need to go through, or if you need to display essential visual images (photographs, maps, etc.) to complement your discussion.