Oral Presentation Guidelines

Presented below are some guidelines to help improve an oral presentation.

1. The introduction should provide a preview of the presentation.

**Excellent:** The main issues to be covered should be clearly presented. The order of topics to be covered should demonstrate a logical flow.

**Unacceptable:** No clear preview of the main topics to be covered by the presentation. No clear introductory statement; rambling sentence or thought pattern; presenters not identified; jumping directly into the presentation of the main topic content; or reading directly from notes.

2. The main points of the presentation should be stated clearly.

**Excellent:** All main points should be succinctly and clearly explained. A visual aid may be used to highlight or reinforce a key point.

**Unacceptable:** Main points of presentation are unrecognizable or unclear. There is no clear differentiation between main points and other general statements in the presentation. There are too many main points included in the presentation so that no statements stand out as being more important than others.

3. Main points should be supported by adequate evidence or reasoning.

**Excellent:** Each main point should be supported by credible evidence or logical reasoning. Any assumptions underlying the logic of your position should be clearly stated. Visual aids (e.g., chart, diagram, bullet list) may help to clearly present data or establish a clear link between data or observations and inferences or consequences based upon such data or observations.

**Unacceptable:** Unsubstantiated conclusions or recommendations should be avoided. Avoid using faulty or inconsistent logic between group members where multiple presenters participate. Don’t fail to clearly articulate key underlying assumptions. A failure to use appropriate visual aids to present supporting data.

4. Main points should be organized in a logical manner.

**Excellent:** There must be a logical progression (flow) of main points during the presentation. Main points should be presented in an order which leads to a logical conclusion. Events should be discussed in a logical sequence (e.g., chronologically).
Unacceptable: No logical progression (flow) to the presentation of main points. A haphazard order to the presentation of main points.

5. Vocal delivery should vary rate, pitch, and volume of speech appropriately.

Excellent: Vary the rate (pace), pitch, and volume of speech for emphasis or to enhance audience’s interest. Maintain a good energy level during the presentation. Speech should be clearly audible from audience seating. Try to use an engaging conversational tone.

Unacceptable: Use of a monotone, flat, uninspired delivery that is inaudible to the audience. Use of distracting mannerisms (e.g., prolonged gaps between sentences or head, feet, hand movements). Speaking too rapidly for audience comprehension.

6. Articulate all words clearly.

Excellent: Words used should be easily understood by the audience. Use correct word pronunciation and grammar. Words should be spoken in a confident manner. Watch for audience cues (e.g., appear to be listening; audience reacts at appropriate points to what is being said), that would demonstrate their ability to understand words being spoken. Clarify or adjust wording as you proceed to ensure audience understanding of your intended message.

Unacceptable: Mispronunciation of words. Use slang or unprofessional wording. A failure to be aware of the audience’s ability to understand spoken words.

7. Dressed appropriately (business casual) for the presentation.

Excellent: *Men* – collared shirt and slacks (tie optional) nice shoes (no athletic shoes or flip-flops) and clean personal grooming.

*Women* – dress or business suit; blouse or top with skirt or slacks; nice shoes (no flip-flops or athletic shoes) and clean personal grooming.

Unacceptable: denim jeans, t-shirt, tank top or muscle-shirt; shorts; sandals; athletic type shoes (e.g., tennis, jogging, basketball); sunglasses; baseball type cap; and a lack of personal grooming.

8. Maintain eye contact with the audience.

Excellent: Only make occasional reference to printed notes. Maintain eye contact with the audience 90% or more of the time. Vary your point of eye contact with the audience to cover the entire room. Even looking just over the heads of the audience members while moving your gaze around the room can give the impression to seated audience members that you are speaking to them.
Unacceptable: Fixed or prolonged staring at the floor, ceiling, or visual aids (e.g., slides). Spending the majority of the time reading from notes or visual aids.

9. Visual aids should be well prepared to communicate relevant information.

Excellent: Ensure visual aids contain no spelling or grammar errors. Use a readable font size so the entire audience can see the printed material. Visual aids should be presented at appropriate points and in proper sequence to enhance the presentation. Be familiar with the operation of all hardware and software components used in the presentation. Select background designs or colors to accentuate or enhance the content material being presented. Ensure smooth slide transitions during the presentation.

Unacceptable: Overuse of graphic images, animations, or sounds producing a cluttered or confusing look or sound. Spelling or grammar errors. Equipment problems caused by unfamiliarity with the operation of hardware or software components used in the presentation. Use of a background design or colors which distract the audience’s attention from the content and meaning of material being presented. Use of choppy or faulty slide transitions during the presentation. Use of visual aids at inappropriate times or presenting visual aids out of proper sequence.

10. The presentation should be concluded definitively.

Excellent: Make a memorable final statement that helps to maintain audience interest to the end. The closing statement should clearly convey the finality of the presentation.

Unacceptable: Avoid abruptly ending the presentation. Avoid just fading out at the end of a presentation. Avoid using an unremarkable final statement (not decisive or memorable).

11. Adhere to the specified time limit for the presentation.

Excellent: Complete the presentation within the allotted time period. This will likely require one or more practice runs to establish the time required to make the presentation. Make adjustments in the content or format of the presentation as necessary to achieve the desired length of presentation.

Unacceptable: Using less than 75% of the allotted time or going more than 5 minutes beyond the allotted time to complete the presentation.