

Speaking Do's and Don'ts:

Do:

- Practice, practice, practice! Practice by yourself, practice in front of a mirror, but more importantly, practice with someone else watching you – friends, roommates, parents, girl/boyfriend, etc. This will 1) give you the experience of speaking in front of people, 2) allow you the opportunity for immediate feedback about your organization, word choice, etc., and 3) help you become more knowledgeable about the information you want to convey.
- Use engaging visuals. Visuals aren't just about PowerPoint or pictures. Visuals can be charts, graphs, tables, objects, videos, maps . . . anything that helps to *enhance* a certain portion of your speech. Be creative and think outside the box!
- Move! Incorporating gestures and deliberate movement into your presentation takes away some of the formality and adds a natural vibe. Move to the other side of the room when transitioning from main point to main point; move toward the audience when you want to emphasize a certain phrase or idea; use gestures when you want to stress a particular concept; interact with your visual aid: point out what the blue line means, the difference in the two bars, etc.
- Speak conversationally. You don't want to sound like a politician or a "rhetorician"; you want to sound natural and conversational. Speak just as you would if there were only one or two people in the room instead of 30, 50, or even more.
- Know the equipment you will be using. If you are unfamiliar with your speaking environment, arrive early and practice using the equipment before your presentation. You don't want the great speech you put together to be shadowed by the fact that you don't know which button to push on the remote.
- Realize you are not alone. Everyone has some level of anxiety before speaking; this is perfectly natural. As they say, "it's not about getting rid of the butterflies, it's about making the butterflies fly in formation."

Don't:

- Wing it. No matter how comfortable you feel speaking in front of a group, your presentation will more than likely flop if you don't have solid structure to your speech. Plan your speech section by section: introduction, main points, and conclusion. Don't assume you can talk for however long your time limit is and still make sense.
- Read your notes or your visual word-for-word. Eye contact is the most important connection to your audience. When you read notes or continuously look at your visuals, you break that connection. You also speed up your rate, lower your volume, and use less expression in your vocal delivery. This is where practice becomes your best weapon.

- Stand behind the podium. Popular belief says, “If I stand back here behind the podium, my audience can’t see how nervous I really am.” This is a myth, and the fact is just the opposite. The more we hide behind the podium, the more the audience sees just how jittery we are. Move away from the podium after your introduction toward the audience. Your audience will thank you for it.
- Fidget. Be aware of what your body is doing: where are your hands, what are your feet and legs doing, how is your posture? Being center stage means you are the center of attention, which in turn means that all eyes are on you and what you are doing. Every scratch of your arm, flip of your hair, and shuffle of your feet is seen by your audience and magnified ten times over. Channel that “nervous energy” into more deliberate movement (across the room, toward the audience, etc.) and gestures.

Websites:

<http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/> - This website reviews articles written on public speaking and condenses the information in a nice blog. (You can subscribe to receive emails of the blogs, which is a nice feature.)

<http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/> - This website is fairly dense, but if you dig deep enough, you can find some really great information regarding do’s/don’ts of PowerPoint, etc.