In the field of dietetics a practitioner must be an effective communicator. In most cases, nutrition is a message that must be delivered. An effective nutrition professional must be an active listener that is able to tailor a message to the specific audience. Dietetic professionals must be effective in communicating with individuals of all levels of education and diverse cultural backgrounds.

The following are learning outcomes for oral communication that must be met for a student to be eligible to take the registration examination to become a dietitian²:

1. “Design, implement and evaluate presentations considering life experiences, cultural diversity and educational background of the target audience”.
2. “Use effective counseling skills, to facilitate behavior change”.

The following are examples of common oral communication activities dietetic professional encounter:

- Patient diet counseling
- Instructing medical students on clinical nutrition
- A research presentation at a professional meeting
- Phone consultation to a home bound patient
- Conducting a foodservice staff meeting
- Conducting a meeting of clinical dietitians
- Talking to random patients at a health fair
- Conducting food preference research survey
- Talking with a team of student athletes about nutrition
Tips for Delivering a Nutrition Presentation:
- Always dress professionally
- Prepare, prepare, prepare (Know your topic)
- Do not read directly from notes
- Speak clearly, in a volume adequate for the audience to hear
- Speak in Standard English; avoid jargon, colloquialisms, and Ebonics
- Avoid speaking too fast
- Pause when you want to emphasize specific points
- Make eye contact with the audience
- Avoid fidgeting or making nervous gestures with your hands
- Allow your personality to come across in your presentation

Tips for Communicating One-On-One with Patients:
- Greet patients with a smile
- Call the patient by name
- Make eye contact; unless cultural differences suggest otherwise
- Lean slightly forward when speaking
- Keep an appropriate distance from the patient (2–4 feet)
- Ask open ended questions
- Repeat key parts of the patient’s statement
- Avoid interrupting the patient