

Part 4
Go First Class
Quality Presentation Skills

**First Class Continuing Pharmacy
(CPE) Education**

**How to Develop and Deliver Quality CPE
Programs**

(Four-part Series)

Part 1: Where Are We Going? Developing Educational Objectives

Part 2: How will We Get There? Instructional Strategies

Part 3: Are we There Yet? Developing Effective Multiple-Choice Tests

Part 4: Go First Class – Presentation Skills

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“The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.”
--- Herbert Spencer



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Part 4
**Go First Class:
Presentation Skills in Continuing Pharmacy Education**

An anonymous comment on the evaluation form says, “Why don’t you guys get speakers with better presentation skills?”

Can we talk? Is it possible that your students find it hard to learn from you because your presentation skills are lacking? After you design a highly effective education program, do it justice when you present it.

In this section, you’ll learn what you need to do to get and keep your learners’ attention so they can best benefit from your expertise. In addition, examples will get your creative juices flowing and you’ll learn how to make anything interesting.

Objectives

By the end of this section you will be able to:

1. Assess your current presentation skills strengths and areas for improvement.
2. Describe how to get and keep learner attention.
3. Identify common speaker distractions and how to avoid them.
4. Explain how to manage nervousness about speaking in front of a group.
5. Summarize how to effectively conclude an education program.

Self-Assessment

Awareness is the first step to improvement. The Presentation Skills Self-Assessment can help increase your awareness of your strengths and areas for improvement. Another way to increase awareness is through feedback from others. A tool for this is in the Appendix.

Faculty Information

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Disclosure: Faculty disclosed they have no financial interest in and/or affiliation with any external organizations in relation to this continuing education program.

Continuing Education Information

This is a *free* CE program for anyone responsible for developing education materials. Each component offers one hour of CE credit for pharmacists. Tests are available online at <http://ce.ashp.org>. Users can take the test and print your CE statement immediately. Follow the prompts to login and register for test. ACPE Program #204-000-07-819-H04P (1.0 Contact Hour)



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Presentation Skills Self-Assessment

Directions: Rate your agreement with the following statements according to the following scale:

- 1=Strongly disagree (SD)
- 2=Disagree (D)
- 3=Neutral (N)
- 4=Agree (A)
- 5=Strongly Agree (SA)

SD S N A SA

I effectively establish rapport with my audience.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I make eye contact with audience members.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
My presentation openings are attention-getting.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I know how to make the importance of my presentation clear to the audience in my opening.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I effectively use vocal variety when I speak to an audience.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I use an effective range of vocal pitch (high/low) when speaking.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I use an effective range of volume (loud/soft) when speaking.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I use an effective rate of speed (fast/slow; use of pauses) when speaking.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I enunciate clearly when presenting.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I make effective use of gestures when appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I make effective use of visual aids and props when appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I am able to avoid distracting behaviors when I present.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I know how to create and deliver an effective closing to my presentation.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
I know how to make my presentations interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

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My strong points as a presenter	Areas I would like to improve

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Capturing Audience Attention: Effective Openings

Take a peek into your learners' minds as they enter the room for your education session: "I wish I had a cup of coffee." "What will I include in my report that's due next week?" "What I should cook for dinner?" Your audience comes to your program with many thoughts filling their minds. Your first task is to give them a reason to turn their attention to you.

Take a lesson from a murder mystery. When you open a murder mystery what do you find? A dead body! What does that dead body do? It has three effects:

- It captures your attention
- Arouses your curiosity
- Plants a question in your mind: "Who done it?!" You want an answer to your question. How will you get it? You have to read the book! Your attention is riveted on the book until you get the answer to your question.

That is what you should do at the opening of your session:

- Capture attention
- Arouse your audience's curiosity
- Plant a question in their mind that your program will answer.

Then your audience's attention will be riveted on you like the reader's attention is riveted to the mystery book. How can you capture attention? Read on.

Openers

Murder mysteries and dead bodies aside, what are other ways you can grab your audience's attention? Here are tools that work well:

Questions

Pose a question or present a mystery you will answer or solve in your session. The audience will be looking to you for the answer with anticipation. The question for this section is, "How can you capture the attention of your audience as well as the dead-body grabber at the beginning of "CSI"?"

Example: "What was the most frequently downloaded document from ASHP's website in March?"

This was the opening line at the beginning of a report on ASHP's Guideline on the Handling of Hazardous Drugs.

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Quotes

Select a thought-provoking or humorous quote related to your topic.

Example: "The human brain starts working the moment you are born and never stops until you stand up to speak in public." - Unknown

Interesting Facts or Statistics

An interesting or startling fact or statistic related to your topic will also attract attention.

Example: According to studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. The second is death.

