

The ability to speak effectively in public is a critical skill to have in your academic portfolio. It can mean the difference between a good or excellent grade. More importantly, it can determine whether or not you land a scholarship, job or some other important professional opportunity. To date you have been exposed to a seminar-style of public speaking as well as to speaking persuasively about your project to a small group of peers. For this assignment, you will deliver a 5-7 minute presentation about your *Anatomy of a Research Project*. This handout offers guidance on how to prepare your talk and some carefully selected resources on public speaking. Finally, it outlines the criteria on which your talk will be judged.

How to prepare

- Write thorough and succinct notes on content as it will be delivered, but do not read these as you give your talk
- Think about how your delivery can achieve the desired impact. Remember that knowing your content is not the same as delivering it effectively
- View the resources provided below for important advice about how to speak
- View the resources provided below on media to deliver your message and choose one that best fits your style and content
- Practice your talk individually or with a small audience
- Find a classmate to give you positive nonverbal cues as you deliver the talk. This has been shown to make speakers feel more at ease (see Winston's "How to Speak", clip # 11)
- Think about logistics:
 - What technological resources will you use?
 - Do you have a back up plan in case technology fails?
 - Where will you stand or sit in the room?
- Don't try to wing it!

Resources on public speaking

[The Art of Speaking](#) (*Study Hacks*). The author of this blog offers a schematic version of a now famous lecture by MIT Professor Patrick Winston entitled *How to Speak*. You can view a version of this lecture delivered at Harvard by visiting the site noted below.

[How to Speak](#) (*Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning*). I encourage you to see this entire series (45 minutes), but expect you to view at least the following clips: "How to Start", "The Big Four", "Time and Place", "The Blackboard", "Style", and "How to Stop".

Resources on media for content delivery

For the purposes of this tutorial, the gold standard in choosing a medium to deliver content is tri-fold: ease of use, clarity and impact. Judge each of these ways to convey your message by these criteria.

- Blackboard (retro makes a comeback). This simple tool is often overlooked because of its simplicity and lack of technological glitz. And yet, these qualities are precisely what can make it a powerful tool. Schoolteachers recognize this and are absolute masters at using blackboard. Some of us have an aversion to chalk, but the whiteboard is a nice alternative. If you use the blackboard for a talk you will have to keep several factors in mind:
 - Space constraints and organization: what content needs to be on the board and how will you organize it on the available space without clutter
 - Use board content effectively by pointing and emphasizing
 - Writing and talking: be mindful of the tendency to talk at the board and away from your public
 - Write legibly!



- PowerPoint. Keep in mind that there are analogues to PowerPoint in OpenOffice, GoogleDocs, and iWork to which my comments apply. PowerPoint and its analogues have become the single most commonly used medium and in some quarters are synonymous with giving a talk. It is also the most commonly abused mode of presentation. As a recovering abuser of this tool, I venture to say that there are at least three practices that seriously interfere with any potential impact of PowerPoint:
 - Speakers tend to read slides that everyone else can read. There is no reason why you'd need to be in the same room to deliver information this way.
 - Slides tend to be overloaded with content that overwhelms listeners and muddles the message. A variation on this deadly practice is to have too many slides for the time allotted.
 - Presenters get caught up in the nuts and bolts of the software, laser pointers, and bells and whistles thus distracting from the central message.

The following sites contain useful guidelines on how to design simple and effective slides and presentations:

- PowerPoint design:
http://presentationzen.blogs.com/presentationzen/2005/09/whats_good_powe.html
 - Baruch College, CUNY, Effective Use of PowerPoint: Online Tutorial:
<http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/dml/engine.php?action=viewAsset&mediaIndex=432>
 - Michael Francis, University Scholar, Effective PowerPoint presentation: <http://university-scholar.com/2008/03/effective-powerpoint-presentation/>
-
- [Prezi \(http://prezi.com/\)](http://prezi.com/). A relatively new online presentation software that essentially models a mind-map. It is especially useful if you want to layout a process by which you reached a conclusion and/or a graphical concept. It allows you to arrange ideas and then connect them in a logical sequence. One of its peculiar strengths is that it allows the presenter to move from big ideas to details as well as to show relationships among ideas. I find that the process of preparing a presentation with Prezi allows me to put everything on the table, to decide what is essential, and to clearly identify connections. You can literally learn how to use this software in 10-20 minutes. It is a free download and available from any computer with internet access. I think of it as a virtual blackboard where I don't have to worry about space availability or chalk dust.
-
- Poster sessions. A poster refers to a single PowerPoint slide that presents an argument, data and findings, a rationale for the way in which you have conducted research, and a case for its importance. It is a challenge to accomplish this in a single slide even if it will be blown up to the proportion of a large poster. Each fall during the poster sessions held during parents' weekend, I have seen many examples of posters that needed radical revision. Therefore, I strongly urge you to follow a very useful [guide on poster session presentations](http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/speaking/poster/index.cfm) prepared by the writing lab at Colorado State University: <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/speaking/poster/index.cfm>. For technical instructions on how to print posters for presentation, please visit "[Making Posters at Grinnell](http://www.lib.grinnell.edu/general/facilities/printers/posterprinter.html)" (<http://www.lib.grinnell.edu/general/facilities/printers/posterprinter.html>). I offer this as a reference in case you ever need to print out a slide for a poster session. For the purposes of this assignment, it is not necessary to print out a giant poster. You can simply design a single slide to project through the computer.



How your talk will be assessed

Content:

- Identifies a central question and related argument
- Clearly identifies what others have said in response to your central question (or a similar question)
- Concretely describes the evidence you use to make your case
- Describes what you will do to the information you will use as evidence
- Conveys to listeners why this project matters to our understanding of cities and/or to related policies

Effectiveness of delivery or impact:

- Organization (listeners know what you will do, how, and if you did “it”)
- Time management (aim to finish in 5 minutes; you will be cut off at 7 minutes)
- Pace (speak at a rate that will be understood by your listeners but that is not too fast)
- Media use: make sure you use a medium that is simple and effective (see resources below)
- Audibility (make sure you are not mumbling, speaking at your papers)
- Dynamism (sound interested in the matter which occupies you)
- Absence of distractions (watch what you do with extremities, pens, glasses, verbal pauses)
- Connection with listeners judged by what they will remember about your presentation (see some of the resources below on the use of stories, props, and/or symbols to make your talk memorable).

