As a Spanish student, you will be asked frequently in your courses to present information to the class, either by yourself or working with others. Developing your speaking skills in Spanish is as important as writing, reading and listening skills, and you can usually tailor the information in a presentation to a topic in which you are interested. Many students feel uncomfortable about speaking in front of others in English, so speaking in Spanish can seem like a big challenge. Relax! There are many similarities between speaking in your first language and speaking in your second.

For example:

- Choose a topic that is neither too broad nor too narrow; your instructor can help direct you if you need it.
- As you plan your presentation, try to anticipate the questions your classmates might have about the topic, and then answer them.
- Have a clear outline of your speech ready that you can follow as you talk.
- Practice your speech over and over so that you can make sure it falls within the time limit.
- Don’t read from your paper! No one enjoys hearing a presentation read in a monotone voice in any language. Practice your talk enough that you need only glance down at the main points from time to time.
- Engage the audience by making eye contact, smiling where appropriate, and even including humor, when possible.

There are a few tips you can follow specifically to help you as you speak in another language:

- Consider using a visual aid, such as a simple PowerPoint presentation or a clear, concise handout. You don’t want so much information that your audience reads it instead of listening to you, but a picture is worth a thousand words, especially when you are describing a person or place.

The basics of speaking are, for the most part, consistent across disciplines. Knowing the expectations of a discipline is an important part of adapting to your audience, however. The papers in the “Speaking, in my opinion…” series do not represent an official statement from the department. They do, however, give you an introduction to different faculty opinions on effective speaking.
• As part of the visual aid, you may want to include key words from your presentation, since other non-native speakers in the class may not have encountered the vocabulary before. Additionally, if there are any words you have trouble pronouncing or are afraid you will stumble over, you can include them in your presentation or PowerPoint and then be sure your audience will understand.

• Practice the speed of your speech. Because they are nervous, many non-native speakers of a language present so quickly that no one can catch what they are saying! Remember that your class is probably mostly made up of other English-speakers, and practice speaking at a normal pace.

• Don’t forget to gesture normally as you speak, as you would in your native language.

• If you feel nervous, instead of focusing on your own “performance,” try to think of it as your opportunity to expose the rest of the class to new cultural information (being sure to cite your sources properly) that they wouldn’t have found out otherwise. Realize that you bring a fresh perspective that will be valued by your classmates.