



Presentations in the Sciences

Audience Analysis: During the preparation process, assess the audience. Are they novices or scholars well attuned to the terminology and concept? Your content and vocabulary should be tailored to the audience, keeping in mind that more explanation and clarification is needed for novices or the general population.

Clear Organization: Use deductive instead of inductive reasoning by stating the thesis or topic clearly and supporting it with evidence. The audience should not have to “piece together” what you are trying to conclude.

- The introduction should briefly review the existing literature on the topic and other necessary background information to set the stage for the body.
- The conclusion should convey a “take-home” message without being overly obvious or pedantic. Most instructors prefer you to present as if you were giving a speech to science scholars at a conference.

Delivery: Show enthusiasm for your topic. Maintain sustained eye contact rather than reading from notes. Preparing notes in an outline form can help with this.

Visual Aids: The key to effective use of visual aids is to be audience-centered. Focus on simple, minimal visual aids that will support, clarify, or complement your words. If complex diagrams are needed, e.g. for showing holistic processes, consider displaying only parts of the visual at a time. Provide the information the audience needs to process the visual

fully, such as pointing out X and Y axes, trends, as well as the significance of the figure.

Practice: As with any presentation, you should practice your presentation repeatedly. Simulate the speaking situation as closely as possible by practicing in a room with a similar physical setup (technology, room configuration etc.) as the room you are to present in. Ask peers to critique your presentation as you practice. Remember - you may have a wealth of information to share, but if you did not get your main message across to the audience, you have not achieved your goal.

You have an important message to share - be well prepared and enjoy the experience!

Compiled by Dr. Esther Yook, Speaking Center Director, Mary Washington College 2004