

Presentations in the Sciences *

1. **Audience Analysis:** During the preparation process, *assess* the audience. Are they novices, or scholars well attuned to the terminology and concepts? Your content, vocabulary, should be tailored to the audience, keeping in mind that more explanation and clarification is needed for novices or the lay population.
2. **Clear Organization:** Use *deductive*, rather than inductive logic by stating the thesis or topic clearly, then supporting it with evidence. The audience should not have to “piece together” what you are trying to conclude.
 - a. Introduction should briefly review the existing literature on the topic and other necessary background information to set the stage for the body.
 - b. Conclusion should convey a “take-home” message, without being overly obvious or pedantic, if for seniors in the sciences or scholars at a conference.
3. **Delivery:** Show *enthusiasm* for your topic. Maintain sustained eye contact, rather than frequent reference to speaking notes, interrupting eye contact with the audience. Prepare speaking notes in outline form to prevent reading from notes.
4. **Visual Aids:** The key to effective use of visual aids is to be *audience-centered*. Avoid overwhelming your audience with unnecessary, or overly “busy”, visual aids. Focus on simple visuals that 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. Be audience-centered by providing 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.
5. **Practice:** As with any presentation, you should practice, practice, and practice your presentation. 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, but if you did not get your 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!

*These suggestions are compiled from three sources: Suggestions forwarded by Drs. Steven Fuller and Leanna Giancarlo, Science department faculty at Mary Washington College, and an Internet source written by Dr. Paul Wasserman, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine. The Speaking Center thanks Dr. Debra Hydorn, Mary Washington College, for forwarding this Internet source from *The Scientist*, Vol. 18, 1:43 (2004).

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