

Communicating effectively is a talent anyone can acquire. However, for some people, speaking in front of a group is comparable to facing a firing squad. If you fit into this category, you may benefit from these helpful hints:

- 1. Choose a topic you know something about.** You'll feel more at ease with a familiar topic and you'll be more prepared to answer questions.
- 2. Make sure you have a message.** The purpose of every oral presentation is to persuade. What opinion do you want your audience to have of your topic?
- 3. Speak from the audience's point of view.** Think about the people in your audience. What are their needs? What do they want to hear? What do you want to tell them? Organize your presentation according to your audiences' needs.
- 4. Use simple language;** short words and sentences.
- 5. Remember, people think in pictures, so try to create a vivid mental picture for your audience.**
- 6. Be enthusiastic about your topic.** If you are bored with it, your audience will be bored. After all, your audience is a reflection of you.
- 7. Leave your audience wanting more.** Motivate them to action or thought about your talk.

Sample Outline Using the Above Hints

1. When I first began to think of choosing a topic for this sample oral presentation, I considered 'skydiving'. Since I am not a master at the sport, I decided to narrow my topic right from the start. Thus, I chose to talk about 'learning to skydive'.
2. My message was to persuade interested people to participate in this sport at the novice level.
3. Though many in the audience may not have experienced this sport, most would be able to appreciate the excitement and the anxiety that springs from jumping out of an airplane 3000 feet above ground.
4. I felt the use of simple, yet descriptive language was the best choice.
5. My task was to try to recreate the experience while giving some information that would help someone else understand what skydiving is all about.
6. It wasn't difficult to be enthusiastic about this topic, as it was an extremely enlightening experience.
7. I wanted to convince the audience that learning to skydive was a task any individual could accomplish and an experience that should not be missed.

Preparing Your Presentation

The first step in preparing your presentation is to identify your purpose. This will help to keep your presentation on topic. Then develop your ideas. Organize your talk into three parts:

- Opening – tell them what you're going to talk about
- Body – talk about it
- Conclusion – briefly summarize what you've just told them

In the body of your presentation, develop your ideas using the PREP formula

- P** - Make your **point**
- R** – Give your **reasons** or **rationale**
- E** – Supply **evidence** or **explanation**
- P** – State your **point** again

Use this method of preparation for every point you want to make in the body of your talk.

Finally, in the conclusion, summarize your points, recommend a course of action and sell your audience

To enhance your presentation, you may wish to use visual aids to support (not replace) what you say. Tell stories to help your audience visualize what you are saying. Eliminate deadwood in your speech (you know, eh?, etc., so on and so forth).

Sample Written Presentation

Have you ever dreamed of being able to fly? Is one of your secret wishes to soar over fields and gaze down upon the landscape from above? I had those dreams and I managed to fulfill them. I'll tell you how.

My dream was to learn to skydive. This was a sport that epitomized my approach to life. Skydiving was daring, aggressive, exhilarating and fun. I felt that if I mastered this sport, it would serve as the pinnacle of my accomplishments. So, I enrolled in a beginner's course in skydiving. There were two beginner courses I could enroll in; one was Tandem Jumping and the other was Accelerated Freefall. Tandem Jumping entailed watching a video, signing some paperwork and then being harnessed to and jumping with an experienced jumper. Accelerated Freefall was completing classroom instruction before the actual jump. Classroom instruction explained the basic fundamentals of skydiving, skydiving safety, the gear and how to operate it, as well as aircraft, freefall and parachute control procedures. I chose Accelerated Freefall.

On the morning of my first day I rose early and began to prepare myself mentally for my ordeal. The realization of what I had committed myself to began to dawn on me. Although I did feel uneasy about this high-flying adventure, I had never been easily

dissuaded from a task once I had made a decision. So, I jumped into my car and drove out to the airport.

The queasiness in my stomach worsened as I neared the airport, but when I saw other expectant faces gazing skyward, I was immediately heartened. In order to dispel any further misgivings, the instructors quickly assembled all the first-timers and we began the instruction.

