

Audio-Based Communication Guide

Delivering information in audio-only situations (i.e. podcasts, webinars, etc.) require attention to delivery in ways that differ slightly from contexts in which the presenter is visible to their audience. Below, you will find guidance about planning, delivery, and editing so that you will be able to give an audio presentation that is effective and engaging to your listeners.

Planning Your Audio Presentation

1. Plan ahead: Give yourself ample time to decide where you will be recording, what equipment you will need in order to record and where you will find it, where your recording will be published, and who your intended audience will be.
2. Clearly identify your topic(s) or subject(s) of interest.
3. Do your research: Make sure that you have all of the information you need to communicate effectively your topic of interest with your audience. Know the sources for any information that will not be coming from your personal experience or knowledge and be sure to include verbal citations in your presentation.
4. Create a manuscript or outline: Take the time to organize your talking points so that they flow logically. You may also find it useful to write a full manuscript if your presentation is more formal, lengthy, or requires a strict narrative structure.
5. Recording: If you are the only person speaking for the presentation, one recording device will be sufficient. However, if there will be more than one person's voice being included in the presentation, you should have at least one microphone/recording device for each person to ensure the audio quality will be consistent between each speaker.

Delivery Tips

1. Pace: If you tend to speak fast, **s-l-o-w down**; vary your pace at strategic points (at transition points, for example, and pick up the pace when you begin the next section). Be conscious of your **pause patterns**, or lack thereof. Write **pause patterns** into your speaker notes.
2. Expressive Voice: Voices are naturally “melodic,” but stress or anxiety can cause us to speak in a “flat” voice, which is not aurally engaging to an audience. Work on overcoming anxiety to the extent that your voice is expressive; practice **vocal variation**. Considering that your audience will not see you, it is especially important that your voice is engaging to your listeners.
3. Articulation/Enunciation: Use your teeth, tongue, lips, and alveolar ridge to give “crisp” and “clear” sound to your speech flow. Rehearse at least once with over-exaggerated enunciation.
4. Pronunciation: Be sure you pronounce words correctly (especially technical vocabulary or jargon). Take time to look up words and practice if you are unsure how to pronounce them. You may even write them phonetically within your speaker notes if necessary.

5. Breathing (Microphone Sensitivity): Be aware of your proximity to your microphone and how quickly or slowly you are breathing. Test out your microphone sensitivity before recording to be sure that your breathing will not be too loud. Anxiety can affect your breathing so try to slow and deepen your breathing if you notice that your breaths are too fast or shallow.
6. Pause Patterns: Your audience does not expect silence from you; therefore, a strategic pause is very attention getting, and particularly one that lasts 4-5 seconds.
7. White Noise/Background Noise: Record in an environment that is as quiet as possible so that your recording device will not pick up sounds that will distract from the audio source you are intending to record. Additionally, take time to learn how your recording device works so that you can identify what sounds the device will favor and amplify.
8. Frame with Silence: When recording, start and end your presentation with about 5 seconds of complete silence so that when you go to edit your audio, it will have a seamless start and finish. You can also use the space to fade in intro/outro music for an introduction or conclusion to your presentation without having any awkward or abrupt starts.

Editing and Polishing

1. Identify how much editing will be appropriate, if necessary at all. More informal presentations will require less editing while academic or professional presentations may require more editing to be effective.
2. Consider your audience when editing. Who is part of your intended audience? What sounds or information might be crucial and what might be unnecessary to include?
3. Use a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) to make the editing process easier. DAWs enable you to record your presentation and then provide you with the tools to edit it within a single platform. There are a number of free DAWs online and apps that are available depending on what your specific editing needs are (i.e. Audacity, Adobe Audition, etc.), so take time to look through what options will be best for you.
4. Do not feel the need to over-edit. Breaths, laughs, and filler words are normal components of oral communication so only remove things that will help your audience better understand or follow your presentation.

Prepared by Simone Moore '20, Peer Speech Consultant

If you duplicate this document, please credit Center for Speech and Effective Advocacy, University of Puget Sound.