

COMMUNICATING SKILLS***Hints for Oral Presentations***

Tomorrow, Gabe has to give a speech about pearls in his science class. Before going through this worksheet, he was very worried, but now he is confident that he has a well-organized speech.

Giving a speech or an oral presentation is a real challenge to many people. This worksheet offers some hints for organizing your speech, controlling stage fright, and watching your language.

Organizing Your Speech

Just like a written report, a speech has three main parts: an *introduction*, a *body*, and a *conclusion*. Here are some hints about each of these parts to help you get organized.

■ The Introduction

The beginning of your speech is the **introduction**. The introduction can be as short as a few sentences. It is very important for the following three reasons:

- It gets the attention of your audience.
- It is a way for you to gain the audience's respect and "good feelings."
- It gives you the chance to build the audience's interest in your topic.

Gabe's introduction will read, "Did you know that some jewelry is made by animals? It's true, only oysters make pearls."

What makes a good introduction?

Tell Them What You Are Going to Tell Them

Here are some hints for writing an interesting introduction. Choose one.

- Surprise your audience; begin your speech with a startling statement, get their attention.
- Begin your speech with a question. Let the audience think about it for a few moments, and then answer the question. The audience will be listening for your answer.
- Begin your speech with a quotation that fits your topic.
- Begin your speech with a personal reference. If your speech is about how bicycles stay upright when being ridden, tell the story of how you learned to ride your bike.
- Begin your speech with an audio-visual presentation that supports your topic.



Hints for Oral Presentations, continued

■ The Body

After your introduction comes the **body** of your speech. In the body, you develop all your main ideas or main points.

Below are the main points Gabe will include in the body of his speech.

- A. why and how oysters make pearls
- B. facts about natural pearls
- C. how people “farm” pearls

To organize the body of your speech, follow the guidelines below.

Tell Them What You Want to Tell Them

- **Select** the main ideas you want to cover.
- **Outline** all the material you plan to include in your speech (all your main ideas plus all the supporting information that goes with them).
- **Organize** your speech in a logical, interesting pattern.

Here are some patterns to consider:

- chronological order (follow the order in which things happen),
- problem and solution (present a problem, then offer your solution to it),
- cause and effect (talk about a condition, then discuss the causes of that condition), or
- topical order (break down your topic into parts, then discuss each of the parts).

■ The Conclusion

The **conclusion** is the last, but not the least, part of your speech. Like the introduction, it should be only a few sentences long. A good conclusion is brief but powerful. It emphasizes the key ideas of your speech, and it focuses the emotions of your audience. A good conclusion will leave your audience excited, sad, glad, angry—or whatever emotional response you intend—if you prepare it properly.

Gabe chose to end his speech humorously. His conclusion reads, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The pearl, which is a treasure to man, is only an annoyance to the oyster.”

Hints for Oral Presentations, continued

The Big Finish! Tell Them What You Told Them

Choose one of the following paths to a powerful conclusion:

- Use a short restatement of your most important information. This is the quickest and easiest type of conclusion, but usually the least interesting.
- Make a recommendation or propose a change; tell the audience what you want them to do.
- Give a stirring ending by using a strong quotation, telling a story, using an illustration, or relating a personal experience. This will intensify the audience's feelings; they will feel what you want them to feel.

Giving Your Speech—Overcoming Stage Fright

Stage fright is the nervousness that people feel before and during the presentation of a speech.

Overcoming Stage Fright

Before your speech, you should—

- Prepare everything carefully and completely; give yourself plenty of time for practice.
- Look your best; dress in the way that makes you feel most confident.
- Relax tense muscles; close your eyes, stretch, breathe slowly, and be positive.
- Remind yourself that you are prepared and that you have something interesting to share with the audience.
- Be confident, and let your body language show it! Take a deep breath, then go for it!

During your speech, nervousness may cause—

- Queasy feeling or butterflies; once you get started, these symptoms will go away.
- Dry mouth; start your speech slowly, and as you continue, dry mouth will disappear.
- Word fumbles as you begin; practice several different opening lines so you will be comfortable with a variety of ways of getting started.
- Perspiration, squeaky voice, trembling; **ignore** these reactions, your body will return to normal once you get rolling.
- Thoughts like “I want to quit!” **Don't give up!** Finish your speech, no matter how bad it seems.

There are a few things you need to know about stage fright:

- ➔ **It is perfectly normal to be nervous.** Even experienced speakers get a little nervous before they speak.
- ➔ Believe it or not, **your audience probably will not even notice** your nervousness! On the inside, you may feel tense or jittery, but it probably doesn't show on the outside.



Hints for Oral Presentations, continued

- ➔ The more you **practice** before your speech (and the more speeches you give), the more confident you will become. Each time you make an oral presentation or practice your speech, you will make fewer and fewer mistakes. Pretty soon, making an oral presentation might even become fun! It's true!

Finally, Watch Your Language!

Language comes in two forms, verbal and nonverbal. *Verbal language* is what you say and write. *Nonverbal language* is how you communicate without words, such as with your appearance, your body language (facial expression, eye contact, gestures, posture, and movement), and the sound of your voice. When you give an oral presentation, both what you say and **how you say it** are very important.

Lookin' Good!

Here are suggestions for improving your nonverbal language:

- **Look at** individuals in your audience; let them know you are speaking directly to them, it will keep their interest.
- Your **facial expression** should reflect what you are saying. If your subject is serious, your expression should be serious; if you are excited about something, your face should show your excitement.
- **Don't worry about your hands!** Start off with your hands by your sides or on the speaker's stand. Relax. Soon your hands will begin to move naturally, as if you were having a normal conversation with your audience.
- Never slouch, slump, or look sloppy! **Stand up straight**, and show your audience that you are confident and proud of your work!
- Let your **enthusiasm** show in your voice.

Speech! Speech!

Now you are ready to give your speech.

- ➔ Remember to speak clearly and distinctly.
- ➔ Do not rush.
- ➔ Do not panic.
- ➔ If you've chosen a topic you enjoy and you're prepared, **YOU CAN DO IT!** Relax!

And once it is over, you'll be surprised; you may want to do it again!

Good Luck!