



UConn 4-H Public Speaking 101

Tips for a Winning Presentation

HAVE PASSION FOR YOUR TOPIC

Choose a topic that is both interesting and relevant to you. Present about something you are passionate about. If you are excited about your topic, it is easier to relate that excitement to your audience.

Don't present just any old subject, but find one that truly excites you.

Your energy will shine through your face and gestures if you truly believe in the topic of your presentation. Find a topic that you just **HAVE TO** educate others about. If you have no enthusiasm for your topic, why should anyone else?

PROPER PREPARATION PREFERRED

Successful presentations don't just happen. They require thoughtful effort and preparation. Those who present in front of an audience don't just "wing it" but rather craft their presentation to include all the necessary points they are trying to deliver. They then practice, revising and editing as they go until they are completely comfortable and ready to present to their audience.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare to deliver a presentation that will educate and wow your audience.

PREPARING YOUR PRESENTATION

- ★ **Use language that your audience will understand.**
 - ◆ Provide examples to help make your points more relatable.
- ★ **Organize your presentation to have a clear introduction, body and summary.**
 - ◆ Tell a story in a logical manner with a beginning, middle and end.
 - ◆ Start and end with the most important points that you want those in the audience to remember. What will they remember 3 days after?
 - ◆ How do you translate your excitement for the topic to others?
- ★ **Practice, Practice, Practice!!!**
 - ◆ **Deliver your presentation in front of a mirror or camera.** This will allow you to practice making eye contact and not overly relying on your note cards. You will also be able to see your body language and become more comfortable in front of others. Speak clearly and loudly (without shouting) for your audience to hear you the way you intended.
 - ◆ **Time yourself.** Use a stopwatch to help ensure that your presentation is not too long or too short. This is also a great way to judge if you are going through your presentation too quickly which often happens when you are nervous. Also watch for filler words such as, uh, um or like, etc.
 - ◆ **Deliver your presentation to others** asking for feedback on what works well and what areas you could improve upon. Do this repeatedly until you feel you can deliver your presentation confidently without the need to overly rely on notecards or other props.
 - ◆ **Focus on being confident, comfortable and engaging.** Remember that your audience wants you to succeed. Take a deep breath and make your audience as excited about your topic as you are.
 - ◆ **Get to know YOUR strengths and weaknesses.** Focus on what you do well and the audience will be excited to go on a journey with you.



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IT'S SHOWTIME

You have rehearsed repeatedly and you are now confident and ready to share your excitement for your topic with others. As you stand in front of an audience to present, here are some tips to keep in mind.

- ★ You want to sound **professional** and **rehearsed** but not robotic.
 - ◆ Let your enthusiasm show as you educate and enlighten your audience.
 - ◆ Speak slowly and clearly, emphasizing the most important points of your presentation.
 - ◆ Remember that even though you have practiced repeatedly, your audience is hearing your presentation for the first time.
- ★ Remember **eye contact** and **body language**.
 - ◆ Making eye contact with your audience will help them feel more invested in the message you are delivering. Avoid looking at only one member of the audience.
 - ◆ Stand comfortably in front of your audience. Movement should serve a specific purpose and not become a distraction. Use body gestures sparingly and in ways that help express your ideas.
 - ◆ If you are using visual aids, don't stand in such a way that you are blocking their view from the audience.
- ★ **Slow down** and remember to **breathe**.
 - ◆ It's easy to forget to breathe when you are nervous and attempting to keep everything in your mind orderly. A deep breath can clear your mind, slow your heart rate and keep nervousness at a minimum.
- ★ **Dress appropriately** for the occasion.
 - ◆ Your attire should be **professional** and **appropriate** for the event in which you are presenting.
- ★ **Know the room**.
 - ◆ Get comfortable in your presentation space. If you are using props or visual aids, ensure that your audience can see them. If using a PowerPoint or some other electronic media, test it ahead of time to ensure that it will work properly. What is your backup plan if there is a technical glitch?
 - ◆ Is the room too warm or too cold? Will it be necessary to use a microphone to be heard by everyone? Have answers to these and other questions before your presentation begins.

USING PROPS

A PROP is any object that is used by a presenter in a performance. Props can include anything on stage with you such as a flip chart, podium, projector, computer, notes, chair, markers, etc. Props are a form of visual aid.

Props help you focus attention on the speaking points you are trying to make by illustrating those points.

Pointers when using props:

- ◆ Make sure the prop can be seen from **all** parts of the room.
- ◆ Always speak to the audience, not the prop.
- ◆ Use props that will actually enhance your presentation and not simply take up space on stage.
- ◆ A prop should provide supporting information without delivering the entire presentation. Use bullets or images to illustrate points.

STAGE FRIGHT

Everyone experiences stage fright from time to time. Even the most seasoned public presenters sometimes get nervous in front of a group of strangers. Remember that stage fright is not only normal but also manageable.

Surprisingly, a bit of stage fright can actually be good for your presentation. It makes you feel more aware of your surroundings and your consciousness. Learn to use these feelings to your advantage instead of letting the fear take over.

There are many strategies that you can use to help deal with stage fright.

- ★ **Think about your passion for your topic and how much you want to share it with others.**
- ★ **Close your eyes and imagine the audience listening and applauding.**
- ★ **Be WELL prepared.**
- ★ **Anticipate potential questions ahead of time.**
- ★ **Take part in an activity that relaxes you before your presentation.**
- ★ **Break your presentation into smaller bits that are easier to remember.**
- ★ **Yawn to relax your throat.**
- ★ **Breathe deeply, openly and slowly for several minutes.**

Remember that nervousness does not show to your audience nearly as much as you feel it. Keep your attention on the audience and take your time and you will do just fine.

For more information on the UConn 4-H Public Speaking program, contact your county Extension 4-H Office or the State 4-H Office at 4-H@uconn.edu.

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