



Introduction to Presentations

What is a Presentation?

A presentation is a method used to communicate an idea by showing and/or telling. It is a way to present information to others, to teach and share what you know or have learned in a structured way.

Any time you learn something new and then show or tell another person about it, you are giving a presentation. Even when you are simply sharing something you already know, you can be giving a presentation. Presentations can vary in length and they can be given in a variety of settings.

Giving presentations is an important part of the 4-H experience. No matter what project area you are in, you can give a presentation. Every 4-H member is encouraged to give at least one presentation every year. You can also select presentations as a communications project.

Why should you give a Presentation?

All through your life, you will need to speak in front of others. Whether it's at school, at work, or at home, you will need to know how to ask for things, how to explain things, or how to speak persuasively enough to win the support of others. Speaking skills will help you in job interviews and allow you to give effective presentations to your peers.

In the career world, communication skills are critical. When professionals are asked which skills are most important to success, public speaking usually ranks number one. Unfortunately, speaking in front of others is something that makes many people feel uncomfortable. Giving presentations in 4-H can help you feel more at ease. With practice, public speaking is a skill almost everyone can learn. The earlier you start and the more you do, the easier it becomes. Each time you present, you will feel more at ease and more confident.

Giving a presentation adds variety to other 4-H projects. It can be a fun and interesting way for you to gain new knowledge and then share that knowledge with others. When you do the work to prepare a presentation and then teach others, you are more likely to remember the material.

Giving presentations in 4-H will teach you many skills that will help you later in life. You will gain self-confidence and poise. You will be able to identify major points and know how to emphasize them. Learning effective delivery techniques will help you develop a stage presence. In addition, you will develop all the following marketable skills:

- How to organize your thoughts in a logical manner
- How to find information and research a subject
- How to express yourself clearly and convincingly
- How to prepare visuals and use them to support what you say
- How to listen to the opinions of others and accept feedback
- How to teach others
- How to manage your time
- How to manage stress

Presenting is an activity that allows you to use your creative ability. Whether it's selecting a title, designing posters, or choosing your outfit, let the "inner you" show through!

Completing a presentation will not only give you a true feeling of accomplishment, but you will become a valuable leader to others. Other members often listen and learn better from youth than from an adult.

Where can you give Presentations?

There are many places you can give your presentation. Begin with small, known audiences such as your 4-H club. As you become more comfortable with speaking in front of others, you can progress to larger audiences and to people you don't know.

Perhaps you could share your presentation with other 4-H clubs, with other county 4-H programs, or at a county or state workshop. Schools are excellent places to give your presentation. You could give it in your classroom or to a parent/teacher group.

Speaking to groups outside of 4-H can be a great way to promote 4-H in the community. Service clubs such as Altrusa, Kiwanis, Lions, Zonta or Rotary are often happy to have you come and speak. Your topic may be one you could share with other youth organizations such as Scouts or Boys and Girls Club.

And, of course, there are presentation contests in which you may participate. Contests give you the opportunity to be evaluated and to receive feedback from a judge on what you can

do to improve. Every contest will have its own rules, and it is important that you are familiar with these rules before you participate. Each contest's rules should address the following:

- Are there age divisions? In 4-H, this is usually junior, intermediate, and senior.
- What are the time limits (for ages and presentation type)? Junior time limits are usually shorter than intermediates or seniors; impromptu speeches are shorter than public speeches, and both are shorter than demonstrations or illustrated talks
- Are there any restrictions on the topic?
- Is help allowed in setting up?
- What is the definition of a team? (number of members, can ages be mixed?)
- What equipment will be supplied?
- Will there be a penalty for using notes?
- What happens if equipment malfunctions?
- What system of scoring/awards will be used?

In Oregon 4-H, there are three main opportunities for competitive presentations: your county contest, State Fair, and Spring Horse Classic. Before you present at your county, check your county contest rules. State Fair guidelines can be found in the State Fair Exhibitor Handbook and Spring Horse Classic rules in the SHC Presentation Contest Guidelines. State Fair and Spring Horse Classic materials may be found on the state 4-H website <http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu> or at your county extension office.

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