

PART VI

CHAPTER 6: DEVELOPING PRESENTATIONS

38. Introduction

Chapter 6 Learning Outcomes

1. Identify the different methods of speech delivery.
2. Identify key elements in preparing to deliver a speech.
3. Understand the benefits of delivery-related behaviors.
4. Utilize specific techniques to enhance speech delivery.



Abe has spent weeks doing research and crafting a strong, well-prepared, researched presentation. On the day she gets in front of the finance team, she makes a few mistakes because of nerves. While she may view it as a complete failure, her audience will have gotten a lot of good information, and most likely written off her mistakes due to nerves (surely they would be nervous in the same situation!).

Abe's colleague, Chris, on the other hand, does almost no preparation for his presentation, but, being charming and comfortable in front of a crowd, smiles a lot while providing virtually nothing of substance. The audience takeaway from Chris's speech is, "I have no idea what he was talking about" and other feelings ranging from "He's good in front of an audience" to "I don't trust him."

As you read this chapter, consider strategies that Abe might use to reduce her nervousness, and ways that Chris might be better prepared for his presentations.

Many surveys have shown that public speaking is at the top of the list of fears for most people – sometimes, more high on the list than death. No one is afraid of writing their speech or conducting the research: people generally only fear the delivery aspect of the speech, which, compared to the amount of time you will put into writing the speech (days, hopefully), will be the shortest part of the speech giving process (5–8 minutes, generally, for classroom speeches). The irony, of course, is that delivery, being the thing people fear the most, is simultaneously the aspect of public speaking that will require the least amount of time.

Watch this 15 minute TEDtalks video: Why People Fear Public Speaking with Dave Guin



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Chapter Preview

- The Importance of Delivery
- Methods of Speech Delivery
- Preparing For Your Delivery
- Practicing Your Delivery
- What to do When Delivering Your Speech
- Conclusion

39. Methods of Presentation Delivery

The Importance of Delivery



Delivery is what you are probably most concerned about when it comes to giving presentations. This chapter is designed to help you give the best delivery possible and eliminate some of the nervousness you might be feeling. To do that, you should first dismiss the myth that public speaking is just reading and talking at the same time. Speaking in public has more formality than talking.

During a speech, you should present yourself professionally. This doesn't necessarily mean you must wear a suit or "dress up", but it does mean making yourself presentable by being well groomed and wearing clean, appropriate clothes. It also means being prepared to use language correctly and appropriately for the audience and the topic, to make eye contact with your audience, and to look like you know your topic very well.

While speaking has more formality than talking, it has less formality than reading. Speaking allows for flexibility, meaningful pauses, eye contact, small changes in word order, and vocal emphasis. Reading is a more or less exact replication of words on paper without the use of any nonverbal interpretation. Speaking, as you will realize if you think about excellent speakers you have seen and heard, provides a more animated message.

Methods of Presentation Delivery

There are four methods of delivery that can help you balance between too much and too little formality when giving a presentation.

Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking is the presentation of a short message without advance preparation. You have probably done impromptu speaking many times in informal, conversational settings. Self-introductions in group settings are examples of impromptu speaking: "Hi, my name is Steve, and I'm an account manager." Another example of impromptu presenting occurs when you answer a question such as, "What did you think of the report?" Your response has not been preplanned, and you are

constructing your arguments and points as you speak. Even worse, you might find yourself going into a meeting and your boss says, “I want you to talk about the last stage of the project...” and you had no warning.

The advantage of this kind of speaking is that it’s spontaneous and responsive in an animated group context. The disadvantage is that the speaker is given little or no time to contemplate the central theme of his or her message. As a result, the message may be disorganized and difficult for listeners to follow.

Here is a step-by-step guide that may be useful if you are called upon to give an impromptu presentation in public:

1. Take a moment to collect your thoughts and plan the main point you want to make.
2. Thank the person for inviting you to speak. Avoid making comments about being unprepared, called upon at the last moment, on the spot, or feeling uneasy.
3. Deliver your message, making your main point as briefly as you can while still covering it adequately and at a pace your listeners can follow.
4. If you can use a structure, using numbers if possible: “Two main reasons...” or “Three parts of our plan...” or “Two side effects of this drug...” Timeline structures are also effective, such as “past, present, and future or East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast”.
5. Thank the person again for the opportunity to speak.
6. Stop talking (it is easy to “ramble on” when you don’t have something prepared). If in front of an audience, don’t keep talking as you move back to your seat.

