

6. Voice, speech and body language: The way you speak, the way you act and the way you move around can be very important to succeed in your presentation. Here you will find some useful advices and links to bear in mind during the presentation.

- Link: University of Canberra
<http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/learning/oralpres.html#preparing>

Watch your language!

- Keep it simple. The aim is to communicate, not to show off your vocabulary.
- Emphasise the key points—and make sure people realise which are the key points. Repeat them using different phrasing.
- Check the pronunciation of difficult, unusual, or foreign words beforehand.

Use your voice to communicate clearly

- Speak loudly enough for everyone in the room to hear you.
This may feel uncomfortably loud at first, but if people can't hear you, they won't listen.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
Don't rush! Speaking fast doesn't make you seem smarter, it will only make it harder for other people to understand you.
- Key words are important. Speak them out slowly and loudly.
- Vary your voice quality. If you always use the same volume and pitch (for example, all loud, or all soft, or in a monotone) your audience will switch off.
- When you begin a new point, use a higher pitch and volume.
- Slow down for key points.
- Use pauses—don't be afraid of short periods of silence. (They give you a chance to gather your thoughts, and your audience a chance to think.)

Use your body to communicate, too!

- Stand straight and comfortably. Do not slouch or shuffle about.
- Hold your head up. Look around and make eye-contact with people in the audience. Do not just address the lecturer! Do not stare at a point on the carpet or the wall. If you don't include the audience, they won't listen to you.
- When you are talking to your friends, you naturally use your hands, your facial expression, and your body to add to your communication. Do it in your presentation as well. It will make things far more interesting for the audience.

- Don't turn your back on the audience!

Interact with the audience

- Be aware of how your audience is reacting.
Are they interested or bored? If they look confused, ask them why.
Stop if necessary and explain a point again.
- Check if the audience is still with you.
'Does that make sense?'
'Is that clear?'
- Be open to questions.
If someone raises a hand, or asks a question in the middle of your talk, answer it. If you can't answer it, turn the question back out to the audience and let someone else answer it!
Questions are good. They show that the audience is listening with interest. They should not be regarded as an attack on you, but as a collaborative search for deeper understanding.
- Be ready to get the discussion going after your presentation. Just in case nobody has anything to say, have some provocative questions or points for discussion ready to ask the group.

➤ Link: http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~riceowl/oral_presentations.htm#goal

Choose an Appropriate Speaking Style

How you sound when you speak is crucial to the success of your presentation. You may have effective content, excellent ideas, accurate supporting statistics. However, if the style you use in speaking is inappropriate to the occasion, to the audience (as individuals and as members of an organization), or to the purpose you are trying to achieve, your content will more than likely be ineffective.

In general, you want to sound respectful, confident, courteous, and sincere. However, the precise tone and degree of formality will be dictated by your organizational role and your relationship to your audience.

To help determine the appropriate speaking style for a given presentation, ask the following questions:

- Do the audience members know you?
- Is your rank in the organization above or below them?
- Are you speaking to an audience of individuals from all levels within the organization?
- What demeanor, approach, and level of formality does the organization usually expect from those giving oral presentations?

- Is the audience composed of people who understand English? How well do they understand English?

Answers to these questions as well as your purpose will determine how you speak to your audience.

Style in writing refers basically to your choice of words, the length and structure of your sentences, and the tone, or attitude you express toward your audience. Style in delivering oral presentations is also defined by these same characteristics plus many nonverbal cues that can either enhance or detract from your presentation. While the style you use will vary with the audience, topic, and context, always consider the following guidelines that can enhance your delivery style:

- Avoid long, cumbersome sentences. Use phrases, and use a variety of sentence lengths. Avoid excessively long, complex sentences, as listeners may have difficulty following your ideas.
- Avoid overuse of abstract, polysyllabic words. Instead, use concrete language that your audience can visualize.
- Avoid overuse of jargon, unless you are sure that your audience will be readily familiar with all specialized terms.
- Use sentences that follow natural speech patterns.
- Use short, active voice sentences.
- Avoid memorizing the presentation verbatim--doing so will likely result in a presentation that sounds as though you are reading rather than talking to the audience.

The most effective style is usually a **conversational style**: short sentences, concrete language, speech that suggests to your audience that you are really talking to them. If you concentrate on getting your point across by having a conversation with the audience, you will likely use a natural, conversational style.

