

Develop and Deliver a Successful Speech

- Know your material, your audience, and your purpose.
- As you research your topic and prepare your speech, make notes that highlight key ideas and memorable quotations.
- Develop a thesis statement and organize and support your argument just as you would for a paper. Make your thesis statement clear.
- Create an opening that engages your audience. Do NOT begin with, “My presentation is about...” Think of your introduction as a roadmap to your speech. Your job is to encourage your audience to “ride along.” Tell your audience where the speech is going, then go there.
- Discuss your main points carefully and succinctly, offering supporting evidence. Write quotations on separate note cards and organize them under each main idea.
- Prepare note cards, but do not memorize or read from them. Use them to guide your presentation and prompt your memory.
- Consider using a visual aid to illustrate your points making sure it is relevant and visible to the entire audience. Practice stepping out from the podium to demonstrate your visual aid. Do not assume that it is enough simply to hang something on the wall or hole up a photocopy.
- Use transitions to connect your ideas.
- Craft a powerful conclusion. Leave the audience with something memorable. Do not say, “And, that is it!”
- Heed your time limit.
- Practice relaxation techniques prior to your speech: breathe, stretch, and imaging yourself delivering the speech easily and effectively.
- Practice in front of friends or the mirror. Visit the Speaking Center for feedback and advice. Audio or videotape yourself.
- Be creative and use your sense of humor appropriately. Do not be afraid to try something unconventional, as long as it does not endanger or distract your audience or veer from your purpose.
- Delivery tips:
 - Make frequent eye contact.
 - Use good posture. Do not lean on the podium or on the wall behind you.
 - Do not shift your weight from one foot to another.
 - Do not fidget.
 - Keep your hands in view and use them for emphasis.
 - If you tend to twist your hair or a necklace, put your hair up and remove tempting jewelry.
 - Show enthusiasm. It will help engage your audience.
 - Project and vary your voice.
 - Do not use verbal filler (like, you know, um.)
 - Do not wear a hat. It obscures your eyes and face.
 - Do not chew gum during a speech, whether you are the speaker or in the audience.
 - Smile and relax to show your audience you are prepared and knowledgeable.
- Refer to Rebecca McDaniel’s *Scared Speechless: Public Speaking Step by Step* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994) or another public speaking text or video for refreshers and reminders.