



Preparing Notes for Oral Presentations

While several of the following reminders might strike you as obvious, speakers often ignore them when preparing to speak:

1. **USE an outline format for your notes:**

An outline helps you visually recall the structure of your talk. Placing numerals and letters by the various points in your talk also helps you distinguish main points from subordinate ones. If you indent supporting points, the outline will be easier to read while you are speaking

2. **KEEP the outline as brief as possible:**

Too much detail on your notes encourages you to read them to your audience. When this happens, you can't maintain eye contact with your listeners, and you will lose any sense of conversation with your audience.

3. **PLACE visual cues on the outline if necessary:**

A good speaking outline includes the content of the talk as well as reminders about *how* you wish to proceed. Mark sections of notes where you wish to pause, or to speak more slowly or loudly, to achieve emphasis. Remind yourself about when to use a visual aid (e.g., when to pause at a particular spot to ask the audience for questions).

4. **MAKE your speaking notes legible:**

Under the stress of speaking before a group, you may not be able to decipher your own writing. Because you'll need to be able to read your notes at a distance, type them in a large font-size. If you want to use index cards, cut and paste your typed notes to the cards.

5. **PRACTICE speaking with the notes you have prepared:**

Rehearse your talk at least once before the official presentation date. Rehearsing ensures that your notes will successfully guide you through your oral presentation and that you will speak no longer than the allotted time.