If you are speaking before a group that is composed largely of people from another country, you need to determine beforehand how fluent they are in English. If they are not comfortable with English, be sure that you speak slowly; avoid idiomatic expressions; choose concrete words; and speak in relatively short sentences. Limit each sentence to one idea. For information about speaking to multicultural audiences, click [here](#).

- Link: <http://www.rider.edu/~suler/bodylang.html>

Body Language

These exercises are designed to help students tune in to the subtleties of body language and what they might mean about interpersonal behavior.



Warm-Up #1: Hand Gestures:

Ask students to demonstrate and describe the meaning of various hand gestures. You'll be amazed at how many there are. Discuss how facial expressions and other body movements influence the meaning of a hand gesture. What do hand gestures mean in different cultures?



Warm-Up #2: Bar Body Behavior:

Discuss body language in a bar or club. What personality types can you detect just by how people use their bodies? What are the obvious and subtle behaviors of the braggart, the flirt, the wallflower, the drunk, etc.? Consider such factors as personal space, posture, eye contact, speed and angle of movement.



Warm-Up #3: The Tell

Gamblers and con artists long have known that people reveal their inner thoughts through body language without even knowing it. For example, if you place a coin in one hand behind your back and then present your fists to a body-savvy person, that person may be able to detect where the coin is. Your "tell" will indicate which hand holds it. You may lean your body to one side, hold one hand higher than the other, point your nose, or unintentionally leak some other behavior that gives away your "secret."

Have students form pairs to try this coin experiment. Some people are much more adept at it than others. If you're good at it yourself, demonstrate with a volunteer in front of the class. This exercise works best if the person with the coin is not told (initially) about the concept of the "tell."

Warm-Up #4: Mirroring (also works well as a warm-down to the role plays below)

Have students pair off. Either sitting or standing, one person in each pair takes the lead and begins to move in any way he/she wishes (tell them to avoid talking, since it's distracting). The task for the other student is to follow or mimic everything that the leader does. Encourage people to use both obvious and subtle behaviors. Do this for a minute or two, then switch roles of who is leading and who is following. Finally, tell the dyads to do the exercise one last time except that NO ONE is the leader or the follower. Both people in the pair should try to move in unison, as if they are mirroring each other simultaneously in a body language "dance." This is somewhat hard to do and takes a bit of practice before a pair gets the hang of it, if

they can do it at all. If the pair IS successful, what usually happens is that there are rapid, minute shifts between leading and following.

Also have everyone switch partners several times and repeat the above steps.

This mirroring can be done with body language alone, facial expressions alone, or body language WITH facial expressions. This last one is considerably more difficult to do than the first two.

This simple exercise sensitizes the students to the details of body movement and expression. It also may say something about interpersonal styles. Some students prefer to "lead" while others prefer to "follow." In particular, some people are very empathically in tune with the others movements, while some people cannot focus on this. Also, moving in unison is easy with some people, but not others, which says something about how "in sync" a dyad is.



Improvised Role Plays

Divide the class into small groups. Ask the groups to create a role play that involves ONLY body language and NO talking. The group can pick any scene and characters it wants. Encourage the group NOT to over-plan the role play. Instead, suggest that they pick a scene, define the characters in the scene, and think of a few possibilities for events that might occur in the scene. Then * IMPROVISE * within that general structure. This makes for a much more spontaneous and interesting role play than the more rigid alternative of carefully scripting all the action.

Each group takes its turn at improvising its scene in front of the whole class. A group may "set up" the role play by telling the class where the scene is taking place and who is in the scene. Another interesting and fun alternative is for the group to provide NO introduction to the role play. The class can then guess what is happening in the scene.

Rather than having students come up with the ideas for the improvisations, the instructor can provide them. Give each group a card with a scene on it that they will role play - a scene that involves NO talking. For example:

- It's 11:30 on New Years Eve. The bus is late.
-
- It's the end of a party. You are the last people left.
-
- You are all friends at a funeral.
-
- You are family members on the way back from a vacation. A few minutes ago you had a big fight.

Each group takes its turn performing it's role play in front of the whole class. Before each group starts, you can read to the class the scene descriptions from the cards, or NOT read the descriptions and let the class guess what the scene is about. After each role play, the class discusses what they believe was happening in the scene based on what they saw in the body language. What are the personalities of the people, their relationships with each other, the issues affecting the group, etc.?