



Tips for Delivering a Briefing

For [additional resources](#) go to this tool's landing page

Verbal Communication

Reflection

How effectively you use your voice to drive home your ideas and information directly impacts the audience's interest in your presentation. You have to choose your words carefully and control the rate, volume, pitch, pause, and other aspects of your speech.

Word Choice

Choose your words carefully to make it easy for your audience to follow along.

- Avoid straying from the points on your slide. Doing so can create what's called cognitive dissonance for those trying to read the slide while listening at the same time.
- Use simple, everyday language appropriate for your audience.
- Use contractions and keep sentences short;
- Use personal pronouns, if appropriate.
- Repeat key words and follow with specific examples if you get into abstract or complicated reasoning.

Rate

There is no one correct rate of speed for every speech; however, you should consider:

- People listen four to five times faster than the normal spoken rate of 120 words a minute. If you speak too slowly, you will lose audience interest because they are processing the information much faster than you are delivering it.
- You don't want to use the same rate of speech all the time. Vary your rate of speech to add emphasis to your presentation.
- Consider speaking at a faster rate to indicate excitement and sudden action or a slower rate to hint at calm and a more serious tone.

Volume

This is another technique that can give emphasis to your speech:

- If possible, check out the room to know how loudly you must talk, always remembering you will need to speak louder with a crowd since sound absorption is dependent upon how many people are in the room. Ask someone in the back of the room if you can be heard.



- If the audience must strain to hear you, they will tune you out from utter exhaustion. A portable microphone may be a good idea, if you know you tend to speak quietly, and one is often required in large auditoriums.
- Check up front how well you are being heard when presenting in an on-line meeting.
- Speak loud or soft to emphasize a point – a softer level or lower volume is often the more effective way to achieve emphasis.

Pitch

To effectively use pitch, you need to practice like a singer because it is just using notes (higher or lower) in voice range:

- Start by speaking in a voice range that is comfortable for you, then move up or down the scale for emphasis using pitch changes in vowels, words, or entire sentences.
- Use a downward (high to low) inflection in a sentence for an air of certainty.
- Use an upward (low to high) inflection for an air of uncertainty or to pose a question.
- Variety in speech pitch helps avoid monotone and capture the listener's attention.

Pause

The pause gives you time to catch your breath and the audience time to reflect on your ideas:

- Never hurry a speech; pause occasionally so your audience can digest your information.
- The important question is where! Pauses serve the same function as punctuation in writing; short pauses divide points within a sentence, longer pauses note the end of the sentence.
- You can also use longer pauses when transitioning from one main point to another, from the body to the conclusion of your speech, or to set off an important point worthy of short reflection.
- A pause may seem long to you, but it's usually much shorter than you think . . . and your audience will appreciate it; however, don't overuse pauses and make your speech sound choppy.

Articulation and Pronunciation

Articulation is the art of expressing words *distinctly*; pronunciation is the ability to say words *correctly*. Your articulation and pronunciation reflects your mastery of the spoken language:



- Keep in mind, it is important to do both. You may be able to articulate your thoughts and still mispronounce words while doing so. Unfortunately (and unfairly), many people equate word pronunciation or mispronunciation as a direct reflection on your intelligence.
- Listen to yourself and make sure your words are distinct, understandable, and appropriate to your audience.
- If you are unsure of your pronunciation, consult an online dictionary; one that is able to correctly pronounce the words.
- It's helpful to learn the pronunciation of the names of people, places, and things.

Length

In today's acquisition environment, you must be able to succinctly relay your thoughts and ideas.

- A key rule in verbal communication is to *keep it short and sweet* (KISS). There are very few who will tolerate a briefer who wastes their time.
- Know what you want to say and then say it with your purpose and the audience in mind.

Non-Verbal Communication

Reflection

Numerous studies have shown people remember less than 10% of what is verbally communicated; first impressions are largely based on nonverbal communication such as how you dress, carry yourself, and use gestures, or other body language. Your biggest challenge might be your nerves. You must be prepared to overcome some stage fright. You have probably witnessed a great presentation "gone bad" solely due to nerves.

The following provides guidance on how to overcome symptoms of stage fright and put your best foot forward. Remember, some nerves are necessary to keep you on top of your game; however, you don't want nerves to get in the way of communicating your message.

Practice, practice, practice

Using a recording device, video camera, full-length mirror, or a partner can be really helpful. Try doing a "dry run" in the room you will be using.

Analyze your audience

Analyze their listening traits, needs, desires, behaviors, and educational background. This will reduce your fear of the unknown.



Check out the “place” where you are speaking

Ask yourself, Is it large enough to accommodate the number of people attending?

Does it have a video screen, projector, white board, microphone, tables, chairs, ventilation, lighting, pencils, paper, or phones? Do you know how to use the slide-sharing and interactive features of your meeting app?

Memorize your introduction and transitions into the main points

This will help you through the first and most difficult minute.

Smile and think positively

Your audience wants you to succeed!

Take a short walk

Doing this right before you go on stage will help release some energy.

Deliver your message

Focus your attention where it belongs, not on yourself.

Make eye contact and look for feedback. Let your audience know you are looking at and talking to them. This holds their attention. If you only look at your notes, you may lose your listeners.

Involve the audience

Solicit their answers or information they may have.

Use your hands to better engage your audience

You can use your hands to more effectively make a point or capture your audience’s attention, especially when meeting in person.

- Pretend you’re holding a basketball with two hands. Opening your palms invites trust. Expanding your “grip” shows inclusiveness, while tightening your grip emphasizes a point.
- Limit your movements to the strike zone. Don't get too wild with your gestures—try to keep them between your shoulders and hips.
- Unless you are pointing at an object on a slide, avoid pointing toward the audience which can come off as too aggressive.
- If you don't know what to do with your hands, let them fall to your sides.
- Don't draw attention to your groin. Instead of clasping your hands in front of you, just allow them to fall to your sides.
- Mix up your hand movements. Just as you mix up the length of sentences in your speech, also be sure to vary your gestures.



- Don't hold things or fiddle with jewelry. People who fidget are often clueless about what they're doing.
- Show your hands. Putting them in your pockets can seem overly casual. If you're at a podium, either gesture with your hands, or lightly rest them on top. If you're right in front of the audience, make sure not to hold your hands behind your back.

Use excess energy to your advantage

Using facial expressions, pertinent gestures, walking, or pressing your thumb or fingertips against the lectern or a chair reinforces your delivery, and the points you want to emphasize. Don't overdo it! Leaning on the lectern, rocking back and forth or side to side, and slouching are not positive ways to release your excess energy.

Looking good builds credibility with the audience

Do you need a haircut? Are your buttons buttoned? Is your shirt tucked? Does your jewelry distract attention? In your audience's mind, a sloppy bearing equals a sloppy presenter. Fair or not, that's the way your audience's mind works. We're all critics!