



The Weissman Center for Leadership and the Liberal Arts  
The Speaking, Arguing, and Writing Program  
122 Porter Hall

## Tips for Public Speaking

### Before you start preparing the presentation:

- Reread the syllabus and think about what is being asked of you for an oral presentation. What are the requirements for the presentation? What type of research will be required? Is there a time limit on your presentation? Are you to speak extemporaneously (delivered with the help of few or no notes) or read from a manuscript? Remember: Professors choose speaking assignments that are related to the topic you are studying! If you don't understand why the assignment is relevant, ASK the professor!
- Determine the general purpose of the oral presentation: to inform, to persuade, and/or to entertain. Again, ask the professor if you don't understand what is expected of you.
- Identify and analyze your audience to determine how to best approach your topic: Who are they (e.g. classmates, professor, the town)? What do they already know about the topic? How will you establish credibility with your audience? Why should they care about your topic?
- Select and narrow a topic: What interests you? Is the topic significant/relevant to the assignment? What types of (scholarly and popular) sources on your topic are available?

### While you are preparing:

- Gather an assortment of supporting materials from credible sources for facts, statistics, examples, and testimony. Hint: supporting materials should be arranged strategically to support your idea(s) and grab the attention of your audience.
- Phrase your central idea in a single sentence that is the essence of your message: this is the thesis of your speech!
- Identify the main points of your speech that support your thesis.
- Organize a formal written outline with a strong and clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Also, include a list of all your sources (see handout for organizing a formal outline).
- Read your outline aloud to check your speech for good form and clarity. Revise if necessary.
- Create a speaking (key word) outline that will be visible and clear as you make your presentation.
- If you plan to use any visual aids, make sure they are well designed, easy to see for all audience members, and well executed. Do you need any special equipment the day of your speech?
- Practice! Time your speech; stay within the allotted time limit.

### Delivering your oral presentation:

- Practice relaxation techniques and breathing exercises prior to your presentation.
- Create goodwill with your audience by approaching your audience calmly and confidently, making eye contact, and showing enthusiasm for your topic.
- Attempt to be as natural as possible when you speak. Strive for a friendly, conversational tone in your delivery.
- Pay attention to your bodily gestures and your speech volume, rate, and enunciation.
- Be prepared to answer any questions about your presentation topic once you are finished.

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/go/saw>

For an appointment, call x2651