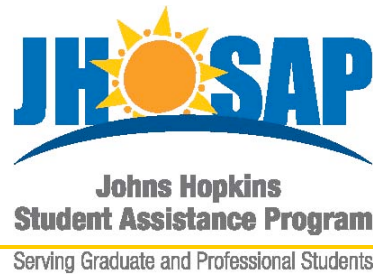


Tips for Giving a Presentation and Writing a Paper



Tips for giving a presentation

Developing the confidence and capability to give good presentations, and to stand before an audience and speak well, are important professional and self-development competencies. However, for most people, it isn't easy to go in front of a crowd of people and give a speech. But good presentation skills are within everyone's reach. The following tips can help.

Calm your nerves. If you have sweaty palms, a rapid heartbeat and butterflies, take deep breaths and visualize yourself giving a successful presentation. Relax your neck, shoulders and any other tense muscles. Smile to release the tension in your face. Remember that you are presenting to a group of peers who will likely be just as nervous for their own presentations.

Engage the audience. Begin with an interesting story, anecdote or question to capture the audience's attention. Instead of speaking in a monotone voice, vary your pitch and tone. Try to speak with energy and enthusiasm. If the audience senses you're not interested in the content, they won't be either.

Keep it structured. A presentation, like an essay, should have an introduction, main body and conclusion. In the introduction, tell the audience what will be covered in your presentation. In the main body, expand upon the topics of your presentation. And in the conclusion, restate briefly what you have covered.

Never try to "wing it." You need to prepare and practice several times. Remember to talk slowly and try to avoid "um," "uh" or other filler words.

Show the audience what's in it for them. What do you want your audience to take away from your presentation? Don't simply present a few facts and figures. You need to consider your audience and what they care about, so they aren't left asking, "So what?" Pick three or four main points, and expound on each of them.

Don't memorize your speech. Instead, know your topic well and use bullets as prompts for your talking points. Include visuals wherever possible – graphs, charts and illustrations make your presentation more interesting for the audience.

Make eye contact. Instead of staring at your notes, look at the audience, making eye contact with different people around the room.

Don't read the slide or handout out loud. The audience will have read it for themselves long before you finish. Find something new to say that isn't already written.

Dress appropriately. Lose the sweats and sneakers. The more professional you dress, the more credible your presentation will seem.

Follow the 10/20/30 rule. If using PowerPoint, your presentation should have about ten slides, last no more than twenty minutes and contain no font smaller than thirty points.

Anticipate questions. Try to anticipate questions and prepare answers ahead of time.

Tips for writing a paper

Have a paper to write? Forget what you were taught in high school – the five paragraph essay no longer applies. But you should follow a few basic guidelines to create a well written thesis.

Create an organized structure.

- **Make an outline.** Write out the main points you want to cover. Write one paragraph for each of these points and make sure each sentence in the paragraph supports the main point.
- **Use headings.** Use your outline to create section headings for your paper.

Create logical arguments.

- **Back up claims with evidence.** For each argument, include supporting evidence from reliable sources. Your professor will expect you to use scholarly references, so a simple Internet search won't do. Instead, search the Johns Hopkins online library to find peer reviewed resources – many of the articles can be read online. For best results, use narrow search terms.
- **Anticipate counterarguments.** Think of any opposing arguments, and offer rebuttals.

Make it clear and simple.

- **Don't use a big word when a simple word says it better.** Using words such as “thusly,” or “plethora” can make your writing sound pretentious and awkward.
- **Avoid clichés,** such as “at the end of the day” or “a wealth of information.”
- **Try not to write complex, wordy sentences.** Simple sentences convey your point more effectively.
- **Avoid adverbs.** Words like “completely,” “really” and “very” don't add useful meaning to your prose.
- **Use active voice.** Think about the actor (the subject) and the action (the verb). Try to avoid “to be” words – “am,” “is,” “are,” “been” and others. Occasional use of a passive phrase is fine, but when you overuse passive tense, your writing may come across as flat and dull.

Leave time for editing and rewriting.

- **Don't start your paper the night before.** You need to save plenty of time for the most important part of the writing process – editing and rewriting.
- **Print out a draft of your paper and read it out loud.** Listen for any sentences that seem awkward or out of place, or that need a better transition. If possible, have a friend read the paper aloud to you. Hearing your words from another's voice will give you the chance to give a more “objective” review of your work.
- **Make sure each sentence supports the topic sentence in a paragraph** and rewrite if necessary.
- **Eliminate any unnecessary words, sentences or paragraphs.**

Give proper credit.

- **Don't plagiarize.** If you use a direct quote, insert quotation marks and include a source. If you paraphrase an idea that is not your own, you also need to include a source.
- **Use online citation tools.** The Sheridan Libraries website contains online tools to help you automatically create citations and bibliographies (www.library.jhu.edu/).

More writing tips and resources can be found online at the Johns Hopkins University Writing Center website (<http://sites.jhu.edu/writingcenter>).

Seek assistance

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