

Student Tips for Oral Presentations

A compilation of tips from the CORL 2018 Assessment Pilot Project scorer insights and the CORL Core Area Representative to share with students.

All Presentations

1. **Relevance.** Having the ability to give a speech or present research results will enhance your confidence and credibility, make you more socially engaged, and develop your marketability as a potential employee. Communication skills are one of the most important skills that employers seek in new hires. They are also essential to a well-functioning democracy.
2. **Oral Communications Core Rubric.** Use this rubric – posted on the Core website – as a guide for your presentation. The details in this rubric align with the learning outcomes for the Oral Communication competency in your core curriculum.
3. **Supporting Materials (a category on the rubric).** Practice in advance how you will use your supporting materials effectively – if you are referring to something on a PowerPoint slide, be sure to point to the exact spot on the slide where you want the audience to focus their attention. It helps the audience follow your presentation if you are explicit. If you are using a prop, have it ready to use, and avoid looking at it when you are not using it. Maintain eye contact with the audience.
4. **Observe yourself with and without sound during a practice run. (Delivery is another category on the rubric.)** Each viewing should provide you with valuable insight on how you can improve. Use your phone to record yourself when you rehearse a 2 – 3 minute segment of your presentation. Watch the recording twice – the first time watch it without the sound, and focus on your nonverbal skills. How are your posture, eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, use of space? Do you have any movements that will be distracting to the audience, such as rocking back and forth or excessive hand motions? Then, listen to the speech with sound, but don't watch yourself. Do you sound engaged in your topic? Confident? Do you use a lot of verbal fillers, such as “um” or “like”? Practice your delivery skills and repeat this process to see how you improve.

Special Notes for Group Presentations

1. **Body Language:** Keep in mind that you are “in the spotlight” even when someone else in your group is speaking. Maintain good posture, avoid pacing/rocking, and show a general interest/engagement (as opposed to apathy) at what the speaker is saying.
2. **Transitions:** Smooth transitions between speakers will increase the overall quality and professionalism of a group presentation. Smooth transitions will clarify each speaker's central message and organization within their portion of the overall presentation. When transitioning from one speaker to the next, provide the segue to connect the two speakers – for example, “I just told you about XYZ, and now Samantha is going to tell you about ABC”. Then, Samantha can pick up and provide a clear central message for her portion of the presentation and lay out its organization.