Psychology is both a social and a natural science. As such, there are many challenges in preparing a comprehensive and all-inclusive guide for speaking assignments in this discipline. How to reconcile qualitative and quantitative aspects of speech is a major issue. On the technical side, psychologists need to be able to read and describe complex statistical outputs, empirical quantitative and qualitative results and interpret graphs and charts. The most important part is to "translate" hard concepts into plain English. This is more urgent in speech than in writing, because of the transient and fleeting nature of live speech.

In the list that I compiled below I relied heavily on Dr. Michael Turvey's comments on the lecture method. Dr. Turvey is a distinguished professor of psychology at the University of Connecticut.

1) Organize presentation around 3-4 major points, not more.

2) If the lecture involves empirical results, start talking about the results within 2% of the time into the lecture. Experimental psychology is an empirical and quantitative science, where the audience demands to see results within the above mentioned timeframe. Otherwise, the lecturer may soon become boring.

3) Be reflexive. This means be very clear about what you will say in the first few minutes.

4) Be attentive to the pace of your presentation. Do not rush through hard concepts, take your time, elaborate, and do not be afraid to repeat the main components of a complex expose'.

5) Be aware and consciously work on transitions (e.g. between slides).

6) A good rule of thumb: “All audiences are freshmen.” Chances are the lecturer is the person who knows the content more than anybody else in the lecture room. This is (or should be) true at all levels: even when the audience is full of Nobel prize winners.

7) I usually schedule student presentations at the beginning of the class. The lecturer should not be disturbed for about 15 minutes before the start of the lecture. It is never a good idea to crash into the lecture room, or chit-chat with colleagues or students immediately before the lecture. In the past, classrooms at British universities had a small chamber next to the lecture room.
8) If you make a mistake, acknowledge and correct it immediately, and move on. Do not dwell on the error too long.

9) Field questions with care and respect. It is a good idea to repeat the question, and pose it to the whole auditorium. How many times does it happen that you miss a question because the person spoke softly or phrased it in a complicated manner?

10) Know your audience. Find out what audience members would like to hear about the topic and try to find everyday examples to be weaved into the lecture.

11) Alternate between hard concepts that require full attention, and lighter moments. This fluctuation between easy, familiar, and hard and dry periods invigorates the dynamics of the lecture making it a pleasant and stimulating intellectual exercise both for the audience and for the lecturer.

12) Be enthusiastic about concepts that seem commonplace to you, and also make an effort to be enthusiastic about other concepts that you do not care for much but must teach. If you are not enthusiastic, do not expect the audience to be enthusiastic about it either.

13) Be physical: Use the space. For one thing, do not stand behind a podium all the time. Move around the room, use the room as a prop, all in service of engaging the audience.

14) Use ordinary language to describe difficult and hard concepts. It is not easy to explain complex things in a simple way, but ultimately, that is the goal of any good lecture: to foster common sense understanding of the content. It is a valuable skill that needs to be developed during the preparation of the lecture.

16) One final (subjective) note: standing in front of an audience never “gets old”. After years of experience, I still get anxious before every one of my lectures. It does help sharpen and focus my attention, and is quickly overcome after a few minutes.

17) One sign that you delivered a stimulating and demanding lecture is this: You should feel emotionally and, actually, physically tired!