



CHALLENGE



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A Herff Jones IMPACT Resource for Students

Secrets of Successful Presentations

Student leaders often find themselves in the position of needing to present information to a group of people. The very thought of doing so causes most people to get nervous—according to statistics, fear of speaking ranks at the top of the list of the things people fear most. While it's natural to feel fearful about speaking in front of the student body, members of your organization, a group of administrators, or parents, with a bit of preparation the experience need not be nerve-racking.

■ Know your key points.

One rule of thumb to keep in mind is that audience members will remember five key points from a presentation. What are the five most important points you want the audience to take away from your presentation? Structure the presentation so that those points are presented clearly, and help the audience remember them by making your points relevant to them. Why does what you have to say matter to them and how will they benefit from hearing your message?

■ Create a good impression.

When you are presenting in

front of an audience, think of yourself as an actor playing the role of presenter. The way you dress, the way you hold your body, the gestures and tone of voice you use all combine to send a message to the audience. Dress appropriately for the occasion. Put a pleasant expression on your face and relax



your body—even if you are feeling nervous. Speak slowly and enunciate clearly, varying your tone and showing appropriate emotion for the topic. Make eye contact with people in the audience. Project a confident image and the audience will respond in a positive manner.

■ Know your material.

Reading your material from a script is boring and may send the message that you are unprepared. It is acceptable to

glance at your notes occasionally, but you should be familiar enough with the ideas and concepts you are trying to convey that you can speak naturally. By the same token, avoid memorizing your speech. If you are nervous, you risk freezing up and forgetting what you planned to say. The best course is to memorize your opening remarks and perhaps the closing remarks, but for the rest, rely on notes and thorough preparation. The better you know your subject, the less stress you'll have.

■ Master the technology you will use. Practice speaking into a microphone and have someone listen to you practice so they can tell you how it comes across. Check out the location ahead of time to ensure that a whiteboard, chart paper, markers, and other materials you plan to use are available.

If you are using presentation software such as PowerPoint, be sure your equipment is set up and in good working order before you begin. Keep your slides simple and to the point—don't get carried away with razzle-dazzle effects,

