

SECTION 4

Mechanics of presenting

POLISHED PRESENTING

Explore different ways to effectively communicate by using different presentation formats and styles. Each person is generally most effective when they develop a style they are comfortable using. The information below gives suggestions for developing a personal public speaking style.

Body Positioning

When positioning yourself in the front of the room, decide whether to be in the center or slightly to one side. Any posters, digital slides, or other props or visuals should be visible to the audience. Where you stand should not block the view of visual aids. Visual aids should not block the audience from seeing you either. Be certain everyone in the room can see clearly. Stand in several places and look where you will be presenting to be sure there is nothing in the way.

Standing and Posture

Use good posture, it helps you feel and look more confident. Weight should be distributed evenly with feet shoulder width apart and knees unlocked. If you become tired during the presentation, shift from front to back (put one foot behind) instead of swaying side-to-side. Some presenters do not realize they sway or twist their legs in front of an audience and it can be distracting.

Speaking voice

It is important to practice your speaking voice to determine the correct volume, rate of speech and pitch. Decide the best inflection and emotion in your voice to successfully convey ideas. Well-planned pauses are useful to let the audience process the speech.

Share in your own words. Avoid reading, memorizing or repeating material that is written differently from how you normally speak. Stiff memorization of material is not recommended. Practice can help 4-H members feel more comfortable with their ability to form clear thoughts as needed, without memorization. While 4-H members should speak in their own words, they should be mindful that this is a formal presentation. Avoid speech habits such as overuse of certain words, catch phrases and sloppy speaking, such as like, gonna, haveta, umm, ahh, so, right, etc. Eliminate the word “you” as much as possible, unless in a rhetorical question. Instead of saying, “Next you do” ... say, “The next step is” or “Next I will.” Saying “you” assumes the audience is doing the action and they are not.

Avoid using notes or being too dependent on notes. If using note cards, number them and use prompts with as few words as possible. Practice will increase confidence without using notes. Listen to yourself as you are speaking. Staying attentive to the presentation is important.

Avoid vocalized pauses including "um," "er," "like," "well," "right," "you know," "so," and other fillers that detract from presentations. Avoid chewing gum and other things that may change voice projection.

Volume should match your audience and room size. Your voice sounds louder to you than to the audience. If you speak quietly, the audience will not hear. Avoid speaking when your back is turned away from the audience to get supplies, adjust visual aids, etc. Look up and out at the audience when speaking, and try to project voice volume to reach the audience in the back of the room.

Pitch and vocal variation can be used to heighten the quality of speech, and to reflect or emphasize a message. Avoid using the same tone throughout a presentation.

Change the volume, speed, and tone of voice.

Your audience is important! Remember to check for understanding by the audience's facial and physical reactions. Add your own style and personality with your voice.



- Turning your back to the audience.
- Hiding your facial expression.
- Crossing your arms in front.
- Putting your hands in your pockets.
- Putting your hands behind your back.
- Leaning on tables or props.
- Fidgeting or rocking.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is important. For small audiences, try to engage each member by making eye contact with them. For large audiences, move your eyes around the room (right, to left, and back to center). When you avoid eye contact with the audience, they don't feel as engaged.

Gestures and Movements

Use hand movements similar to those in a conversation. The larger the room, the more animated gestures can be. Gesturing should focus toward the audience, and should appear natural and enhance speech.

Equipment

Use proper equipment. Practice to be comfortable, and to discover any potential mishaps before the actual presentation. Make sure equipment is clean, safe and in working condition.

