

Oral Presentation Exercise

Strong presentations skills—i.e., the ability to clearly and concisely convey ones thoughts to others—are fundamental in most, if not all areas of life. Still, perfecting the art of presenting requires frequent practice and reflection. This activity is designed to help you hone in your ability to present in front of others. Although this is an activity intended for class, I would recommend using it from time to time as you move beyond life at Adams State University. For the purpose of this course, please turn in your reflection during the final exam. Your reflection will make up 5% of your final grade.

Step 1: Record yourself presenting

- Choose a topic and prepare a brief 2-3 minutes presentation or identify a short section of your final presentation that you would like to work on.
- Use a video camera or an audio recorder to record your presentation (most phones and computers are equipped with recording programs).
- Prior to beginning your presentation imagine that you were presenting in front of a large audience. Envision this for a moment before you begin.
- Present.
- Only do one run through! (This is extremely important because you want to become accustomed to the idea that once you start a presentation you cannot simply stop and start over. In time, this will help you become more comfortable with improvising if you get off your planned path.)
- Upload your recording to your computer.

Step 2: Watch yourself present

- Watch yourself present. Things to reflect on:
 - Take note of what you feel you do well and what you believe you need to work on.
 - Do you use any familiar “crutches” such as ending sentences with “um,” “stuff like that,” “you know,” “and all that,” etc.?
 - Do you address your audience or do you tend to look at the board?
 - Do you move fluidly through your presentation? Or do you tend to speak rapidly and then awkwardly pause as you think about what you had planned to say next?
 - Where do you place your eyes? Do you look down? Do you look at your audience? Do you look at the slides?
 - What is your body movement like? Do you stuff your hands in your pockets? Do you use hand motions to emphasize your points? Do you stay in one place or do you move across the floor?
 - Do you look relaxed? Do you look tense? Do you recall how you felt as you were presenting?

Step 3: Identify two aspects of your presentation you would like to improve

- Think of two areas that you would like to improve.
- Take a few minutes to envision yourself presenting again. Work through the presentation in your head several times and then take a 10-15 minute break.
- Record your presentation for a second time.
- Watch the new recording.

Step 4: Reflect on yourself as a presenter

- Write a short reflection paper. One page should be sufficient. Feel free to use bullet points when appropriate. The only requirement is that you be *brutally honest* with yourself. I recommend touching on the following areas:

(1) Reflection on your short presentation

- What did you do well?
- What areas did you identify as weaknesses?
- What steps did you take to improve in these areas? How effective were you in improving?
- What else did you notice?

(2) Reflection on general presentation skills

- How do you prepare yourself for presentations?
- What is your mindset going into a presentation? (Are you fearful? Are you excited? Are you nervous?)
- In what areas of your life would improved presentation skills be useful?

Step 5: Moving forward

- Make a point of seeking out opportunities to present in public. The more often you present, the comfortable you will be doing so. As you become more relaxed it will be easier to work on focusing on the types of details discussed above.