

4-H Communication Fact Sheet 6.0

Effective Presentation Tips

Besides writing a good project talk, demonstration, illustrated talk or public speech, there are a number of other criteria to consider when polishing your presentation. By using these criteria, your presentation will shine and you will be effective in getting your points across to your audience.

Appearance

Attire should be appropriate for the occasion. That will change for every presentation that you give.

Smile

Begin with a smile. A smile can do more for the presentation than any other single item. A smile will relax you, the audience and the judges and make it easier to present. A smile indicates your interest and enthusiasm for the subject.

Talk positively

Don't apologize for your appearance, your limited knowledge of the subject, the amount of time you had to prepare your presentation, or taking up the audience's time. Simply put, do not apologize for anything.

Practice the presentation

Practice is essential. Each time you review the presentation, see if the ideas are in order and supported with facts, examples and illustrations. Through practice, you can:

- coordinate action with explanation,
- do things in logical sequence,
- stay within the time limit,
- determine whether the presentation contains sufficient information,
- become skillful in using the equipment,
- ensure equipment functions properly.

Practice before an audience of other members, leaders and parents. Try videotaping the presentation to see ways to improve.

Don't memorize

It is best not to write your presentation word for word or memorize it, but you may want to note on index cards certain statements or phrases you don't want to forget. You will need only a word or a short sentence at the most — just enough to bring the thought into focus. Remember to:

- use one major idea on each note card,
- use only one side of the card,
- number your cards in order,
- use separate cards for the introduction and summary,
- put the three or four main points of the body of your talk on separate cards,
- print neatly so that the cards will be easy to read,
- use ink that won't smear. (Try using different colored highlighters to emphasize major points.)

After your talk has been transferred to note cards, you are ready to practice. Carry your note cards with you and practice every chance you get. After practicing, try to reduce the number of cards you have to use. At first you may feel more at ease practicing in private. Later you will want someone to listen as you practice.

Remember to learn your presentation in parts. You want it to sound like a conversation, not a recitation. After you have practiced the talk in parts, put it all together and rehearse it just the way you will give it. This involves going through all the steps you will follow in your presentation. Practice in front of a mirror or videotape your presentation so you can see yourself as the audience will see you. A good rule of thumb is to practice your presentation one time for each minute of your speech.

Rehearse gestures so they will look natural. If you plan to use visual aids, they should be part of your rehearsal. *Note: Visual aids are not used in 4-H public speaking competition.*

Voice

Speak clearly and distinctly to make sure you are being heard. Be careful not to speak too fast or drop your voice at the end of sentences. Do not run your words together or speak too softly.

Make eye contact

Remember to maintain eye contact. You should be looking at your audience about 75 percent of the time. If you notice that people in the back of the room have lost interest, think about what you're saying, and adjust your delivery accordingly. By the way, you'll never know if this is happening unless you look at the audience you're speaking to — so look.

Watch your posture

Stand up straight, and even if you are nervous, your audience will never guess it. Maintain good posture by standing erect with your feet comfortably balanced. Your weight should be evenly distributed between both feet. Keep your knees flexed to ease nervousness. Don't sway back and forth. Remember that ease and freedom of movement are essential.

Select appropriate gestures

Hand gestures are the outward indication of your inner feeling and enthusiasm. They need to be natural, not forced. A gesture is appropriate if it is one you would make during an ordinary conversation with friends. Avoid meaningless gestures. Gestures should be used only when they will help clarify or emphasize a point. Speak with energy and enthusiasm.

Choose words wisely

Simple analogies, stories, illustrations, metaphors and personal examples can help your audience understand you.

- Be smooth. Avoid long clauses. Use contractions.
- Be vivid; appeal to the senses.
- Keep your audience in step with you. Use transitions, list points, enumerate, summarize.
- Be at ease with a moment's silence. Don't fill in with *um*, *you know*, *okay*, *let's see* or *like*.
- Don't tell jokes. In most cases, they are best left to professional entertainers.
- Be convincing. Show your audience that what you have to say is important to them.

Language tips

Here are some ideas on how to keep your language simple, yet clear.

