

Oral Presentation Guidelines

Some of the following points are based on guidelines from a course on public speaking¹ and a presentation guideline². A project presentation falls under the category of a “Speech to Inform.” The specific purpose of this presentation is to explain how your project was done in a clear, concise, and interesting manner. Prior to assembling your presentation, you must do the following:

- 1. Analyze Your Audience** – What do you anticipate will be your audience’s knowledge of your subject? Keep your answer to this question in mind as you prepare your presentation material. This is a general principle. For many purposes, the instructor of the course can be considered as your working supervisor in an industrial firm. Your classmates will be co-workers on the project, but on another phase of it. Assume that they have basic knowledge of the material. Do not assume that they already know what you have done, nor that they are intimately acquainted with the details of the design. Did you do simulation? What is the purpose of simulations? How did you do the simulations? How did you do the “implementation”? Why was the particular design technique relevant to the problem? The answers to these questions are important in the introduction. If you are doing a presentation for the general public, you must keep in mind that they may not be familiar with the material.
- 2. Choose a Title** – It must be brief, relevant and provocative. It should truly summarize the subject, yet grab the audience’ attention.
- 3. Decide on an Organizational Pattern** – Decide on whether or not your presentation is best explained in a chronological or topical order. This is like considering your presentation from a screenwriter’s point of view. How will the story unfold?

All oral presentations should consist of the parts described on the following pages.

1 Taught by Dr. L.B. Goss, former head of New Mexico University Speech Department

2 Basic document prepared by Dr. R. Paz, NMSU Klipsch School of Electrical & Computer Eng.

Introduction

- a) Introduce yourselves. Who are you? Why are you doing the project? What are your qualifications to work on the project?
- b) State your thesis in an attention attracting manner:
 - i) Concisely introduce your topic
 - ii) Use at least one detailed illustration. Here you might consider illustrating the overall system, the circuit schematic, the software flowchart, or other technical diagrams.
- c) Establish your listeners “need to know”:
 - i) Use at least one rhetorical question to draw out interest
 - ii) Make at least one motive appeal. Why do they need to know? Why did the project need to be done; what was the point of it; what will it do?
- d) Establish the necessary definitions and background. State the relationship of your topic to the course material.

Body

The Body of the presentation is more like the entire written report. It contains the main information on what was done.

- a) Provide an initial summary, like the introduction of the written report. Simply discuss the approach, the methods, and the expected results
- b) Provide concise yet detailed information on each of the basic ideas. This would be like the “body” of the report. Discuss the software, hardware and design techniques, as well as the results. Show the basic parts and how they fit together.
- c) Give a final summary reiterating the basic ideas and results.

Conclusion

The conclusion here is to “wrap up” the presentation. Here it is important to remind your audience of their need to know, and restate the relevance of the topic to the audience. You can discuss further work, or applications of your work and any problems or hurdles you’ve overcome.

Logistics

Time: Keep in mind the length of the presentation. Practice it, and polish it. A general rule of thumb is 1-2 slides per minute. It is very important to stay within the time limit.

Often times, a series of presentations are set back-to-back. If one presentation goes overtime, the entire schedule gets off. Dress nice, and make the presentation look sharp.

Visual Aids: Use appropriate diagrams but make sure they can be seen and read by the audience. Use font large enough to be read in the back of the room. Use colors to complement. If the colors make reading the slides difficult, then change the colors.

Presentation Mechanics: It is important that your delivery be done well. Make eye contact with the audience. Don't read the PowerPoint slides, but use them as a guide. Your words should not be the same as those on the slide. Speak loud enough to be heard. You don't have to shout, but project your voice. Try not to use prompts (note cards or reading the PowerPoint slides). Position yourself so the audience can see the presentation. Use proper American English and dress well. When questions are asked, listen carefully before answering. Try to avoid nervous habits.