DELIVERY

Speaking isn’t just what you say, but also how you say it. You may have done a great deal of work in planning it and writing the presentation, but if it is not delivered in a clear and engaging manner, the audience may quickly lose interest. Delivery is about nonverbal communication, or how a person uses their body and voice to express the ideas. This includes: speaking clearly, establishing eye contact, and movement.

Speaking Clearly:
Refers to the speaker being easily understood. There are three main components to speaking effectively.

- **Volume**: This should be adjusted based on the acoustics of the room, which means you should practice in the room beforehand, with someone in the very back. If they can’t hear you, increase your volume. Remember that you sound louder to yourself than you do to the audience. Look for the audience’s nonverbal cues to determine whether or not you are at a proper volume. If you are too quiet you will see the audience turn their heads, lean forward, etc.

- **Pitch and voice inflections**: Pitch is the perception of how high or low a speaker’s voice is. Inflection refers to the changes in voice. Both of these can be used to communicate enthusiasm for your topic. Look at the speech and determine where various inflections should be placed for various effects. Record yourself and listen, or have someone in the room with you when you practice to ensure proper pitch and inflection.

- **Rate** is the pace at which we speak. Just like pitch can be varied for different effects, so can rate. Speaking slowly and pausing let your audience know that content is important. Speaking more quickly can show enthusiasm, or let the audience that know the information has already been covered. No matter how slowly you think you’re speaking, you sound faster to the audience than to yourself. Nerves tend to make us speak faster and higher. Speak slowly to explain something complex (like a definition) and faster when it is already known to the audience. A good way to judge rate is to perform the presentation out loud and time it.

Note on your outline places to speed up and slow down, as well as places for various pitches and vocal inflections. The same can be said for pauses, which are used to add emphasis, signal the end of a thought, or to allow information to sink in. Avoid vocal fillers—uh, like, er, um. If you’ve lost your train of thought, take a deep breath and continue.

**Articulation and Pronunciation**
Practice articulating and pronouncing difficult words ahead of time. For example, if you are citing a name or using a word in a language other than English, be sure that you know how to pronounce it.

Also, be aware of colloquialisms such as “dint” (didn’t), “dunno” (don’t know), “wanna” (want to), and think about whether they are appropriate for the occasion. For a formal speech or professional presentation, probably not, y’all.

**Personal Appearance: Confidence is key**
The audience tends to see you before they have a chance to hear what you say, and they will form their impression quickly. Dress one step above the audience to garner respect and a good first impression. This doesn’t have to mean a business suit or dress, but put some effort into your appearance.
Movement: Covers everything from posture to eye contact
Moving purposefully is different than bobbing or swaying. We move to demonstrate going from point to point. We sway because we’re nervous. To prevent swaying and other nervous behavior, keep your feet evenly distributed. Movement starts in the beginning, so walk to the podium confidently, with good posture. To end effectively, pause after your last line to let your words sink in, then collect your notes, and walk off confidently no matter how poorly you felt you did.

Gestures
What do we do with our hands? Do we keep them clasped, let them hang, or do we place them in our pockets? However you decide and how often you decide to gesture they should add to the speech and not take away or distract the audience from your message. Like most delivery components, you should do what feels natural. If you naturally speak with your hands gesturing than do that. If you don’t, work on adding in a few key gestures; perhaps holding up three fingers to reinforce you have three main points, or pointing to something on your visual aid, etc.

Eye contact is an easy way to gain a rapport with the audience and gauge their reactions to what you have to say. Make eye contact with the entire audience—in a small group look briefly from one person to the other, in a larger group scan rather than trying to make contact with everyone. Keep yourself from falling into a dead, blank stare—make eye contact that is confident, warm, and friendly.

Delivery Style

- Extemporaneous delivery (speaking from an outline) is the most engaging and flexible style of delivery. You should create a keyword outline, practice many times with that outline, and then (preferably) transfer that outline to note cards for the presentation. See our Extemporaneous Speaking Guidesheet for more information.

- Manuscript delivery There are times when you will need to speak from a manuscript. If this is the case, make sure that you create a speech manuscript (in other words, don’t just read sections of the paper), practice reading the manuscript several times, and then maintain eye contact and make it seem conversational when you deliver the speech. Manuscript delivery is difficult; don’t make the mistake of waiting until the last minute to prepare this kind of speech. See our Manuscript Speaking Guidesheet for more information.

Delivery may be the hardest part of giving a presentation because our nerves kick in once we are in front of an audience. Be sure to practice numerous times before you give the presentation, and come to the Speaking Center for more tips on delivery.