

WRITING REPORTS AND PRESENTING TO AN AUDIENCE



AGENDA

- SESSION 1
 - Starter
 - Get to the Point
 - Get Organized
 - Write It or Say It
- SESSION 2
 - Review
 - Look It Over
 - Say It Loud and Clear
 - Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize the importance of effective reports and oral presentations.

Students will identify effective presentation skills and report techniques.

Students will recognize the importance of revising and proofreading as well as identify and practice effective oral presentation techniques.

Materials Needed

- Session 1: 10 index cards for each student (Part I)
- Session 2: A board on which you have written the steps to an effective report covered in Session 1 (Part I)
- Session 2: One copy of the “Count the Letter” activity sheet for each student (Part II)
- Session 2: Students’ first-draft reports from Session 1 (Part II)
- Session 2: 10 index cards for each student (Part III)

SESSION 1

Starter (2 minutes)

Begin by modeling poor oral presentation skills. Read the following text:

Today, we are going to learn how to give good presentations and oral reports. Oral presentations are very important. Did you see that show last night? It reminds me of giving presentations. I like that actress, too. Where was I? Oh, yeah. Reports.

Your actions should be exaggerated, and your words and train of thought difficult to hear and follow. Keep your head down, make no eye contact, mumble, and slouch.

Pause and ask students to describe your presentation. Have students list the characteristics that were ineffective. Ask students why report preparation and presentation skills are important. Elicit from students that reports and oral presentations are intended to convey information to other people. If the information is not clearly presented, it is lost to its intended audience.

Explain to students that in this lesson they are going to work through the process of writing a very short report and preparing an oral presentation.

Part I Get to the Point (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students understand the importance of having a well-defined topic for a report. Students practice doing research and taking notes for their reports.

1. Students understand the difference between a general topic and a specific topic.

Explain to students that sometimes when a report is assigned, it is mentioned in general terms. It is the student's responsibility to narrow the general topic to a more specific idea.

Start a list on the board with the heading "Steps to Effective Reports and Presentations." Write "Step 1: Have a general topic" beneath it.

Provide an example of a general topic, preferably one from a course students are currently taking (e.g., the Civil War). Point out that one report on the entire Civil War would be very long. A more effective report would narrow the topic to a more specific idea. Encourage students to generate specific topics based on the general one. As students come up with ideas, point out that it helps to know something about the general topic in order to decide on a specific one.

Write "Step 2: Research the general topic for more specific topics" and "Step 3: Narrow the general topic to a more specific topic" on the board.

2. Students prepare to research their topics.

Explain that now that students have a specific topic, step four is to research the topic. Write “Step 4: Research your topic” on the board.

Ask students what they think it means to be an active researcher. Suggest that they think about the characteristics of an active listener or an active learner. Explain that researching a report involves asking thoughtful questions and taking good notes to answer those questions. Review tips for taking good notes with students (covered in “Lesson 3: Reading, Listening, and Note Taking”).

Suggest to students that they take notes for their report on index cards. This way of taking notes allows students to put one idea on each card. Then, when they are finished, they can arrange their ideas easily, as if completing a puzzle. Tell students that they are going to practice using note cards for their in-class mini-reports.

3. Students research and take notes on a specific topic.

Explain to students that they are now going to research a specific topic. Ask them to write a report on a general topic—their community. Tell them to imagine that they have narrowed this wide topic to the specific idea of the community surrounding the school. Tell students that they are to research this topic by recalling the area. If time and circumstances permit, allow students to go outside to conduct further research. Encourage them to consider all aspects of the community—what it looks like, the activities they see, the sounds they hear, the aromas they smell, and so on. If there is additional time, suggest that students read the local newspaper or spend some time doing research in the library.

Distribute approximately 10 note cards to each student. Remind students that they are to write only one idea on each card. Suggest that students label cards with a heading, such as “Sounds” or “Activities,” as a way of organizing the information.

Tell students that you are going to give them eight minutes to observe the community, either by recalling it or by going on a quick walk.

Part II Get Organized (13 minutes)

Purpose: Students practice compiling notes and writing a report from notes.

