

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION SKILLS

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Issue(s) Being Addressed:

AmeriCorps*VISTA members are often in situations where they must present to groups of community members, faculty, administrators, and peers at professional conferences. To effectively convey their message they must have the confidence and knowledge to succeed.

Actions to Consider:

Below are tips for three key areas of presenting that VISTA members may face in their year of service:

1. Public Speaking

- *Make Conversation* – Talk to the audience as they arrive. It will be easier to talk to friends than strangers.
- *Know your Material* – Practice your material ahead of time so you are not nervous.
- *Don't Apologize* - Apologizing for any problems you think you have with your speech may be calling attention to something the audience has not noticed.
- *Diverse Audiences* – Experiencing different audiences will help you feel confident in any setting.
- *Have fun* – Humor can be a great way to break the tension in the room and help you relax.

2. Power Point Presentations

- *Know your audience* – Speaking English to Spanish speaking people is not going to work. By knowing your audience you will know how and what to include on your slides.
- *Content Specific* – Be clear and to the point as you have very little space to convey your message.
- *Readable Slides* - If the audience can not read your slide or does not have enough time to read the slide because there is too much information than your presentation will not be successful.
- *Slide Layout* – Creativity is great but do not over do it. You will take away from the content.
- *Technology Problems* – Sometimes technology fails and you must have a backup plan. Bring handouts and a backup disk.

3. Flip Chart Presentations

- *Write, then talk* – Avoid talking to your audience as you are writing on your flip chart; be patient.
- *Colors* – Black and Blue are best to use. Avoid yellow, orange and pastels, as they are hard to see.
- *Know your surroundings* – Find out in advance if you can use tape or thumbtacks on the walls and if your markers will bleed through onto the walls.
- *Print vs. Script* – Print large enough so that the person in the back can clearly see what you are writing.
- *Look Professional* – Markers are not just used by children. Be under control when at the easel. Know how to write legibly and speak clearly. Avoid getting marker all over yourself.

Outcome Achieved:

Making presentations takes confidence and practice, but with some basic skills and techniques, anyone can excel. Successful public speaking and presentations are achieved through practice.