

# Getting Organized to Speak Before a Group

Use the checklist below to help you plan ahead for your presentation.

## 1. Be prepared.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm the date and time at which you are scheduled to speak, the time you are expected to arrive, and the amount of time allotted for your presentation. Reconfirm with your contact person during the final week before the event.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Find out the number of people to expect and the interests of the audience, and plan what you will say, and how you may wish to reorganize the Powerpoint slides to match the audience's education, knowledge, and interests. This information will provide the foundation for making a thoughtful, well-organized presentation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have the street address, transportation options, and local directions in advance. Find out where you are likely to find parking and the amount of any parking fees to help ensure that you arrive on time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Know the full name of your contact person and all telephone numbers in case of an emergency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bring all the equipment and supplies that you need with you, including a laptop computer equipped with Powerpoint, and projector if using the slideshow, or arrange in advance for someone at the host organization to provide them.

## 2. Arrive early. Check details before the audience arrives.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Be at the site ahead of time so that you can check out the meeting location, meet your hosts, set up any equipment you will use, and place materials on resource tables.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make sure the equipment is plugged in and works properly, and that the slideshow works.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check to see that the laptop computer, projector, screen, lighting, and seating are arranged for the best audience view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bring enough handouts for everyone. Ask host staff to make additional copies available if necessary.

## 3. Refer questions to others if available and necessary. If you are uncertain of the correct answer to a question, refer the person to other organizations that can help.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Guide those looking for resources to organizations that make referrals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Offer the names of more than one organization if possible. Avoid endorsing one resource organization or local practitioner over another.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Avoid using the presentation as an opportunity to solicit personal business.

## 4. Evaluate your experience. Take a few minutes to think about how your talk went.

- \_\_\_\_\_ How interested was the audience in the information you presented?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did you receive questions during your talk? Any comments afterward?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use the form at the back of this kit to make suggestions for improvement.

## Tips for Speaking to Lay Audiences

1. Use simple language, and avoid technical terms, acronyms, jargon, or unusual words. Speak loudly and clearly. Pause before and after important points.
2. Stand when you speak, so that your audience can see you clearly.
3. Your appearance is important—being well-dressed will improve your confidence, and you will gain respect from your audience.
4. Be yourself—speak in a conversational tone. Emphasize important points, and vary the tone of your voice. Your delivery is as important as the facts you want to convey.
5. If you haven't been introduced, introduce yourself briefly. Don't try to start with a joke—most people are unable to do this well.
6. Relax. Most people are nervous for the first few moments of a talk. Take a few deep breaths before you start and know what you want to say first. Once you get into your talk, you will relax.
7. Make eye contact with each member of the audience. Speak with emotion and sincerity. Smile as often as you can—your audience will respond warmly.
8. Never read your talk. If you must use notes, use an outline to guide you. Look down to see your next point, but then look up again before speaking.
9. Incorporate examples and gestures when possible. Use examples to illustrate your points when you can, as long as they are relevant. Don't digress from your outline or prepared talk unless you're very experienced.
10. Do not be discouraged if someone in the audience appears disinterested or falls asleep. Look, instead, at someone who is actively listening.
11. Never apologize for what you say or what you are about to say.
12. Don't fill in with “um” or “er” or use slang.

13. Leave time for questions. Never tell someone they asked a stupid or irrelevant question. Do not comment that you already covered the issue about which an audience member is asking.
14. Try to end on an upbeat note.
15. Thank your host for inviting you and your audience for listening. Compliment the audience and your host before leaving the podium.
16. Make yourself available for a few moments afterward in case someone has a question to ask privately.