Impromptu presentations: the presentation of a short message without advance preparation.

Impromptu presentations are generally most successful when they are brief and focus on a single point.

For additional advice on impromptu speaking, watch the following 4 minute video from Toastmasters: *Impromptu Speaking*



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Manuscript Presentations

Manuscript presentations are the word-for-word iteration of a written message. In a manuscript presentation, the speaker maintains their attention on the printed page except when using visual aids. The advantage of reading from a manuscript is the exact repetition of original words. In some circumstances this can be extremely important. For example, reading a statement about your organization's legal responsibilities to customers may require that the original words be exact.

A manuscript presentation may be appropriate at a more formal affair (like a report to shareholders), when your presentation must be said exactly as written in order to convey the proper emotion or decorum the situation deserves.

However, there are costs involved in manuscript presentations. First, it's typically an uninteresting way to present. Unless the presenter has rehearsed the reading as a complete performance animated with vocal expression and gestures, the presentation tends to be dull. Keeping one's eyes glued to the script prevents eye contact with the audience. For this kind of "straight" manuscript

presentation to hold audience attention, the audience must be already interested in the message and presenter before the delivery begins.

It is worth noting that professional speakers, actors, news reporters, and politicians often read from an autocue device, commonly called a teleprompter, especially when appearing on television, where eye contact with the camera is crucial. With practice, a presenter can achieve a conversational tone and give the impression of speaking extemporaneously and maintaining eye contact while using an autocue device. However, success in this medium depends on two factors: (1) the presenter is already an accomplished public speaker who has learned to use a conversational tone while delivering a prepared script, and (2) the presentation is written in a style that sounds conversational and in spoken rather than written, edited English.

Extemporaneous Presentations

Extemporaneous presentations are carefully planned and rehearsed presentations, delivered in a conversational manner using brief notes. By using notes rather than a full manuscript, the extemporaneous presenter can establish and maintain eye contact with the audience and assess how well they are understanding the presentation as it progresses. Without all the words on the page to read, you have little choice but to look up and make eye contact with your audience.

Watch the following 10 minute video of a champion speaker presenting his extemporaneous speech: *2017 International Extemporaneous Speaking National Champion – Connor Rothschild Speech*



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Presenting extemporaneously has some advantages. It promotes the likelihood that you, the speaker, will be perceived as knowledgeable and credible since you know the speech well enough that you don't need to read it. In addition, your audience is likely to pay better attention to the message because it is engaging both verbally and nonverbally. It also allows flexibility; you are working from the strong foundation of an outline, but if you need to delete, add, or rephrase something at the last minute or to adapt to your audience, you can do so.

The disadvantage of extemporaneous presentations is that it in some cases it does not allow for the verbal and the nonverbal preparation that are almost always required for a good speech.

Adequate preparation cannot be achieved the day before you're scheduled to present, so be aware that if you want to present a credibly delivered speech, you will need to practice many times. Because extemporaneous presenting is the style used in the great majority of business presentation situations, most of the information in the subsequent sections of this chapter is targeted toward this kind of speaking.

Memorized Speaking

Memorized speaking is the recitation of a written message that the speaker has committed to memory. Actors, of course, recite from memory whenever they perform from a script in a stage play, television program, or movie scene. When it comes to speeches, memorization can be useful when the message needs to be exact and the speaker doesn't want to be confined by notes.

The advantage to memorization is that it enables the speaker to maintain eye contact with the audience throughout the speech. Being free of notes means that you can move freely around the stage and use your hands to make gestures. If your speech uses visual aids, this freedom is even more of an advantage. However, there are some real and potential costs.

First, unless you also plan and memorize every vocal cue (the subtle but meaningful variations in speech delivery, which can include the use of pitch, tone, volume, and pace), gesture, and facial expression, your presentation will be flat and uninteresting, and even the most fascinating topic will suffer. Second, if you lose your place and start trying to ad lib, the contrast in your style of delivery will alert your audience that something is wrong. More frighteningly, if you go completely blank during the presentation, it will be extremely difficult to find your place and keep going. Obviously, memorizing a typical seven-minute presentation takes a great deal of time and effort, and if you aren't used to memorizing, it is very difficult to pull off. Realistically, you probably will not have the time necessary to give a completely memorized speech. However, if you practice adequately, your approach will still feel like you are being extemporaneous.

