Public Speaking Guide

1. Consider your audience.

- Consider the audience's understanding of the topic.
- Consider your audience's level of agreement regarding the topic.
- Consider what your audience cares about.
- Avoid assumptions and overgeneralizations.

2. Make smart decisions about content.

- Remember, "A speech is not an essay on its hind legs."
- Know your overall purpose and goal before outlining your speech.
- Simplify and explicitly state the purpose of your presentation.

3. Earn your audience's attention and keep it.

- Use relevant stories, surprising information, questions, or conversation about your passion for the topic to grab your audience's interest.
- Engage your audience and explain new material using vivid descriptions, stories, visuals, and examples.
- Use signposts, body language, and pauses to direct your listeners to your main points.
- Wrap up in a way that gets the audience motivated to think and feel something about the purpose of your speech.

4. Create personalized speaking notes.

- Make sure your speaking notes are efficient and keep you organized.
- Never read straight from your notes or essay.
- Number your cards, color-code priority information, and write yourself notes to remember to pause, take a breath, look up, and smile.
- Write out direct quotations and remember to attribute credit to the sources.

5. Rehearse your presentation.

- Time yourself using your note cards and visual aids.
- Practice in front of family, friends, and peers and ask for feedback.
- Use your voice, body movements, pace, and stance to give your speech texture and personal flair. You are the punctuation of your speech. When you're speaking, your audience doesn't have the benefit of visual signifiers such as commas and question marks.
- Use your physical position in the room to transition throughout your speech and keep your audience's attention. Literally move with your signposts.
- To make eye contact, find friendly faces in the audience to focus on throughout your speech.