

Presentation Seminar

Time

Junior Time: 3-8 minutes

Senior Time: 8-12 minutes

Picking a Topic

When picking a topic, it is important to choose a subject you can be passionate about and form solid opinions. The subject should also be organized where everyone can understand and apply it no matter their discipline or experience.

There are two different forms of presentations: an illustrated talk and a demonstration. While both are accepted and scored equally, there are major differences between the two.

Demonstration – A demonstration shows how to do something. Aids such as posters, props, and pictures will be used.

Illustrated Talk - an illustrated talk is a speech on a topic with the aid of posters and pictures like a demonstration.

Information

Once you've selected a topic, you must gather information to start the demo. It's important to gather plenty of information even if you're not able to put all of it into your demo. Since judges can ask questions, you should have a wide range of knowledge on your topic.

You are judged on accuracy so make sure all information is accurate. This can be difficult if you choose a controversial topic where there are many varying opinions so make sure the information you put in your presentation is consistent.

At the end of your presentation, the judges may ask questions pertaining to your topic. Always repeat the question before answering. If you do not know the answer, don't try to make up one. Simply state "I do not know but if you give me your contact information I will gladly get back to you at a later time".

Posters

Poster board should be of a strong material such as matting board (which could be cut in half) and need to be neutral colors. Light tans, grays, and white are good colors to choose. All posters should be the same color. Lettering should be large and preferably black. Remember, the posters should look professional, not colorful. If you want pictures, they must be at the very least 8"x10" so the judges can see them clearly.

Letters and words should be evenly spaced; it's grueling and takes a lot of time, but the end result is worth the effort. There are machines that cut letters out such as the Cricket Scrap Book Machine as well as pre-made vinyl lettering that can be used but they tend to be very expensive.

The posters are meant to serve as note cards for the speaker. The topics listed on the posters should be the main topics you will address.

Posters are considered a visual aid for presentations but you can also use other visual aids to create interest and further demonstrate your topic. Props are a huge part of any demonstration or illustrated talk. They should be memorable and eye-catching so don't be afraid to be creative when designing props. PowerPoint may be used.

Presentation

Once you've finished your posters and speech, it's time to present it. Since you are judged on presentation skills, it's important to practice your presentation many times before competing.

First of all, your words should sound more like a conversation with the audience rather than a memorized speech. It should also be worded in a simple manner so everyone can understand. When speaking, your voice should be clear and confident. Smile and use facial expressions as often as needed; this makes you seem more relaxed and comfortable with your demo. Having inflection (changes in vocal pitch) in your voice is also important; speaking in a monotone with no emotion tends to lose your audiences' attention. Keep direct eye contact with both the judges as well as your audience.

Most importantly, do not get nervous or upset if you mess up. Even the best make mistakes in their speeches but as long as they keep talking and don't show their mistake, no one would ever know. Only you know what is written and what you're supposed to do; the judge won't realize you made a mistake if you stay relaxed and keep going.

You will also be judged on organization so if you use props, be sure to keep them neat and organized on the table. Do not put any visual aids on the table that you do not plan to use; if a prop is not mentioned or explained in your demo, the judge could deduct points for unnecessary visual aids. Make sure each step is done as it would be in an actual situation and an explanation given at that time.

Another crucial part of a presentation is how the presenter dresses. You must look neat and professional at all times. For county and state, a simple pair of black pants and white collared, button-up shirt is a great outfit for girls and guys. Loud colors are not recommended; a simple, neutral-colored suit is preferred. There are exceptions to these rules. If you have an outfit that pertains to your topic, feel free to wear it. This is perfectly acceptable.

Girls - ALWAYS put your hair up where it is out of your face and eyes. This looks more professional. Use neutral colors for make-up and hair color- your purpose is to seem neat, not colorful.

Guys - If your hair is long enough to get in your eyes, style it where it is out of your face. Suits and ties should be of neutral color.

Speech – Only Senior Members may give a speech

As long as the speaker pertains to their topic, the speech is completely up to you. However, there are three mandatory topics you must address: Introduction, summary, and references.

Introduction - It should serve four (4) purposes: tell who you are, where you're from, your topic, and what you plan to do. *Ex./ I am Jane Doe from Saluda County, South Carolina. My topic is rabies and today I hope to help you understand this life-threatening condition.* This is a standard introduction but don't be afraid to be creative. The most important purpose of the introduction is to create interest.

Summary - You should summarize your key points in a quick, short manner. This part wraps up the demonstration and reminds the audience what you have covered.

References - The judges will stop timing your presentation after the summary when the speaker states, "This concludes my speech". After this, you must state the major references used to compile the demo. *Ex./ "This concludes my demonstration. My references are: Are there any questions?"*
