

Quick Tips for Improving your Virtual Presentation

Presenting in front of a computer is different than presenting in front of people. However, the challenges of presenting remain the same. Here are some tips and tricks to improve your virtual-specific presentation. This information applies to both individual and group presentations.

1. Make sure you are in a **quiet space without other people** while presenting; background noise and movement can be distracting to your audience.
2. **Mute your microphone** when you are not speaking.
3. **Focus on transitions** between slides, topics, or group members. This helps your audience follow your presentation and removes potentially awkward pauses.
4. Focus on the **content** of your speech using clear language and concepts.
5. For group presentations, **practice the transitions** before presenting. **Use a keyword** to signal to your group that you are done talking and ready to move on.
6. **Do not read your speech or paper!** It is easy to read from a document in front of you, but written words sound different than a conversation. Create a clear outline or speaker notes, and allow yourself to talk confidently and freely about your topic.
7. These aspects of **extemporaneous speaking style** are most important:
 - a. **Pace**: if you tend to speak fast, **s-l-o-w down**; vary your pace at strategic points, for example at transitions, and pick up the pace when you begin the next section.
 - b. **Pause pattern**: your audience does not anticipate silence from you; therefore, a strategic pause is very attention-getting, particularly one that lasts more than 4-5 seconds. Be conscious of your **pause patterns** (or the lack thereof) and write pause reminders into your speaker notes.
 - c. **Expressive voice**: voices are naturally “melodic” but stress or anxiety can cause us to speak in a “flat” voice which is not engaging to an audience; work on overcoming anxiety to the extent that your voice is expressive; practice **vocal variation**.
 - d. **Articulation/Enunciation**: use your teeth, tongue, lips and alveolar ridge to give “crisp” and “clear” sound to your speech flow; practice with your speaker notes at least one time doing exaggerated enunciation.
 - e. **Pronunciation**: Be sure you pronounce all words correctly (especially technical vocabulary).
 - f. **Breathing**: Control your breathing; breathing slowly in and out can help control stress.
 - g. **Facial expressiveness**: Audiences respond to expressive faces. That’s what most of us anticipate in conversations. Stress tends to cause some speakers to “freeze” both their faces and their voice. Try using relaxing facial exercises prior to speaking.
 - h. **Practice**. If possible, practice in the room where you will give your speech. Practice from a full set of notes. **Give your speech from the same set of notes with which you practiced**.
8. **Tell a story with your content**. Listening to presentations online can be uneventful: make sure your content is direct and to the point, but also interesting.

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