



Oral Delivery Exercises

My voice makes me sound nervous.

- Check whether your posture is upright. Pull your shoulders back and stack your spine.
- You might just need to project. Imagine that you're speaking to someone sitting at the back of the room.
- Warm up your voice before you speak by saying "mmm." Feel the resonance in your mask (your nose and sinuses). Once you feel the resonance, try to say a part of your speech and keep the resonance. By warming up your voice, it won't sound as breathy.
- Sometimes your voice can sound nervous because you don't know what the most important parts of the material are that you're covering. If you are confident in the main message, you will be willing to stake your vocal emphasis on reiterating that, lending passion to your presentation. Try to separate out which points are most important for the audience to remember from everything else through using your voice more urgently in some sections but not others.

I read from my paper or PowerPoint.

- Ideally, try to avoid having any temptations... don't bring any paper up with you!
- If you need some prompt, try making a working outline, which only has the key phrases of the topics you are discussing. If you need even more prompts than this, highlight main sentences on your paper. But if you have the time, practice your presentation enough that you don't need to resort to this.
- If you are using a PowerPoint, make it a habit never to speak when looking at the PowerPoint. If you need to gesture, point, pause, turn around and face the audience, and *then* speak.

It feels weird making prolonged eye contact with my audience.

- Fix your eyes on a point in the room just above the audience's heads, or look at their foreheads. They'll think you're making eye contact with them, even though you're not.
- If your audience is big enough, move your gaze around.
- It's not weird! Think about it as a conversation. Imagine you're sitting down as you're talking with the members of your audience.

I move around or fidget when I speak.

- Look at a fixed point in the room constantly so that you'll notice when it's moving back and forth. When it is, you know you're moving and need to plant yourself.
- Widen your stance and make sure your legs aren't crossed.
- If you just need to move, try choreographing intentional movements. For example, if you're contrasting two topics, move a few spaces to one side when you transition between the two

I say “like” or “um” or another vocal filler a lot.

- Every time you want to use a filler, take a breath.
- Speak in short chunks of words and take pauses in between. It’s easier for us to think in smaller bursts, so you’re less likely to get caught up in the middle of a complicated sentence and rely on “um.”
- Think about the root causes of your vocal figure. These can include:
 - Processing deeper thoughts than you’ve yet had a chance to articulate
 - Worrying about feeling dumb when answering a question
 - Running out of time
 - Trying too hard to sound like an expert, worrying about self-image
- Don’t worry about a few fillers... just if they become distracting.

I speak quickly or I get out of breath when I speak.

- Find some rhythm to remember when to breathe. For one, breathe for a few moments whenever you change a PowerPoint slide. Between that, breathe at the end of sentences. A lot of times, we tend to string our sentences together.
- Try to emphasize certain words over others. The more character you add to the story you are telling, the more you will force yourself to slow down for dramatic effect.
- Exhale and inhale five times before your presentation -- consciously. This will ensure that you start out with full lungs and remember what that feels like.
- Perhaps you are worried about the time limit? Time your presentation beforehand so that it’s under the limit, or know which sections you’ll plan to cut out if you find you are going too slowly.

My audience thinks I mumble my words.¹

- There are several articulation drills you can do to practice your enunciation. These include:
- Say portions of your presentation with a pencil in your mouth (lay it across the top of your tongue and bite down on it lightly). Then remove the pencil.
- Say portions of your presentation, inserting the word “a” or “the” in between every word in your speech. Then say it usually.
- Make the noise of a siren from as low as you can to as high as you can. This will improve your vocal coordination.
- Practice tongue twisters.

I don’t know how to make my presenting skills more interesting.

- Try involving the audience. Are there any questions you can ask them (e.g. show of hands) to break the fourth wall?
- Are there any obvious media you can involve in your presentation? (e.g. pictures, video or audio clips)
- Use humor, sparingly and subtly.