

## Developing Presentation Skills

Presentations can be intimidating, especially for student interns. There are ways to make it a positive experience with little tension. These best practice tips can help.

- 1) **Define the purpose:** Begin with the end in mind. Define the precise desired thoughts and impressions you want the audience to “take-away.” Every detail of preparation and content should support this goal.
- 2) **Keep it simple:** Don't stray too far from the core messages that support the desired impression. Avoid getting into complex content that only you may “get.”
- 3) **Know your audience:** Gauge what will or may not interest them in particular. Seek ways to incorporate content with which they'll identify.
- 4) **Plan the details:** Know the room; such as its layout, size, and acoustics. Address equipment and other support needs. Identify anyone with whom you will coordinate.
- 5) **Practice makes perfect:** Rehearse aloud and in front of an audience whom you feel comfortable with. There's no such thing as rehearsing too much. Alter your tone and volume for emphasis and flow. Practice relaxing and controlling your breathing.
- 6) **Visual aids:** Graphics should add value. Make sure they are relevant, readable, and comprehensible. Practice how you will use them when rehearsing.
- 7) **Dress the part:** Your appearance is your first impression, so plan accordingly. Avoid wearing anything that can distract the audience from your presentation.
- 8) **Be you:** It may sound trite, but do not try to step out of your comfort zone to be something you're not. For example, do not overuse humor if you lack the finesse to deliver a punch line. Instead, play to your strengths, be they likeability, sincerity, liveliness, storytelling, graphic abilities, speaking style, etc.
- 9) **Engage the audience:** Remember that you are presenting to people, not space in a room. If presenting to 10 people or less, try to make eye contact with each one along the way. For larger audiences, be sure to face each part of the room and make eye contact with select individuals.
- 10) **Bring it home:** Close strongly by refocusing on your core theme. The final impression is often the most remembered. Be prepared to field questions and how you will reiterate key message points. If you cannot answer a question, say so and offer to research and follow up with the answer