The Process for Developing and Delivering a Presentation

It is a valuable skill to learn how to create and deliver presentations since you will continue to use this mode of communication throughout your educational and professional careers. It is important to note that while they are similar, a speech and a presentation are not the same. A speech utilizes verbal communication, whereas a presentation is a speech that also includes a visual element. This handout will focus on the two components of developing a presentation: best practices for creating the content for the speech as well as methods for delivering a presentation.

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Part One: Develop the Content

Select a Topic

- **Understand the assignment**: These guidelines may include the speech's time limit, structure, and tone.

- **Choose a familiar topic**: Select a topic in which you are already knowledgeable. This makes the preparation more enjoyable, and you will be more comfortable sharing information that interests you with your audience.

- **Research the topic**: To understand the complexities of your topic, conduct well-rounded research. This will not only help you create an engaging speech, but it also allows you to be able to answer questions from the audience in an informed manner.
- **Select a presentation method**: How you present material will vary depending on the type of project you are assigned. For instance, you may want to use a PowerPoint presentation to create visual interest, or you may want to include a video to demonstrate your point.

Write an Outline

After deciding on a topic, it is helpful to create an outline of your speech. An outline should include an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction should contain a preview of the main points, or signposts. These signposts will introduce the audience to the content's organization and will keep the central idea in focus. After the introduction, the outline should contain a body. The body will consist of bullet points for each main point and corresponding supporting points to be addressed. A conclusion should also be included to summarize the main points and remind the audience why the information is important. Sometimes, a conclusion can be used to call the audience to action.

Edit the Content

When editing the content of your speech, analyze the layout and ensure that it communicates the topic in the best possible way. Here are some tips for editing the content:

- **Listen to the supporting details:** Will the audience understand the main idea? Will the audience have the necessary background information needed to understand the main points? Is there any irrelevant information that distracts from the main point?

- **Follow the organization of the ideas:** Does the flow make sense? Does the order of ideas match in the introduction and the body? If not, review the original outline, and make the necessary changes.

Practice with the Outline

After the outline is finished, use it to practice the speech. One method of doing this is to look at the outline, read the keywords of the point that will be discussed, then speak about the point without looking at the outline.

Practice without the Outline

Using a minimal number of notes while delivering a speech shows knowledge of the content and communicates confidence to your audience. Here are some strategies for practicing without an outline:

- *Listen to the flow of words:* During this part of the editing process, listen specifically to word choice and phrasing. Are there words excessively repeated? Are there synonyms that could replace some of these words? Do you have a habit of using filler words such as "um" or "like" during certain sections? Are you speaking slowly enough that your words are enunciated clearly?

- *Double check your nonverbal communication:* Once the speech sounds clear, organized, and concise, take time to analyze your body language. Common nonverbal mistakes include placing hands in pockets, locking knees, standing in one place, looking at the ground, or looking at the presentation on the projector screen or computer. While many of these non-verbal cues may seem subtle, they are distracting to the audience and may communicate a lack of interest in the topic. Developing methods to manage non-verbal patterns can greatly improve your speech. One method is to record yourself giving the speech and watching the video later, noting ways to edit body language in the future.

Create a Visual Presentation

Because presentations include a visual media component, it is important to format your PowerPoint, Google Slides, or Prezi slideshow in a way that best conveys the information you wish to share. While it is intended to complement the topic, media should never distract from

the message of the presentation. Here are some tips for utilizing visual media during a presentation:

- *Keep it concise:* The slideshow should include bullet points with keywords or basic phrases rather than writing complete sentences. This will keep you from reading slides during the presentation.

- *Keep it simple:* Use subtle, dark, or neutral colors for the slides' background. Avoid using any bright colors that will distract the audience. Use an easy-to-read, large-sized font. Also, ensure that the any visual media includes relevant, properly sized graphics that complement the main point.

- *Cite it:* Cite any images and media incorporated into your presentation that you did not create. These images are not original to you, so the creator must be given credit.

Part Two: Deliver the Speech or Presentation

Delivering the speech is the next and final step. Here are some points to remember:

- *Do not stand still*: Gradually move or walk around during the presentation to create interest for the audience.

- *Make eye contact with different audience members*: This is a valuable tool to encourage audience participation.

- *Enunciate and speak slowly*: This ensures that the audience can hear the speech clearly.

Tips for Combatting Nervousness

Many people are nervous about conducting a speech or a presentation. Here are some useful tips to combat your nervousness:

- *Do not overthink the experience:* Many times, speakers overthink the experience of public speaking and let that distract them from their delivery. Remember, the goal is to effectively communicate the topic, so do not place emphasis on small mistakes.

- *Find a focal point:* Although you should move and vary eye contact, finding a specific place to visually return to can be comforting and may decrease distractions.

- ***Do not rush:*** Even if a presentation contains a large amount of content, it is important to keep a steady pace. This will allow you to keep focused and remain calm throughout the process. If you have difficulty remembering words or parts of the presentation, do not panic or worry. Take a brief pause and think about the content. Many times, this pause is not noticeable to the audience and can add an element of thoughtfulness to the speech.

- ***Preparation and practice:*** As mentioned before, the most important aspect of public speaking is feeling comfortable with the material beforehand. Repetition will allow the content to feel familiar. If rehearsing alone does not feel like enough, practice in front of others, such as friends or family. Also, ask for honest feedback, and think of ways to involve the audience. Like any other skill, public speaking improves with practice. The more you do it, the better you will become.