

GIVING PRESENTATIONS



AGENDA

- Presentation Preparation
- Practicing the Presentation
- Refining and Revising

Objectives

Students will prepare an oral presentation.

Students will practice giving an oral presentation.

Students will discover the steps to refining their action plan.

Materials Needed

- Index cards for each group (Part I)
- Art materials (e.g., poster board, markers) (Part I)
- Presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint, OpenOffice Impress) (Part I)

Part I Presentation Preparation

Purpose: Students identify the characteristics of effective presentations.

1. Students identify the characteristics of a good presentation.

Introduce the exercise by poorly giving a brief presentation (e.g., slouch, mumble, speak very informally).

Ask students what they thought of your presentation. Elicit their criticisms of your presentation. Then, ask how the presentation could be improved. List their answers on the board. (Students should respond: speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard, use good posture, organize your thoughts so listeners can easily follow your presentation.)

Explain to students that all good presentations display these characteristics.

2. Students plan the organization of their presentation and make presentation notes.

Explain to students that if they have created a written action plan, they have already completed most of the preparation necessary to give a presentation, since both the written plan and the presentation include the same information: an introduction, information on each activity to be undertaken, and a conclusion.

Ask students if it would make sense to just read aloud from their action plan if they are presenting it to someone who has already received it. Elicit that this would not make sense, since the listener has probably read the action plan and wants more information. Instead, the presentation should elaborate on the action plan's key points.

Have students work in their groups to identify the key points of the action plan (e.g., who, what, when, where, why, and how) and to write them on index cards. Work with each group to ensure that the key points are organized in an order that makes sense, just as they are organized in the action plan. Then, encourage each group to present the section of the plan on which they have worked. Engage students in a discussion about the organization of the entire presentation, including who will present which information.

3. Students create visuals for their presentations.

Ask students whether they think the presentation will be interesting if it's just a series of people standing up, reading, and then sitting down. Ask students to suggest ways to enliven the presentation so that listeners will be interested in and excited about it. Elicit that visuals would help with capturing interest.

Have small groups brainstorm visuals that might enhance each section of the presentation. Remind students that visuals are meant to enhance the presentation, not draw attention away from it; therefore, they should be colorful (but not distracting), simple, and easy to read. Encourage students to use photographs, charts, and graphs.

Have students choose and create at least one visual for each section of their presentation using the art materials and presentation software you have provided. When they have finished working, have students practice their presentation using their visuals. If necessary, discuss again with students the organization of their presentation, including who will be in charge of presenting visuals while others are speaking.

Part II Practicing the Presentation

Purpose: Students complete final preparations and practice their presentation.

1. Students practice their presentation.

Ask students why professional dancers or actors practice instead of just showing up to perform. (Students should respond: in order to improve their performances, to sharpen their skills, to practice working well together.) Explain that practice does the same thing for everyone. The best way for students to ensure that a presentation goes smoothly is to practice it until they are completely comfortable with it.

First, encourage students to practice each section of the presentation for their peers. Listeners should take notes on whether the information is organized clearly and whether the speaker can be heard. Next, have students practice their entire presentation while you take notes on the organization and flow of information, whether speakers can be heard clearly, whether the visuals are being used well, and whether students are taking an appropriate amount of time to complete their presentation. If possible, have students invite others, such as another class or teacher, to watch their presentation and to make suggestions.

2. Students practice answering questions during their presentation.

Ask students to talk about an experience in which they were listeners at a presentation. Prompt student participation by posing questions such as the following:

- What kept you interested—or disinterested—in the presentation?
- What did the speaker do well?
- As listeners, did you have questions? How and when did you ask those questions?

Tell students that it is very likely that their listeners will have questions, and that it is up to them as presenters to tell their listeners whether they would like to take questions during or after the presentation.

Explain to students that preparing for questions during a presentation is much like preparing for questions during a job interview—they should think about what they would want to know if they were hearing about the project. Encourage students to brainstorm possible questions that a person outside the classroom might have about the project.

Prepare students to field questions by acting as an attendee at the presentation and asking questions. Invite other teachers or students to do the same. Remind students that if they do not know the answer to a question, it is appropriate to respond by saying, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out and get back to you.”

3. Students make final preparations for their presentation.

Discuss the following with students:

- **Attire**—As in a job interview, the way that you present yourself reflects how you feel about what you’re presenting. The way you dress can prove that you are taking your project seriously. There’s no need to be formal, but you should dress neatly and professionally.
- **Behavior**—It won’t matter what you’re wearing if your behavior doesn’t also show that you are taking the project seriously. You should consider the presentation to be like an interview, and behave appropriately. Holding side conversations or arguing with one another is not appropriate. If you behave professionally, your listeners will take you seriously.
- **Conclusion and Thank-You**—Because you’ll be presenting a lot of information, it’s important to include a conclusion that briefly summarizes your presentation’s key points. A conclusion also lets your audience know when it’s time to ask questions or to leave. Remember that your listeners have other commitments as well, so you should be sure to thank them for their time.
- **Notes**—You’re going to be concentrating hard during your presentation, and you’ll probably be excited; it can be easy to forget some of the things that happen during the presentation. It’s a good idea to appoint a few people to take notes on what happens, what questions are asked, and what requests are made, so that you will remember what needs to be done after the presentation.
- **Requests**—Remember that if you are asking your listeners for approval or for feedback, you must clearly describe what you want and suggest a deadline.

Part III Refining and Revising

Purpose: Students explore the steps to revising their action plan.

1. Students share their feelings about revising their project.

Ask students to discuss or write about their project experience up to now. Encourage them to discuss their feelings about having to revisit or revise their original plan.

Help students to understand that revising a project is like revising a piece of writing—the goal is to improve the outcome. While it may seem difficult to revise a plan that was exciting and seemed perfect, there's no reason to be discouraged. Help students to reexamine what inspired them to do a project in the first place. Remind them that their service learning project will allow them to practice skills they've learned and provide a service to their communities.

2. Students identify what needs to be changed.

If students are revising the project based on a request from someone whose approval is required, facilitate a class discussion about the requested changes. Encourage students to seek clarification about anything that is unclear.

If students are revising the project because their planning made it clear that the project could not be completed as they had hoped (perhaps because of time or resource restrictions), encourage them to pinpoint the problem areas of their plan and create a list of issues that must be addressed.

3. Students revise their action plan.

Ask students to review the definition and uses of an action plan:

- Action plans outline what resources are available and what needs to be acquired.
- Action plans also outline a schedule and a time line for completing the project.

Help students to revisit the activities and questions they encountered in the first four lessons and revise their action plan.