After lunch we learned how to exit from the plane (while it was still on the ground) and how to freefall. The reality of our decision was becoming more and more comprehensible. The airport was now teeming with other skydivers; many of them seasoned professionals. We felt special now that we were in the company of so many sporty types. However, our euphoria very quickly dissipated when we witnessed a near fatal accident that occurred while we were taking an afternoon break. While attempting a group maneuver in the air, three skydivers' parachutes became entangled. Two men effectively jettisoned their main parachutes and landed via emergency chutes. Unfortunately, the third man's emergency chute also got caught and was unable to become disentangled from the rest. We watched as he plummeted to the ground. We could hear orders being given to call the ambulance and we saw others running towards where he would land. Remarkably, he suffered only a broken shoulder and a badly bruised leg. The half-open chutes he had carried with him were just enough to break his fall.

Suddenly, the enormity of what we were about to do became a reality and I wasn't sure anymore. The possibility of error loomed realistically before us. Perhaps the instructors realized this because we were very quickly rounded up and our training continued. Within an hour, the incident had faded in our memories. By late afternoon, we were prepared to jump. Now we just had to wait for the wind to die down. Alas, our maiden jumps had to be rescheduled for the next morning when, and if, calmer skies prevailed. This postponement gave us a bit of time to reflect on the day's happenings. Oddly enough, we didn't use the time to create excuses to back out of the exercise the next morning.

In fact, we were all assembled very early the next morning, dressed and eager to take our places in the plane. Then I heard my name being called and the instructor motioning the three of us to get into the plane. With a hasty goodbye to the others, we climbed in and took our places. I would jump third. The airplane climbed steadily until we reached 3000 feet and then we leveled off and began circling. Because of my position in the plane, all I could see of the first jump was the open door and Maurice making his exit. As I took up second place, I could see the anticipation on Jim's face, who was jumping next. Immediately after he jumped, I looked out at his body falling

away from the plane. As he arched his back I could see a look of incredulity (or was it fear) on his face. I didn't have long to ponder his flight as I positioned myself in the jump seat.

We circled once and then it was my turn. Though I've never been superstitious unconsciously I was compelled to untie and retie my bootlaces. Perhaps it wasn't superstition but a tactic to delay my entry into the wild blue yonder. Apparently the jumpmaster had seen this behavior in others. He smiled and asked me to get into the ready position. I stepped out onto a small bar jutting out from the side of the plane. I held onto the struts, briefly looked back at my instructor and when he shouted, "Go!" I leaped out. I suppose I arched and counted because I did right myself and my chute did open. I gazed heavenward. A canopy of blue and yellow silk billowed out about me. I was elated; I was flying. This was what I had dreamed of. I began to recognize land marks below, albeit from a very different angle. We had been advised to keep the sun on our left shoulder in order to establish our bearings. Nevertheless, I drifted far from the target and landed in a cow pasture two fences away from the airport. I quickly gathered up my chute and trekked back to share my awe with the others.

The rest of the adventure passed quickly. It would be difficult to express the feelings of the group and of each successful diver without sounding evangelistic. I had set out to learn to fly and I had done just that. My first time was an experience I would never forget no matter how many more times I participated. I knew that the first time would be the highlight of my achievements and if I continued to take the instruction and practiced more jumps then eventually I would be able to jump independently anywhere. I'd be a professional. How amazing would that be!

Ten Tips for Effective Communication

- Consult with others.
- Clarify ideas before communicating.
- Identify the true purpose of each communication.
- Arrange your ideas in logical order.
- Arouse interest by finding common ground, (consider other's feelings, viewpoints).
- Be a good listener.
- Be sure your actions support your communications.
- Follow-up on your communication.
 - Check to see how well you put your message across
 - Encourage reactions
- Emphasize and repeat the important items, (most important point last).
- Keep your presentation brief and specific.

The most important tip for effective communication is practice. As you become more familiar with your material, you will become more relaxed. Now you can begin to speak with confidence.