

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARING AND ORGANIZING ORAL PRESENTATIONS²

Getting Ready to Speak

- **Identify your purpose.** Decide what you want your audience to believe, to remember, or to do when you finish. Aim your speech toward this purpose.
- **Analyze the audience.** Examine the demographic makeup of your audience, and adapt your message toward their knowledge and needs.

Organizing the Introduction

- **Get the audience involved.** Begin your speech with an attention-getting opener. You can ask a question, tell a story, give a startling fact, use a quote, make a promise, or tell a self-effacing joke.
- **Establish yourself.** You need to identify yourself and your position, expertise, knowledge, and qualifications so that you establish your credibility.
- **Preview your main points.** Introduce your topic, and give a summary of the principal parts of your presentation.

Organizing the Body

- **Develop two to four main points.** Focus on two to four major issues so that you can streamline your overall topic.
- **Arrange the points logically.** Sequence your points chronologically, from most important to least important, by comparison and contrast, or by some other strategy.
- **Prepare transitions.** Use bridge statements between each major point so that you connect each item to the next item. Use transitional words or expressions as verbal signposts (to tell your audience where you are going to take them next). Examples of transitions include *first, second, then, however, consequently, on the contrary*, etc.
- **Have extra material ready.** Always be prepared for the unknown. Be prepared with more information and/or visuals in case you have additional time to fill.

Organizing the Conclusion

- **Review your main points.** Emphasize your main ideas in the conclusion so that your audience will remember them.
- **Provide a final focus.** Close by telling your audience how they can use the information you have provided, why you have spoken, or what you want them to do.

Designing Visual Aids

- **Select your medium carefully.** Consider the size of your audience, the degree of desired formality in this presentation, the cost and ease of preparation of visuals, and potential effectiveness.
- **Highlight main ideas.** Use visual aids to illustrate major points only. Keep them brief and simple.
- **Use aids skillfully.** Talk to the audience—not the visuals. Paraphrase the content of the visuals; do not read their content to the audience.

Developing Electronic Presentations

- **Learn to use your software program.** Know the basics of using the software such as template and slide layout designs and how you can adapt them to your needs.
- **Select a pleasing color palette.** Work with five or fewer colors for your entire presentation.
- **Use bulleted points for major headings.** Make sure your points are all parallel and follow the 6 × 6 rule or the Rule of 7.