1. Students compare notes with their groups.

Arrange the class into groups of five or six. Instruct each group of students to compare their notes from Part I with each other. Allow approximately five minutes for this activity.

2. Students practice organizing notes for a report.

Have students describe the structure of a report. Explain that a report has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Encourage students to offer the content that belongs to each of these sections.

Instruct each group to discuss the best sequence of ideas for each student's notes. Encourage them to determine which points belong in the introduction, body, or conclusion. Allow approximately five minutes for this activity.

As students work, write "Step 5: Organize notes" on the board.

Point out that although many people think only of writing a report, much of the process is actually doing the research and organizing the notes.

Part III Write It or Say It (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students write short reports from their notes.

1. Students prepare to write reports from their notes.

Tell students that their notes should now be complete and well organized. They are ready to begin writing. Write "Step 6: Write report" on the board.

Ask students what they must do next in order to turn their notes into a finished report. (Students might respond: compose cohesive, logical paragraphs; write complete sentences; add transition words.)

2. Students write short reports from their notes.

Tell students that they have 15 minutes to write a first draft of a mini-report from their notes. Explain that this first draft does not have to be neat, with perfect spelling and grammar. They will proofread it later. The first draft is intended to get their ideas on paper in an organized fashion.

Before students leave, collect the first drafts of their mini-reports and keep them for use in the next class period.

SESSION 2

Part I Review (5 minutes)

Purpose: Students review the mini-reports they have written and recall the steps to writing an effective report or presentation.

1. Students review the first drafts of their mini-reports.

Distribute the reports students wrote during Session 1. Allow students several minutes to read their reports quietly to themselves.

2. Students recall the steps of writing an effective report.

Briefly review the steps of writing an effective report, which should be written on the board.

Part II Look It Over (18 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize the importance of peer editing, revising, and proofreading.

1. Students recognize the importance of revising.

Explain that the next step of writing a report is revising. Remind students that a piece of writing is not finished until the ideas are expressed logically and clearly.

2. Students practice peer editing.

Ask students what they should look for when they revise their own writing. Write students' ideas on the board. (Students might respond: sentence structure, clarity of ideas, choice of vocabulary.)

Guide students to the awareness that it is often difficult to look critically at their own writing, especially when they have been working intensely on it. Explain that peer editing can help with this problem. Peer editing involves exchanging papers with other students to proofread each other's work. Briefly discuss the guidelines for peer editing: The proofreader should be tactful and thoughtful. The writer should remember that the proofreader is making suggestions and intends to be helpful. Students must respect their classmates' work and offer all criticisms and suggestions in the most constructive way possible.

Tell students to exchange papers. Give them five minutes to read and make suggestions about each other's work. When they are finished, ask students to return the papers. Give students time to revise their writing to form a solid second draft.

3. Students recognize the importance of careful proofreading.

Invite students to complete an exercise in proofreading. Distribute copies of the “Count the Letter” activity sheet. Give students approximately 30 seconds to count the number of times the letter “f” appears in the paragraph.

Once students are finished, take a poll to see how many times they counted the letter “f.” Students might be surprised at the varied numbers. Explain that some of them miscounted because the eye tends to overlook things that are familiar. Ask students how they think this might impact their own proofreading. Tell students that the letter “f” appears 11 times.

Explain to students that once they have revised their writing, they are ready to proofread. Remind students that no matter how strong their ideas are, the report will be difficult to read if it contains grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Careful proofreading is essential to writing a report. Instruct students to proofread their reports and correct them until they are free of errors. Suggest that they again exchange papers with a partner and proofread each other’s mini-reports to be sure that they are totally correct. Assign students to write their final drafts as homework for the following day.

Write “Step 7: Revise report” and “Step 8: Proofread report” on the board.

Part III Say It Loud and Clear (25 minutes)

Purpose: Students understand the techniques of preparing and presenting an effective oral report.

1. Students recognize that oral presentations are generated the same way as written reports.

Refer students to the list of steps generated throughout the lesson. Encourage students to add one more step to turn their written reports into oral presentations. Explain that an oral presentation involves the same preparation as a written report, with the added element of effective speaking.

