

Public Speaking at 4-H Visual Presentation Day
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Many of you are very familiar with our 4-H Visual Presentation Program, which offers opportunities to 4-Hers to present information on a topic using visual aids. However you may not be as familiar with another aspect of our program, public speaking. This is considerably different as no props or visual aids are used during your speech, which can be challenging to a beginner. Some of us have grown dependant on posters and visuals and now it's time to fly solo using just your voice and your words. This can also be a very rewarding and educational experience gaining skills that will increase your confidence and knowledge. We hope that some of our senior 4-Hers will choose public speaking as an alternative to visual presentation.

Phase I Decision Making 101

There are different types of public speaking including informative, persuasive and motivational or inspirational. The kind of speech you give will depend on your topic and your reason for choosing that topic. Are you trying to motivate people to do something or get an emotional reaction to something, such as motivating people to donate to a charity or do community service projects? Would you like to inform your audience about a particular subject like a favorite hobby or recreational activity or place you've visited? Or are you passionate about a particular subject and would like to try to convince people that your point of view is best, such as not to buy puppies at pet stores or puppy mills. Before you start, brainstorm some ideas with others and then list out topics that would interest you. Explore these ideas by researching information on the Internet or at the library. When you've chosen your topic, chose the type of speech your subject best fits into. Once that is selected you are well on your way.

Phase II Mapping Your Speech

Just like a visual presentation there are parts to a speech. Drawing a map is a good visual aid to use. Just as you would map out a trip from here to Alaska, you can map where your speech will be going. Consider your map to be your outline; this will become invaluable to you as you finalize your speech. Think of your subject as going from one place to another and taking the audience with you. Beginning to plan your speech will help you pull together your thoughts and information. Some questions you'll need to answer are: Will I have enough time to research this subject? Is this really the right topic for me? Will my audience be interested in my topic and will they understand it? You may be very interested in the African Blue Bellied Fly but is it so specific that not too many others will have any interest unless you're speaking to a group of entomologists. Will you have enough time to present your topic? Try not to tackle a topic that you have had no experience with. It's better to be somewhat familiar with your subject until you're more experienced. This will help you feel much more confident. The mapping idea will also help you get back on track if you get lost.

Once you are ready to commit you'll need an introduction. You'll need a good opener so that the audience is eager to hear the information you are presenting. This could be the time for a wow factor, something that will really catch their attention, or the time to add humor or to show your enthusiasm for your topic. You may ask a question, state a fact, pose a challenge or tell a story, whichever way you decide to do your opener make sure it fits in with your theme and ties in with the rest of the speech. You'll also need to introduce yourself and your topic. It's also time to give them a glimpse of what the rest of your speech will be like but don't give everything away, keep them guessing so they are interested.

Phase III Organizing Your Speech

Your goal will be to lead your audience on a wonderful interesting journey. Make sure your ideas flow naturally from one thing to the next using some keywords. You should have three strong points you'd like to cover with your theme. Make sure your enthusiasm and passion for your subject comes through. Show your confidence. Even if you're nervous never let the audience see you sweat. There's plenty of time for that later and by then it'll be over! Be upbeat and develop a pace for your speech. Practice when to pause to let a point digest ,or when to add humor or slow down for impact. Another element of a speech can be to entertain. Most people want to enjoy their experiences so blending the "show must go on" attitude with facts or opinions will go a long way with your audience.

This is the time to develop a relationship with the audience. Switch places with them and see if you feel as interested from another person's perspective. Remember you can't please everyone so be gracious even if your audience isn't. Never apologize if you make a mistake. Chances are you're the only one who knows that you did, so keep right on going as if nothing happened. If something is more noticeable, ask yourself what's the worst thing that could happen if you did make a mistake? Things happen, life happens, doors slam, babies cry and thunder cracks across the sky. It's all part of doing a presentation or speech. How you react to different situations shows the audience how prepared you are. After you're done with this part of your speech, you may want to go back to make changes to your opener. Remember it's a work in progress.

Phase IV The Closer

It's time to bring them back from their trip and on the way home what would you like them to remember. Make sure you'll have enough time for a good closing. Should you go back to the opener, restate the key points or just summarize it all? Once again tell the audience what you most want them to remember. Maybe it's creating a picture of this trip that will stay in their memory for a long time. Maybe it's stating facts over again to help them make a decision on which way they want to go. It could be a series of memories that will make them want to revisit this journey. One thing for sure, you'll need to keep smiling and end on a strong note. Thank your audience and tell them you appreciated their time.

Tips for Public Speaking

Try not to use the same words over and over, get out the thesaurus and experiment with a few new words. Good use of vocabulary matters.

Smile and establish eye contact with your audience, engage them and take them along with you through this oral presentation.

Eliminate the “uhms”, “ahhs”, “ers”, “you knows”, “ands”, “buts” and other non-words or phrases you use over and over.

Don't copy other people's styles, create your own.

Avoid talking too fast, make sure to breathe and set your pace, it's not a race.

Remember to use some pizzazz; what's hot, what's new, can you quote an article from the latest magazine, book or Internet resource.

Look for bad habits; do you move around, rock from side to side, play with your hair, your jewelry or your belt? Do you have your hands in your pockets, or are you fidgeting with something? If so, try to correct these motions or gestures and have natural and appropriate movements.

Avoid memorizing your speech; instead use your outline to prompt you. If you are truly familiar with your speech and have rehearsed it many times it will flow more naturally.

If using humor make sure it is appropriate for all ages and all audiences. Something funny to you can be offensive to others. Double and triple check your humor but if it is used well, humor can add so much to your talk.

Videotape your speech and review it carefully. This is where you'll pick up on those annoying habits or nervous things you do.

You will be judged on your posture, pronunciation and presence. Don't use words that you have trouble pronouncing, stand up straight, no slouching and dress for success.

Enjoy this experience; you are among an elite group of young people who are making public speeches. You are all winners just for trying. Congratulations!