40. Preparing For Your Delivery

Your audiences, circumstances, and physical contexts for presenting will vary, but will arise regularly in any business environment. Being prepared to deal with different presenting situations will help reduce anxiety you may have about giving a speech, so let's look at some common factors you need to keep in mind as you prepare for a typical business presentation.

Using Lecterns: Lecterns add formality to the presentation situation, but it can be tempting to hide behind it. Use it to hold your notes only. This will enhance your eye contact as well as free up your hands for gesturing, and give the appearance of confidence.

Large spaces: auditoriums or other large spaces can be intimidating. Preparation and practice will prevent poor performance; a rehearsal, if available, can also ease nerves. Slowing your speech to allow for echo, and adjust visual aids so they can be seen by those in the back of the hall.

Small spaces: these are usually easier to manage for presenters, but use note cards and visual aids carefully, as your audience will be able to see everything. Ideally, arrive early to set up your presentation material to prevent fumbling and delays.

Outdoors: Noise (cars, wind), insects, weather, sunshine and other environmental factors may be hard to control. Do your best to project your voice without yelling, and choose locations that are quiet and sheltered, if possible.

Using a Microphone: you can avoid difficulties with microphones by doing a rehearsal or test ahead of time. Ensure you enunciate clearly and give a few inches between your face and the microphone.

Small Audience Size: A small audience will allow for greater contact, but may invite interruptions. Deal with any questions politely and say you'll try to answer that question at the end of the presentation. Or, set the agenda at the beginning so that the audience knows there will be a question and answer period at the end.

The following web pages provide some additional concepts and strategies for presentations:



[Five Presentation Mistakes Everyone Makes](#)

[The Ten Most Common Presentation Mistakes](#)

[8 Tips on Giving Presentations Like a Pro](#)

41. Practising Your Delivery

There is no foolproof recipe for good delivery. You are a unique person, and you embody different experiences and interests from others. This means you have an approach, or a style, that is effective for you. It also means that your concern about what others think of you can cause anxiety, even during the most carefully researched and interesting presentation. But there are some techniques you can use to minimize that anxious feeling and put yourself in the best possible position to succeed on presentation day. You need to prepare for your presentation in as realistic a simulation as possible. What follows are some general tips you should keep in mind, but they all essentially derive from one very straight-forward premise: Practice your presentation beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it in person.

Practice Your Presentation Out Loud

Practice allows you to learn what to say, when and how to say it, but it also lets you know where potential problems lie. Since you will be speaking with a normal volume for your presentation, you need to practice that way, even at home. This helps you learn the presentation, but it will help identify any places where you tend to mispronounce words. Also, sentences on paper do not always translate well to the spoken medium. Practicing out loud allows you to actually hear where you have trouble and fix it before getting up in front of the audience.

Practice Your Presentation Standing Up

Since you will be standing for your presentation (in all likelihood), you need to practice that way. As we mention in more detail below, the default position for delivering a presentation is with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees slightly bent. Practising this way will help develop muscle memory and will make it feel more natural when you are doing it for real.

Practice Your Presentation with an Audience

The best way to prepare for the feeling of having someone watch you while giving a presentation is to have someone watch you while you practice. Ask your colleagues, friends, family, or significant other to listen to you while running through what you will say. Not only will you get practice in front of an audience, but they may be able to tell you about any parts that were unclear or problems you might encounter when delivering it on the day. During practice, it may help to pick out some strate-

gically placed objects around the room to occasionally glance at just to get into the habit of looking around more often and making eye contact with multiple people in your audience.

Practice Your Presentation for Time

You'll likely have a time limit for presentation. As a rule of thumb, plan to have a 60-second "buffer" at the end of your presentation, in case something goes wrong. For example, if your presentation is set for 10 minutes, plan for nine minutes. Should you rush through or end early, make sure you can add more detail to the end of your presentation if needed. With all of this in mind, practising at least three times at home will ensure your presentation is properly timed.

Practice Your Presentation by Filming Yourself

There is nothing that gets you to change what you're doing or correct a problem quicker than seeing yourself doing something you don't like on video. By watching yourself, you will notice all the small things you do that might prove to be distracting during the actual presentation.

It is important enough that it deserves reiterating: Practice your speech beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it on the scheduled day.

