HOW TO DELIVER A MEMORABLE PRESENTATION

Most of us wouldn’t get through high school without making at least one presentation as part of a classroom assignment or a competition like Imagine Tomorrow. Let’s face it: delivering a presentation can be nerve-wracking. But the ability to present your ideas clearly and persuasively is critical to success in every endeavor. Take the following steps as you prepare your presentation, and you’ll sail through it like a pro.

Stick to the topic
Directly answer the question being posed. Avoid straying off on tangents.

Start with research
Become an expert by reading about your topic in depth. Review popular literature, websites, and even scientific literature. Ask for input from experts: teachers, parents, or other adults. Support your conclusions with data and name your sources.

Organize
What messages do you want your audience to take away? You need to quickly capture your audience’s interest and hold it. State your objective clearly and get to the meat of your presentation quickly. Take the time to organize your presentation logically.

If you’re working within a team, identify what roles each of you will play in the presentation. Ensure that each of you can play the others’ roles, so if a team member is unexpectedly absent, one of you can fill in.

Keep it simple
Focus on a single core idea. Avoid complicated language and visuals. If you’re using a PowerPoint presentation, keep text to a minimum. Use only one idea per slide. Less is more.

Tell stories ... with pictures
The most memorable speeches are those that tell a story. Share a story that’s central to the message you want to present.

Choose images and graphs that drive home your core message. People remember pictures more easily and vividly than long paragraphs or speeches. The best visuals are the simplest. Use them to support your talk, not repeat it.

Put your audience’s needs first
Anytime you get up to speak, you’re the most nervous person in the room. But remember, it’s not about you. The purpose of your presentation is to create a rewarding experience for your audience. Know your audience’s interests. Gear the content of your presentation to address their needs. Make them feel comfortable and engaged.

Be conversational
Don’t read your notes or your slides word for word. Audiences love speakers who connect with them. Share your knowledge and passion for the subject. Talk in a slow, steady voice and remember to breathe! Have confidence and let your personality shine.

If you make a mistake, chances are people won’t even notice. Never stop and ask to start over. Just remain confident, correct any misstatements, and proceed to your next point.

Practice, practice, practice
The more rehearsed you are, the more confident and relaxed you will feel. Know your topic. Adjust your presentation to fill, but not exceed, your allotted time.

Take the challenge
Imagine persuading others to adopt your best ideas. The future is in your hands!

Classroom exercises
• Write a persuasive paragraph on an energy-related topic: why we should recycle, why we should turn off the lights when we leave a room, and so on. Then stand up to share the ideas in your paragraph — all from memory. The goal isn’t to recite the facts, but to persuade classmates that the initiative is important.
• Outline a five-minute presentation to classmates about a simple topic, identifying your core idea and key takeaway messages.
• Imagine that you are delivering the Gettysburg Address as a PowerPoint presentation. Find four to eight images to accompany your presentation. Indicate the passage of text that each image would support.