

Tips for Oral Presentations: CI Classes

(Practice deep breathing five minutes prior to presentation to reduce nervousness.)

- Tell us your central idea at the outset. Then give a couple of sentences which preview what you'll tell us.
- Organize your content into 2-4 engaging points; five minutes is a short time.
- Create an outline of your talk and provide it on paper, the board or Power Point.
- Try using a "hook" of some kind at the outset: a question you will answer, a passionate quote you remember and will explicate; whatever you can imagine that works to pique interest. Test it on a friend: *does* it hook her?
- Use your hands expressively (not nervously). Find a comfortable posture and again, practice before a mirror.
- Use eye contact with the audience, as if you're telling each of us, one by one, the "story" you are presenting. Confidently or dramatically, you're leading us to a place we've never been, and we will love it!
- Assume a friendly reception, and be personable in presenting.
- Humor helps and relaxes you as well as your audience.
- You are taking on a role here, as an actor does, so you may distance from the personal "you" into a kind of official voice or storyteller. Mimic your ideal speaker, or the vitality and confidence of a good speaker you've heard.
- Other speaking goals should include: animation in your delivery; varying tone, volume and emphasis for certain points or turns in your story/argument.
- Pause (and breathe) for important ideas you want your audience to pay special attention to, to hear clearly or to think about.
- Don't be afraid of repetition or of unfilled silence. Controlled silence can increase your power as a speaker dramatically. A nice pause after making a point or asking a rhetorical question intensifies drama and impact.
- Make a comic aside if appropriate. Add a personal note to drive home a point.
- Use a prop or visual to help to clarify ideas – and they definitely will, if you use them well. Words alone are not enough these days. A strong visual to clarify an important idea could be the one thing an audience takes away from your talk. Practice using your visuals (images, graphs, maps, powerpoints) comfortably. If you are nervous with them, it will be distracting and siphon off your power. Consider using the blackboard. Simple can be good.
- Don't rush; let us think about what you are saying. Comfortable pacing is critical for letting an audience have silent dialog with you. All the more reason to rehearse aloud with a real audience in advance!
- Practice aloud with a couple of friends to sharpen and organize your content. Ask for their feedback, and don't be afraid of their criticism. The more honest they are, the better you will become at this. Practice is critical, and few are "naturals."
- Be concise and organized. Your main goal is stimulating interest in your evolving argument, through a few main ideas and clear descriptive detail. Do not try to cover too much territory. Often students run out of time, which shows how little they... practiced!
- Plan your conclusion and summarize your ideas (cheerfully if possible).
- Wait for questions and maintain a calm stage presence – even more graceful than you usually are.

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