42. What to Do When Delivering Your Speech

The interplay between the verbal and nonverbal components of your speech can either bring the message vividly to life or confuse or bore the audience. Therefore, it is best that you neither over-dramatize your speech delivery behaviors nor downplay them. This is a balance achieved through rehearsal, trial and error, and experience. One way to think of this is in terms of the Goldilocks paradigm: you don't want to overdo the delivery because you might distract your audience by looking hyper or overly animated. Conversely, someone whose delivery is too understated (meaning they don't move their hands or feet at all) looks unnatural and uncomfortable, which can also distract. Just like Goldilocks, you want a delivery that is "just right". This middle ground between too much and too little is a much more natural approach to public speaking delivery, which will be covered in more detail in the following sections where we discuss aspects of your delivery and what you need to think about while actually giving your speech.

Watch the following 10 minute video: Use Body Language to Rock Your Next Presentation



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Hands: Use your hands as naturally as you would in normal conversation. Try to pay attention to what you do with your hands in regular conversations and incorporate that into your delivery. If you're not comfortable with that, rest them on the lectern or fold them in front of your body.

Feet: stand shoulder-width apart, keeping your knees slightly bent. If you are comfortable, try walking around a bit if space allows and it appears natural in practice. Avoid shifting from foot-to-foot, or bouncing nervously.

Objects: bring only what you need to give your presentation. Anything else will be a distraction. Turn off any personal devices (cell phones, tablets) so there are no interruptions.

Clothing: dress professionally, based on the culture of your organization. Avoid jewelry that could make noise, uncomfortable shoes or any item that hangs from you. Tie back long hair so you are not tempted to touch or move it.

Eye Contact: Eye contact is an extremely important element of your delivery. The general rule of thumb is to aim for 80 percent of your total speech time be spent making eye contact with your audience (Lucas, 2015, p. 250).

Watch the following videos for additional visual advice:

5 minute video: How to Make Eye Contact When Presenting



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8 minute video: Video For Practicing Eye Contact – FOUR Difficulty Levels



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Volume: The volume you use should fit the size of the audience and the room.

Rate: How quickly or slowly you say the words of your speech is the rate. You especially will want to maintain a good, deliberate rate at the beginning of your speech because your audience will be getting used to your voice.

Vocalized Pauses: Everyone uses vocalized pauses to some degree, but not everyone's are problematic. This obviously becomes an issue when the vocalized pauses become distracting due to their overuse. Identify your own common vocalized pauses and try to catch yourself to begin the process of reducing your dependence on them.

The items listed above represent the major delivery issues you will want to be aware of when giving a speech, but it is by no means an exhaustive list.

There is however, one final piece of delivery advice. No matter how hard you practice and how diligent you are in preparing for your presentation, you are most likely going to mess up some aspect at some point. That's normal. Everyone does it. The key is to not make a big deal about it or let the audience know you messed up. Odds are that they will never even realize your mistake if you don't tell them there was a mistake.

43. Conclusion

Good delivery is meant to augment your presentation and help convey your information to the audience. Anything that potentially distracts your audience means that fewer people will be informed, persuaded, or entertained by what you have said. Practicing your presentation in an environment that closely resembles the actual situation that you will be speaking in will better prepare you for what to do and how to deliver your speech when it really counts.



Returning to Abe's story, where she felt well-prepared but became nervous in the moment of her presentation, what did you learn in this chapter that might be useful for her (or for yourself) related to last minute nerves? What about Abe's colleague Chris. He was very unprepared for his presentation. What have you learned in this chapter about preparation?

Something to Think About

Most people struggle with at least one aspect of delivery: voice, posture, eye contact, distracting movement, vocalized pauses, etc. What do you struggle with? Based on this chapter and what you have already experienced in class, what is your biggest takeaway about improving delivery?

Check your Understanding



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Additional Resources

Duarte, N. (2011). The secret structure of great talks [Video]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/nancy_duarte_the_secret_structure_of_great_talks^[i]

Chapter Glossary

Extemporaneous presentations – carefully planned and rehearsed presentations, delivered in a conversational manner using brief notes.

Goldilocks paradigm – you don't want to overdo (or understate) the delivery of your presentation because you might distract your audience by looking hyper or overly animated.

Impromptu presentation – the presentation of a short message without advance preparation.

Impromptu speaking – the presentation of a short message without advance preparation.

Manuscript presentations – the word-for-word iteration of a written message.

Memorized speaking – the recitation of a written message that the speaker has committed to memory.

Rate – how quickly or slowly you say the words of your speech.

Chapter References

Tucker, B., & Barton, K. (2016). *Exploring public speaking: 2nd revision*. Retrieved from <http://oer.galileo.usg.edu/communication-textbooks/1>