

The University of Southern Mississippi Speaking Center

What do we do in the Speaking Center?

- We provide peer consulting for formal and informal presentations, advice for participating in classroom discussions, mock interviews, and help with speech anxiety
- We provide access to audio and visual equipment (for practicing presentations), a video camera (for taping presentations), and a speaking library
- We lead workshops throughout the year on topics such as dealing with speech anxiety, turning a paper into a presentation, using visual aids, and effective speaking style
- We visit classes to give general advice on speaking or specific advice for your assignments
- And more...read on.

What is the Speaking Center?

We want to make sure that you are ready to speak out—in class, on campus, and in the world more broadly. We offer peer consulting for class projects and campus speeches and general advice on dealing with speech anxiety.

Trained peer consultants (undergraduate and graduate Speech Communication majors) assist students at any stage on a variety of oral presentations. We are open to all majors, all level of speakers (beginner or advanced), undergraduate or graduate students.

You can use the center to practice your presentations with a variety of audio and visual equipment (video camera, DVD/video player, computer and projector) and record and watch your speech.

On our web site, you have access to information on a variety of speaking topics: planning a presentation, delivery, adapting to an audience, using PowerPoint, presenting as a group, handling the Q&A session, and more.

Where can you find us?

Cook Library 117
www.usm.edu/speakingcenter
speakingcenter@usm.edu
601-266-4965



What can you expect in a Speaking Center session?

You decide. Need help brainstorming speech topics, outlining a speech, or dealing with those butterflies? Need someone to watch your speech and give you feedback? Want to do a mock interview? You can use tutoring time in the way that you feel will best help. Our experienced consultants will help you craft a polished presentation and give you the confidence to deliver it.

Sign up for an appointment, come with some ideas and assignment information, and we'll go from there.



General Tips for Improving your Presentations

There is a lot to keep in mind when preparing a presentation, so remember to give yourself plenty of time to think about what you will say to your audience. The Speaking Center has a variety of handouts available outside of the center and on the web site (www.usm.edu/speakingcenter) that will help you get ready for your presentation. This guide is a fast introduction to some of the best speaking tips.

- ◆ If you are presenting a paper, start planning your presentation when you begin writing the paper. Think about the differences between writing and speaking and what parts of the paper will work well in the presentation.
- ◆ Create a speaking outline that is different than your writing outline. You will need to reorganize the information for the presentation, making sure that the audience can follow your argument.
- ◆ Translate for your audience. Don't get wrapped up in your own paper. Think about who you are speaking to and what type of background information they do/do not need.
- ◆ Use support material to keep your audience interested. Develop your ideas with stories, examples, vivid descriptions, statistics, etc.
- ◆ Start and end with a bang. If you seem unexcited about speaking, your audience certainly won't be interested in listening to you. Have an interesting and well-practiced introduction and conclusion ready to go. Start and end with good energy, eye contact, and volume.
- ◆ Don't use a visual aid (PowerPoint) unless you need it. If it doesn't add something to the speech, there's no reason to use it.
- ◆ Do not read your speech. Most beginning (and some seasoned!) speakers are not good at reading speeches from a manuscript. Instead, sketch out an outline for the speech and talk to your audience based on that outline. For particularly complicated parts, you can read small sections. This takes practice, so give yourself plenty of time to work on practicing the presentation.
- ◆ Practice your speech in front of someone else. They will be able to give you feedback and assure you that you are communicating effectively. The Speaking Center staff is happy to listen to speeches.
- ◆ Time your presentation while practicing. Make sure that you know the time limits/expectations for the speaking occasion and that you stick to them. Also, be aware that different people react in different ways to nervousness. Some people talk a lot more when nervous, while others speed through their presentations.
- ◆ Speak up! Volume makes you appear to be more confident (even when your stomach is doing flip-flops) and can make that shaky voice go away. Don't forget to breathe—it makes all the difference.
- ◆ Record yourself when practicing. Use a video camera (available in the Speaking Center) or a voice recorder to hear how you might sound to the audience. This will also allow you to catch any excessive vocal fillers (um, uh, like, etc.) or long pauses.
- ◆ Take note of your appearance on the day of the presentation. Think about what you are wearing (some suggest dressing one step above your audience), how you are standing, how you are using hand gestures, etc.
- ◆ Deal with nervousness by being well-prepared, visualizing yourself giving a successful speech, and taking deep breaths.

Remember, for more specific advice, visit the Speaking Center in Cook Library 114. You might also find the following handouts useful:

Outlining a Presentation
Transitions
Presenting a Paper
Speech Anxiety
Using PowerPoint
Group Presentations

Introductions and Conclusions
Audience Analysis
Citing Sources in a Presentation
Delivery
Leading a Discussion
Question and Answer Tips