

Tips for Public Speaking

Before the presentation

Know your audience – Before developing your presentation, it is important to find out as much as possible about your audience. This will help determine how in-depth your presentation will be and also help you manage expectations and prepare for questions.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who are they?
- What do they already know?
- What is their attitude about this topic?
- What do I want them to know?
- What do I want them to do?

Assess the situation – Ask for as many details about the presentation as possible.

- How many people will be attending?
- How much time will you have to present?
- What is the order of the presentations?

Understanding these details will help you prepare a presentation that best suits the situation and will help put you at ease on the day of the event.

Structure an effective presentation – Ensure your presentation has an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

Remember key messages – Use clear and concise statements that allow you to communicate your position or viewpoint in a succinct and memorable manner. Also, remember to refer back to these three messages regularly – repetition helps solidify your message.

Practice – Rehearse out loud, so that you know what you want to say, but avoid memorizing your presentation. Remember, practice makes perfect.

Anticipate questions – Think of questions your audience might ask and prepare answers. Think of ways to tie your answers back to your key messages. Also, try to think of difficult or challenging questions and how you will answer them. This preparation will help you feel more confident during the question period.

Contact AAMAC – Provide AAMAC with the details surrounding your presentation. Should someone want to attend, they will have all the necessary information. Inquire as to whether they would like you to bring any leave-behind information for the audience or if there are any messages they would like you to share. Also, let them know you will follow-up after the presentation.

The presentation

Arrive early – Arrive between 10-15 minutes before your presentation and use the time to review your notes and get familiar with the space in which you will be presenting.

Speak clearly and persuasively – To help engage your listeners, be mindful of your voice, volume, inflection and pace. It is often these things that help demonstrate your passion for the cause. Use gestures where appropriate and be sure to make eye contact with your audience.

Stay on message – Stay calm, be yourself and stick to your key messages. Avoid getting sidetracked and give the presentation that you are there to give. Stay away from jargon, speculation, speaking on behalf of others or “off the record.”

Nerves – A little bit of adrenalin can keep you energized, but use these tips to keep nerves under control:

- Rehearse your presentation out loud
- Do not consume alcohol and limit caffeine before the presentation or interview
- Hold a prop if you need to keep your hands busy
- Remember to breathe

Engage – Use real life examples. Sharing personal experiences will provide a face for your cause. Also, encourage questions from your audience and try to engage them with the issues you are presenting.

Answering questions – Be sure to restate the question before providing the audience with factual and specific information that supports the issues you are presenting. If you do not know an answer to the question, offer to find the information and get back to them.

Your request – Be sure to conclude your presentation with a direct ask or call to action from your audience. State clearly what you want to achieve as a result of giving the presentation. Determine a way to work together to achieve the task.

Wrap-up – Do not go over the time allocated to you. Thank your audience for their time and encourage them to contact you should they have any additional questions.

Additional information – You may have information that you are unable to get through in the allotted time. Be sure to provide your audience with a website or another source where they can find additional information, should they want it. If you have it, bring along supportive material including, brochures, educational materials or briefing documents that you can pass out at the end of your presentation.

Contact information – If appropriate, collect mailing and / or email addresses from your audience members who are interested in receiving follow-up information.

After the presentation

Follow-up – Be sure to respond promptly to any emails you receive after the presentation.

Share – Talk with your peers and compare your experiences. Contact AAMAC to share your activities, successes and outcomes as a result of the presentation.

Communicate – Where possible, try to establish and maintain a relationship with members of your audience so they will remember you and be responsive when you later ask for help. Continue engaging them with regular and routine communication and updates on the issue when appropriate.