

In addition to the diverse written reports that you will prepare, you can also expect to make oral presentations quite frequently. Most often, these will be simple unrehearsed progress reports given to your manager and your fellow project engineers. At other times, however, you will need to speak to upper management or customers, and it will be essential that you come fully prepared.

Table 1 lists a checklist of issues that you consider when you need to make an oral report. As you start to prepare a talk, you should find out as much as you can about your audience and why you need to make a presentation for them. Are you informing them about a situation or persuading them to buy or fund a project you would like to pursue? These facts should dictate how you organize the various topics and supporting material.

After you have the topics outlined, sketch visual aids that can help illustrate your ideas. Ask yourself which might be most suitable in your talk: transparencies, movies, videotape, posters or actual equipment. Transparencies for an overhead projector are convenient, quick, and they have a bonus: you can put notes to yourself on the margin.

Avoid trying to read a presentation; be natural and conversational when you speak. Note cards work, but only if you stick to simple keywords that help you remember your topic sequence. You should, however, have a solid well-practiced introduction that puts everything in perspective for your audience. Similarly, your closing should summarize all the main points and conclude with your recommendation if appropriate.

Being nervous before a presentation is normal. The best remedy is knowing your material. You have an advantage in that regard: you know more about your topic than anyone else. Rehearse your talk, be sure you can operate the equipment, and investigate the room where you will speak. Finally, when you address an audience, remember they are listening for a reason; if you concentrate on their needs, then the presentation will be successful.

Criteria that you can use to rate your presentation are shown in Table 2. When you rehearse, have a friend comment on each point. Did you introduce your subject well? Did you order your topics in a logical sequence and explain them adequately? Did your closing statements bring the whole presentation together and successfully accomplish the purpose

of the talk? Did you have all your facts right? Did the visual aids get the ideas across effectively? Did you stay within your allocated time limit?

During your presentation, you should maintain eye contact with audience. A professional appearance can help instill audience confidence in you and make the presentation much easier. Your interest in the subject, plus your enthusiasm for what you have to say, can help the audience get involved and interested too.

TABLE 1 PREPARATION FOR PRESENTATIONS

Audience Analysis	Who is the audience? What do they already know about the topic? What do they need to find out?
Purpose	Why give the talk? Inform or persuade? What is the main point?
Outline	Plan topics and support for each. Organize topics logically.
Visual aids	Prepare illustrations.
Notes	Put keywords on cards or on margin of transparencies.
Introduction	Orient the audience to the problem or issue; give needed background.
Closing	Summary and recommendations.
Rehearsal	Practice; do full dress rehearsal.
Equipment	Know equipment; have it ready.

TABLE 2 PRESENTATION CRITERIA

Introduction	Tell audience what to expect, how talk is organized. Purpose clear?
Topic Ordering	Are topics in logical sequence?
Topic Explanation	Are topics explained well?
Closing Summary	Closing summarizes points well?
Purpose Accomplished?	Is audience informed or persuaded?
Correctness	Facts and theory correct?
Visual Aids	Appropriate, well-executed?
Timing	Presentation within time limit?
