PRESENTATIONS

You've been asked to prepare a presentation, and you need to start preparing. The problem is that you can't stop thinking about your nervousness, let alone writing out what you will say. You are not alone in this.

Many people get nervous when asked to talk to groups of people. In fact, more people are afraid of speaking in public than they are of death. It's okay to be nervous because with enough practice, you'll be able to use that nervous energy to make your speaking that much more effective.

Let's start off by stating what it is you will be doing.

There are two main ways to talk to groups of people: Public speaking or Presentation (business) speaking.

Public Speaking: This occurs in a larger, formal setting which is open to the public. We tend to think of a typical speech (with speaker, cue cards, lectern) when referring to this term.

Presentation (Business) Speaking: This type of speaking is much more common than you might think. We do this any time we try to convey meaning to audience members, whether it be a group of 3 or 60 people. The interaction with your audience is different in this case, which makes the presentation less formal.

Getting Started

1. Topic

Be clear about the topic of your presentation. Identify what you are giving a presentation on, for instance drinking and driving, AIDS, or fear of public speaking. Next, identify the reason for the presentation. It could be for a class assignment, or for members of a particular club.

Speakers often apply informative, persuasive and entertaining strategies when presenting:

Informative proof like facts, statistics and testimony may be used to further support speakers in their attempt to explain, instruct or describe a process or concept. Teachers are a prime example of those who would apply this.

Persuasive elements are supporting details like personal stories, analogies, statistics which are used by the speaker to try to change the attitude or behaviour of an audience. Lawyers would

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use persuasion to present their case so that the judge will rule in their favour.

Entertaining information is often used by a speaker to gain audience attention and create a ~~lighter, cheery mood among audience members. Stand-up comedians use this approach in~~ speaking to an audience.

No presentation covers just one category but may touch on all three areas in several ways. By determining what you will be speaking about, you will be able to decide what elements could be used to get your message across to audience members.

2. Audience
Who are you speaking to? Is the audience a group of your peers, possible new clients or a class of 5th graders?

You need to know who you will be speaking to so that you can adjust your presentation to suit the needs of your audience. Your audience may not understand jargon (words that only members of a specific group would know), so you may need to define these words orally or in a handout.

Your topic should also be relevant to the audience you are speaking to. Try to find out what your audience's attitudes and interests are and address them. Speak to the audience on a topic that will interest them and keep them listening.

3. Understand Expectations
Make sure you know if there are any particular points that need to be addressed in your presentation. There will be times when you can choose the topic and various other elements.

If you are a student and are being asked to give a presentation on time management skills, make sure you know what the professor expects from you in your presentation. The professor may even give you a handout or rubric about this.

Regardless of who you are presenting for, you should understand the basics for your presentation. Be clear about:
- time – How long do you have to speak? Always be prepared to cut material if your time is cut short.
- location – Where will you be speaking? Whether you are speaking in a classroom or an auditorium, seeing the room beforehand will give you an idea of the size of the audience and where you will be addressing them.
- topics – Will there be other speakers? Knowing what they will be speaking on will allow you to fine-tune your speech so that you can add information that they may not cover.
- materials – What equipment is supplied? If there is no overhead projector, you will not be able to use overhead materials. This will help you know what kind of visual aids you will be able to use.

Preparing Your Information
Brainstorm. Write out your thoughts and see what presentation ideas come out.

Brainstorming techniques like preliminary outlines, mind-mapping, chunking, and tree outlines will allow you to group together similar ideas.

Research the topic thoroughly to ensure that you know as much as possible about it. Researching provides you with more background information about the topic. Consulting your library, Internet*, books and articles, as well as conducting interviews will give your information more credibility and add colour to your presentation.

> * Be mindful that the Internet is not always a credible source of information. Since anyone can post information on the web, there is no true way of telling whether the information you are using is factual. To be safe, use it as a starting point for research, but don't rely on it as a main source of information.

Approach your presentation as you would for an essay.

> Your presentation is like an essay. You are presenting information to support what you want to say. There will be an introduction (explaining what you will be talking about), supporting details (discussing what you want to argue) and a conclusion (summing up the information and leaving the audience with an idea of what you want them to do).

In presenting this information, use different ways to present materials to interest your audience. For example, if you are using new terms that the audience doesn't understand, define them. If you want to paint a mental picture, use description to make the point clear as in the following:

> The garden was a sea of colour, featuring every flower from the deepest crimson roses to the softest white daisies.

Other types may include:

Facts
Stories
Examples

Statistics
Analogies
Testimonies

Note: Don't forget to cite all references you have made to other people's work. A good practice is to keep a list of the sources you have used as you go along so that you know where you got specific material and can back up where you got your information should someone ask for it.

Remember: these kinds of details will add to your presentation, increase your credibility to the audience and interest them in the presentation as a whole. The more audience members want to listen, the more they are going to remember.

You can print out the attached presentation organisation template below, to help with your presentation.

Presentation Organization

Topic:

_____

_____

 Audience:

_____

_____

Introduction: (include an icebreaker [a story, fact, question] to help
        introduce your topic)

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Detail or Supporting
Argument #1:

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Detail or Supporting
Argument #2:

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Detail or Supporting
Argument #3:

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Conclusion:

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> Note: It doesn't matter how many supporting details or arguments you have, you need to back up your information. Just make sure that you stay within the time you are given and that your ideas flow smoothly.