Students may have trouble deciding whether an oral presentation should be written. Remind students of the importance of following the structure of introduction, body, and conclusion. Point out that those same elements are also needed in an oral presentation. Although we do not read from a report when presenting, writing the report provides an opportunity to structure the key points into a logical and coherent presentation.

2. Students break their reports into notes for an oral presentation.

Share with students that while it is not appropriate to read from a report, many speakers prepare note cards to refer to as they speak. Because these note cards contain main ideas, key phrases, and critical transitions, they are different from the note cards students used to write their reports. Distribute 10 index cards to each student.

Instruct students to break down their written reports into notes that they might use for an oral presentation. Focus their attention on which notes will help them give the report orally by having them consider the following questions: What are the main ideas? Which key phrases must they remember? What transitions will be most helpful to the audience? Allow students 10 minutes to create note cards.

3. Students recall characteristics of an ineffective speaker.

Ask students to recall from the starter activity at the beginning of this lesson the characteristics that make an oral presentation ineffective. Create a two-column chart on the board. List the ineffective characteristics in one column. When that list is complete, have students change the ineffective characteristics to make them effective techniques. For example, if “mumbling” is in the left column, students will say “speak loudly and clearly” in the right column. Write their changes in the adjacent column.

4. Students recognize the importance of practicing their presentations.

Have students discuss ways to ensure that they use effective oral presentation techniques when presenting. Elicit from students that an oral presentation must be well rehearsed. Suggest to students that the best way to rehearse an oral presentation is to practice in front of someone else.

5. Students work in pairs to practice effective oral presentations.

Divide students into pairs and instruct them to practice their presentations with each other. Remind students to observe their partners in order to provide constructive feedback for improving the presentations. Suggest that students base their evaluations on organization of ideas; clear introductions, bodies, and conclusions; liveliness; and volume and speed of the speaker’s voice.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to identify the steps of developing a written report. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Reports and oral presentations are often required at work and at school.
- Deciding on a well-defined topic is the first step to writing an effective report or presentation.
- Careful proofreading is essential to completing a report.
- Peer editing can be helpful.
- An oral report involves the same preparation as a written report, with the added responsibility of effective speaking.

Student Assessment

SESSION 1

1. Why is it helpful to choose a specific report topic?
2. List three reasons to take notes on note cards.

SESSION 2

1. List five things you should look for when you proofread.
2. How is preparing an oral report similar to and different from preparing a written report?
3. List three characteristics of an effective oral presentation.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“It usually takes more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.”

Have a volunteer give the definition of “impromptu.” As a class, discuss the contradiction in this quote.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students play a version of *The \$25,000 Pyramid*. Draw a pyramid with three boxes on the bottom, two in the middle, and one on top. Each box should contain a general category guessable by giving specific clues (e.g., for a category called “U.S. Presidents,” students could use “George Washington” as a clue). Have students play in two teams of two and alternate giving and receiving clues.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write a how-to report about something they excel at (e.g., how to shop for computers, make a friend, entertain a child younger than two).

Ask students to present their journal entries as oral reports. Have listeners outline the information given and compare notes.

Using Technology

Have students choose a general subject for a report and use the internet to research and narrow it down.

Have students present their suggested topic to a small group for critique.

Homework

Discuss with students how writers research scripts for television shows and movies (e.g., by reading about a certain time period, running focus groups, etc.).

Have students watch their favorite television show or movie and write a list describing what the writer might have needed to research before completing the script. Then have students write, with their lists in mind, their own scripts about a historical event.

Additional Resources

Divide students into eight groups, one for each major part of Ron Hoff's *I Can See You Naked*. Assign each group a part of the book to read.

Have each group report on the tips that Hoff gives regarding presentations.

COUNT THE LETTER

Read the following paragraph and count the number of times the letter “f” appears.

The sheriff of Fargo, North Dakota, recently found a large bag of five dollar bills. He’s not sure how many fives there are in the bag, but he is going to assign some of Fargo’s most fearless investigators to look into the incident.