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Presenting Online

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Introduction

WHEN GIVING AN ORAL PRESENTATION online, start with the same basic principles as if giving it in person. This publication will help you to navigate the steps for giving an oral presentation online. To help get you started, first check out [Speak Up with Confidence](#), a State 4-H publication. It provides the foundation for putting together a public speaking presentation. Then you'll be ready to check out the information in this publication.

Beyond all of the presentation basics, you are now also the producer of your presentation so there's a few more things to be mindful of as you prepare to present online: etiquette, how to manage the visuals and audio, and how to effectively use props or other visual aids.

Respect and etiquette throughout a presentation is just as important online as in a face-to-face meeting. Thus you or your volunteer/teen leader may want to set the ground rules prior to delivering your presentation to assure a respectful environment for all. The following guidelines should be helpful: Refrain from interrupting the speaker verbally or visually. Do not type comments in the chat box unless it is your only option. Instead, raise your hand virtually or visually so a speaker can recognize you. When speaking or commenting in the chat, focus your comments or questions on the current topic.

Managing the Visuals—A Quick Photography Lesson

Take a closer look at the location and position in which you will be presenting. Have a helper photograph you from the same perspective viewers will have when they see you onscreen. Then you can improve the setting by doing the following:

Remove clutter. What do you see in the background? After identifying any distracting objects, like clutter, laundry, dishes, or even garbage, remove them so you have a clean, neat background.

Check the lighting. See any shadows and/or bright spots? Change the lighting (turn the lights on or off, close or open window shades) or move your camera angle or location to achieve the best lighting possible.

Choose an image size. Do you want a close-up, a head-and-shoulders, or full-length view? Adjust the distance between you and the camera or adjust the zoom on the camera.

Compose the view. Your image should be well composed. Allow space in the picture frame for props or posters you will use during your presentation.

Nonverbal Communication— Personal Appearance and Audio

Dress appropriately. Wear solid colors, although avoid all black or all white. Clothing with busy designs can be distracting. It is also best to avoid sleeveless tops. While you may plan for the camera to only show a waist-up view, dress entirely head to toe as you would if you were giving the presentation in person.

Make eye contact. This is important even though you may not be able to see your audience. The camera is your audience, so look directly at the camera. It only takes 3–5 seconds to establish eye contact so it's ok to glance back and forth at your notes or computer screen, then back to the camera.

Mind your gestures and facial expressions. Even though you may not be able to see your audience, they can see you—including your facial expressions and gestures. Keep them natural.

Test the microphone. Adjust the microphone volume so you can speak comfortably and naturally—you don't want to raise your voice to be heard. Also, remember that turning your head away from the microphone might make it more difficult for others to hear you.

Using Props and Posters

Including props and posters during a virtual presentation may require extra preparation and practice.

Props and posters. You can choose different sizes depending on how you plan to use them. For example, a poster the size of an 8½" × 11" piece of paper might still be large enough for an audience to view if it is held close to the camera. Or one sized at 20" × 30" may work just fine if placed behind or beside you. Test out various positions to see what works best for you.

PowerPoint presentations. If you are using a PowerPoint or another digital presentation software in your presentation, practice how to share it virtually so the audience can see your presentation and a thumbnail image of you at the same time. On the day of your presentation, open the file prior to beginning your presentation, so that you're ready to screen share. You can also send a copy of the presentation to your audience ahead of time.

Video. Avoid playing a video during your presentation. A video may use more bandwidth than either your or your audience's internet connection can support.

Day of Presentation

Arrive early. Plan extra time before your presentation to be sure you are able to log in, to test to make sure the audio and video settings are correct, and to familiarize yourself with navigating the technology. Have everything for your presentation set up and ready to go before your appointment time.

Know your internet bandwidth. If you experience a slow internet connection, consider asking others in your household to log off during your presentation. You may also want to try using a direct ethernet cable rather than a Wi-Fi connection. Although having a video feed is crucial, as a last resort you may have to turn off your camera so only the audio transmits. Limited bandwidth may also cause delays in the audio, so please be patient.

Background noise. Eliminate any background noise such as fans, radio, TV, a ringing phone, barking dogs, people talking, etc. that may disrupt your presentation.

Screen-sharing documents. Utilize this tool from your computer so your audience can read your poster or other materials you want to share. Open the document on your computer before starting your presentation and practice screen sharing ahead of time to smoothly transition to and from the document.

Allow for questions. Tell your audience you will answer questions at the end of your presentation. Remind members to type their questions in the chat box or to share them at the conclusion of your presentation by raising their hand then unmuting their microphone when recognized to ask a question.

Most of all, practice, practice, practice. Then relax and have fun!

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