

# Quinnipiac University The Learning Center



## Tips for Public Speaking

# First of all, be REALISTIC!

How many people can honestly say that they don't get butterflies in their stomachs before speaking in front of their fellow classmates? It doesn't really matter whom you're talking to: third-graders or the Board of Trustees, there is a sense of diminished self-confidence. Well, we can't send you through self-actualizing counseling sessions, but we can give you some pointers on how to be prepared and how to avoid public speaking blunders.





# The Keys To A Good Presentation Are:

- ◆ Being Prepared
- ◆ Structuring Your Presentation
- ◆ Targeting your audience
- ◆ Painting a Picture
- ◆ Practicing
- ◆ Making a First Impression
- ◆ Utilizing Proper Body Language
- ◆ Leaving Them With A Lasting Impression



# Be Prepared

There are few things more boring than listening to someone who obviously has not put time into a presentation. If lack of effort is apparent, the audience will most likely tune out the presentation.

- ◆ ***FIND a topic.*** What is the goal of your speech: arguing a position on an issue, describing a process, reporting on the latest developments in a field, etc.?
- ◆ ***READ the professor's requirements*** more than once to ensure that you know exactly what you're supposed to be talking about.
- ◆ ***BRAINSTORM for your own idea*** when necessary. Use search engines on the web (<http://www.yahoo.com> or <http://www.google.com> ) or search the campus library's own resources (<http://www.quinnipiac.edu/libraries/qcat.asp>) to check for materials on whatever subject you're interested in.



# Structure Your Presentation

- ◆ ***HELP your audience*** follow your presentation. Have an introduction and conclusion surrounding your content. In other words, tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you just told them. This helps people get the point of your speech, and even if they don't remember the content, they will probably remember the main theme of your speech.
- ◆ ***DO your research.*** After delivering a speech, it is embarrassing to be asked a question for which you don't know the answer. "I don't know" is an acceptable answer and a better response than trying to fudge your way through it. However, doesn't it feel better to be able to give an educated answer? Doing your research will also help to guard your facts from being refuted by the teacher or even more embarrassing, a peer.

# Target Your Audience

- ◆ Had you ever had someone talk to you as if you're five years old or use an over-inflated vocabulary that is unnecessary when discussing everyday topics, such as bicycle trails in Cape Cod? It is important to ***SPEAK to your audience at an appropriate level***, so they will not feel “talked down to” and will be at least mildly entertained by your speech. Here are some questions to consider:



What age group, sex, and intellectual level make up your audience?

How long will their attention span be, and how can you effectively accommodate their needs?

What would your audience find interesting?  
Can you relate it to their own lives?

# Paint Them A Picture

- ◆ Most people are visual learners, so take advantage of that. Whether you are doing a PowerPoint presentation, have access to an overhead projector, or are talented with poster board and markers, ***ENHANCE your lecture*** with some kind of visual aid.





# Practice Makes Perfect

- ◆ ***REHEARSE through your presentation*** at least twice so you can get the timing and speed down. Don't rush through. If you have a time limit and you have too much content, then cut some out (versus the alternative option of talking faster). Practice delivering the speech by referring to your notes rather than reading from them, preferably to another person who fits the same profile as your target audience. Have the listener ask questions, so you can practice coming up with answers on the spot. You can also come to the Learning Center and practice your speech on the constructive ear of a tutor. Tutors can also help with grammar, give suggestions, and/or spruce up PowerPoint.



# Make A First Impression

- ◆ ***ARRIVE early*** to set up any technology that you will be using. To order equipment or services from the Media Services, located in the Arnold Bernhard Library, you may use this link: ([Media Services Request Form](#)) or you can call **582-8638** during office hours. Web Orders must be made 48 hours in advance of required service. You may want to call and confirm your order the day of your presentation to avoid any excess nervousness on your part. Check your equipment before beginning the presentation to ensure that you know how to operate it and thus avoid a lull in your speech.
- ◆ Whether or not the presentation is formal, your clothes and hygiene make a statement about how important the presentation is to you. If appropriate, ***USE your clothing as part of your presentation***. For example, if you are giving a speech on skateboarding, then set the tone by dressing in the fashion of a typical skateboarder. However, it is always a good idea to check with your professor before doing anything out of the ordinary.



# Utilize Body Language

- ◆ ***Look around the room*** as you're presenting, not just at the people right in front of you. It is okay to use your hands for emphasis, as long as the gestures are not distracting. Get feedback on this while practicing your presentation in front of someone. It is also acceptable to walk around a little bit, but coordinate movements with changing your presentation materials (PowerPoint or overheads), so that you don't have to run back each time. The right amount of body language will indicate that you are interested in your own topic. Standing in one place or pacing back and forth can display a lack of confidence or increased intensity/anxiety.

# Leave A Lasting Impression

- ◆ ***THINK ahead*** about your closing line. It doesn't have to be sweeping or grandiose. Try to wrap up your presentation and offer the audience something thought-provoking, concluding, or entertaining. The last line is one of the most important, but the speech should sell itself. The final phrase is your last chance to make an impression— use it!

