As an Exercise Science student, it is essential that you develop effective oral communication skills. While you may have the knowledge of a particular topic, you also need to be able to communicate this knowledge in a clear and concise manner. This is not simply the oral delivery of information. The information needs to be presented in such a way that you can convince the reader of your understanding of the topic. A great oral presentation quickly engages the listener and focuses their attention on the issue at hand. During this time, you get to inform the listener about where you are planning to “take” them and then you move into the bulk of the presentation. This is where you get the opportunity to convince the listener that you indeed do understand the topic and that you are a professional. It is essential that your presentation be well-planned, logical, and “smoothly” transition from one thought to another. The conclusion should allow you to re-emphasize the most important parts of the presentation, bringing the reader back to the original purpose.

One way that speaking in exercise science differs from many other disciplines is that it often requires communicating very complex scientific/health issue at a very “elemental” level. For example, a potential client with congestive heart failure comes to your clinic seeking professional help in the treatment of his life-threatening condition. You, as the expert, will have a very brief window of time (often times 3-5 minutes) to convince this individual that you thoroughly understand the issue and this must be communicated in a manner that is appropriate to his/her level of understanding. Additionally, you need to convince this individual that they can totally trust you and that you have their best interest in mind. On the surface, this type of communication often appears spontaneous, however, believe it or not, one can prepare for “spontaneous” communication.

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.