- Use simple everyday words.
- Keep your sentences short. Avoid long, run-on sentences that can confuse your audience.
- It's OK to use everyday contractions — for example, *don't* instead of *do not*.
- Use descriptive words to help your audience see, feel, taste, touch and smell what you're talking about.
- Avoid slang. Never use profanity or words that will offend or insult others, or language that puts people down or makes fun of groups of people.
- Feel free to use personal pronouns such as *I*, *me*, *you*, *us*, *we*, *our* and *them* to make your presentation sound more personal.

Pronunciation

If you're not sure how to say a word, look it up in a dictionary so you pronounce it correctly. If you just can't seem to say the word correctly, pick a different one that you can say easily.

Enunciation

Many times speakers get in a hurry and don't clearly enunciate key words. Here are a few tips on how to pronounce endings of words:

| Avoid | Say |
|--------|----------|
| Hunerd | Hundred |
| Gonna | Going to |
| Hafta | Have to |
| Dint | Didn't |

Habits to avoid

You may be nervous, but it is important to avoid behavior that will distract your audience, such as:

- Playing with change in your pocket
- Jangling jewelry
- Playing with your hair
- Rocking back and forth
- Chewing gum
- Wearing sunglasses
- Wearing a baseball cap, unless it is part of your presentation

Demonstration tips

Encourage the use of different showmanship techniques for effective demonstrations, including these:

- A slanted table is an effective tool for some demonstrations. Raise the back legs of the table slightly and tilt the table toward the audience. This permits the audience to follow the demonstration more closely.
- Keep a supply table in back for assembling materials for demonstrations. Bring needed supplies from the back table to the demonstration table to avoid a cluttered appearance on the main table.
- Trays filled with equipment and materials may be brought to the demonstration table and returned to the supply table as needed.
- Use towels to cover trays with equipment and food.
- A mirror used to display a finished product to the audience improves the overall appearance of a demonstration. Practice using a mirror for maximum effectiveness.
- Display garments on a rack.
- If you are working with foods, practice safe food handling techniques. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Use an ice chest to keep your foods cold. Refer to K-State Research and Extension food safety fact sheets for more information, or contact your local extension office.
- Wash hands before starting. Assume that the table is dirty. You may want to keep antibacterial wipes handy. A tablecloth helps with cleanliness and makes a more attractive presentation.
- Use paper towels and sponges to wipe up spills. Tape a sack to the table for stashing trash during the presentation.
- If you don't have a mirror overhead to show the demonstration, try tilting the materials so the audience can see better.
- If you run noisy equipment (such as food processors or saws) during the presentation, talk when the equipment is not running. You don't want to have to shout over the noise. You can explain procedures before and after using the equipment.
- For foods demonstrations, wear an apron and cover hair or tie it back.

Other resources to help you

4-H Communication Fact Sheets:

4H975 *Kansas 4-H Project Talk Scoresheet*

4H976 *Kansas 4-H Demonstration and Illustrated Talk Scoresheet*

4H977 *Kansas 4-H Public Speaking Scoresheet*

4H978 *Kansas 4-H Presentation Overview*

4H979 *4-H Project Talks*

4H980 *4-H Demonstrations*

4H981 *4-H Demonstration or Illustrated Talk Outline Form*

4H982 *4-H Illustrated Talks*

4H983 *4-H Public Speaking*

4H985 *Preparing and Using Visual Aids*

4H986 *Presentation Brainstorming Activity*

- Distribute handouts for the audience at the end so it won't disrupt your talk.
- Be sure to have a poster or electronic slide of any recipes or other instructions so the audience can see what's involved.

Make your entrance

You are about to go on. You are seated on the stage, on the platform or at a table. The toastmaster or emcee has just finished introducing you. Take a deep breath and exhale slowly. Look as relaxed as you can. Smile. Establish eye contact with your audience, and start speaking.

Relaxed hands

The best place for hands is at the sides of your body, creating a casual appearance. Don't clench your hands. Don't grip the speaker's stand or lean on it. Don't fold your hands across your chest. Don't stroke your ear or throat. Don't hold the microphone.

Summary

Being able to give effective public presentations is a valuable skill, and one that will help you as you go through life. With practice, you can master the process and become an effective speaker.

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