## Oral Presentation Basics

### WRITING TO BE HEARD

#### Content and Structure

- Allow 2-2 ½ minutes per page of text (10 min. presentation = 5 pp text; 20 min. 10 pp.)
- Do not go over time limit; frame the project to fit within the time limit
- Narrow the field—1-2 major ideas
- Make sure presentation "stands alone" (even if taken from a longer work) and exhibits a "narrative arc"
- Give background/context for your project but do not rehash your entire thought process
- Explain methodology succinctly
- Contextualize your research effort within your discipline (place it within the critical landscape)
- Use metaphors and analogies to make field-specific points easier to understand

#### Introduction & Conclusion

- Begin with an interesting anecdote, fact, quote, event, issue or visual that captures the heart of your argument and piques your audience’s curiosity
- Present a deductive argument (i.e. present the argument very early in the presentation)
- Consider using an organizational device to let the audience know what you will be covering in the presentation
- Wind down to the conclusion
- Summarize key points and conclude definitively

#### Claims and Evidence

- Slow down and use vocal inflection to demarcate major claims and ideas
- Keep in mind what constitutes key evidence in your discipline
- Abide by "Argument to Example" ratio (do not overload audience with examples)
- Do not quote at length
- Attribute any quotes you use ("As Judith Butler asserts...")
- Use vocal inflection (rather than quoting gesture or "quote/unquote") to set off quotes
- Incorporate transitional words (In Contrast; For example; First/Second/Third) to guide the audience through the argument

#### Vocabulary and Sentence Structure

- Explain discipline specific terminology
- Reduce jargon
- Eliminate any phrasings or words that are difficult for you to pronounce
- Do not use very informal word choices
- Avoid complex sentences (sentences should be shorter than in a written work)
**Oral Presentation Basics**

### Reading Copy
- Prepare a “reading copy” in 14-16 pitch
- Create page breaks at points at which it is easy for you to turn the page (i.e. not in the middle of a sentence)
- Identify places to breath, points of emphasis, places to slow down or speed up, places to gesture to visuals—create a “script” for your performance

### DELIVERY

#### Demeanor
- Maintain a confident, enthusiastic demeanor
- Take pleasure in teaching your audience about your subject
- Sustain eye contact with the audience (left, center, right, front and back); make a connection

#### Posture and Gestures
- Stand up straight with shoulders back, arms at sides, feet shoulder-width apart, chin level
- Coordinate gestures with content (gestures to enumerate, indicate size or scale, illustrate concepts)
- Avoid distracting gestures (pulling on hair, fiddling with pen or notes; indiscriminate waving; gripping the podium)

#### Volume, Articulation, Breathing
- Maintain an appropriate volume for the room
- Enunciate clearly (words and ends of sentences)
- Do not use informal pronunciations (gonna, shoulda, kinda)
- Use vocal inflection for emphasis
- Do not “up talk” (end a sentence as if it is a question when it is not a question)
- Do not breathe in the middle of a sentence

#### Pacing
- Speak fluidly
- Slow down for important points; speed up over details
- Avoid using “filler” or “bridge” words (“like”; “you know”; uh/uhm”; “so”)
Slide Design Basics

**TEXT**
- Strive to be succinct—avoid bullets longer than 2 lines; try to limit yourself to 6-8 words/line
- Maintain parallel grammatical structure for each bullet point on a slide
- Ensure pitch is large enough for the venue—no smaller than 20 pitch
- Use a Sans Serif Font (Calibri or Arial are good choices)
- Maintain consistent style throughout the presentation
- Do not use all caps
- Do not overuse boldface, underlining, and italics

**VISUALS**
- Use dark background for large, formal venues
- Use light background for smaller, more casual venues
- Avoid distracting backgrounds—keep it simple
- Avoid high-contrast, intense color choices (they can be difficult to read)
- Avoid low-contrast colors (pastels are not usually a good choice)
- Use high-quality images (istockphoto.com; creativecommons.org; your own photos)
- Cite all images you use
- Employ the “Rule of Thirds” to create a more visually dynamic slide
- Ensure that photos and text are unified (if you include photos of people/animals they should be oriented towards the text)
- Use gridlines to align visual elements both within and between slides
- Be sure to include x/y axis labels on graphs; these should be positioned very close to the axes
- Avoid using legends (do not block off or boldface the legend if you do use one)
- Avoid using 3-D or rotated graphs—they distort the data
- Ensure data—and any other text on your graphs—is easily readable
- If you import graphs from a journal article, be sure that they are transparent against the background of the slide

**ORGANIZATION**
- Use pitch and indentation to signal hierarchy of ideas
- Try to stick to no more than four categories at each level (i.e. presentation, slide, sub-claims)
- Use boldface and color changes (sparingly) to signal key words and ideas
- Pay attention to the proximity of content elements—proximity suggests related ideas
- Craft meaningful titles (ideally, titles should convey major points or claims)
- Call out key points by circling, highlighting, or animating
- Use animation strategically to direct attention to key points, highlight one step at a time, and convey dynamic processes
- Ensure your slide has adequate white space—do not glut a single slide with multiple text blocks, photos, graphs, and video clips—this will impede the audience’s ability to grasp your argument
- Do not end with a “Questions?” slide—form a summary slide, reproduce one of your most important graphs, or return to one slide/image from early in the presentation to come full circle
- Strive for simplicity and clarity