Anecdotes

A short anecdote related to your topic can also be effective. It can be from your own personal experience, as in the following example, or something you have read or heard.

Example: I once struggled through listening to a very poor speaker at a conference. Her concluding comment was, "Thank you for putting up with me." Moral: If you feel that badly about your presentation skills, your listeners will appreciate it if you work on them and practice before your presentation.

Cartoons

Most of us have seen cartoons used in presentations. Be sure your cartoon relates to your topic. Check with the artist or publisher to see if you need to pay a permission fee.

Example:



"How's my presentation?" cartoon example.

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Coming up with An Opening Line

Many people struggle to come up with an attention-getting opening line. If you tap into your creativity, you'll find that you can come up with multiple opening lines. Then you can take your pick of the best.

Example: I was making an announcement describing a new project to be undertaken by myself with the support of the ASHP Toastmasters Club (Toastmasters is a public speaking organization). The project involved improving presentation skills of staff members at weekly internal "Staff Updates" meeting during which different divisions take turns reporting on their activities. The announcement, made at the Staff Updates meeting, described the project and how staff members could participate. Here are four opening lines I considered for this announcement:

1. "Do staff members attending the Staff Updates meeting find it interesting and useful?" (A "National Enquirer" newspaper was help up as a prop.) "Enquiring minds want to know!"
2. "What do ASHP Toastmasters have in common with a meteor colliding with the surface of the earth?!" (Gesture of a fist being plunged into the palm of the other hand like a meteor.) "We want to have an impact!"
3. Using a beaker and stirring sticks as props, while stirring say, "We want to do an experiment."
4. Display the bright red book, Good to Great¹, as a prop. "'Good is the enemy of great.' That opening line from this book reminds me of ASHP staff members who are working to improve their presentation skills."

Opening line #4 was used for the announcement.

After thinking through the opening line tools and examples listed above (quotes, questions, facts, anecdotes, etc.), if you still need ideas, try this: After you finish developing your presentation, think about what headline(s) might be appropriate for it if it were a news article. The headlines that come to your mind may help you think of an opening line.

Openings to Avoid

Don't say "I'll be brief," "I only have a few items," "This won't take long," etc. Avoid comments like this that imply that your listeners will be bored or that they want you to stop speaking as soon as possible.

Don't say what you won't talk about (e.g., "I won't be able to get into x and y but I will..."). Instead open with a strong statement that entices audience attention by building interest in what you will say. Focus on what you *will* be offering in your talk.

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Many speakers begin by thanking and acknowledging people or remarking how happy they are to be there. In general, it is a good idea to save these remarks until after the attention-getting opening. These points can be covered at any transition point in the introduction to the session and do not need to come first.

Exercise: For your next session, talk or report, try to think of at least three possible opening lines. Don't be satisfied with just one. Stretch the boundaries of your creativity!

You are more creative than you think. You have lots of ideas. Learn how to access them, make anything interesting and keep your audience's attention.

How to Make Anything Interesting

Once you capture attention, how do you keep it? You are fighting human nature: Human attention span is not very long. Your learners' attention will begin to wander after only a few minutes unless you do something to keep it. Here are some tips and tools for making it easy and enjoyable for your learners to continue absorbing your messages.

Creativity

What is interesting about puffed rice? When you think about it, it is a pretty boring food. Yet the advertising industry turned it into a product that is interesting enough to be one of the most popular and profitable breakfast cereals. We all know what it is (think, "snap, crackle, pop"). What about soap? Pretty boring – until you see a TV ad with a person appearing to be having a peak experience showering with their prominently displayed bar of soap. Mouthwash? Pretty gross stuff to get rid of mossy, morning mouth. But by the time the advertising industry is done with it, it is sexy since it makes you kissable (according to the ad). Auto insurance? A lizard can spice it up.

If the advertising industry can make these mundane items interesting, you can certainly do as well or better with your topic. Try this exercise: Look at any object in your current surroundings. What is interesting about it? Let's say you see a pen. It is an object of creativity! The greatest writers in history used it to create literary masterpieces! People have used it to bare their souls throughout history! Try this with a few more objects that you see. What is great and interesting about each one? Now do this with your next presentation topic. You'll be surprised at what you come up with!

Enthusiasm

Don't be afraid to let your interest in your topic show. If you aren't interested in it, your audience won't be either. Enthusiasm and passion are infectious so let yours shine through.

Exercise: Next time you are giving a presentation, ask yourself:

- What do I like about this subject?
- What am I most excited about related to sharing it with others?
- What am I offering others that they will be glad to have learned?

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Vocal Variety

Your voice is an obvious tool when you are speaking. Yet few are aware of its possibilities or take advantage of them to keep things interesting. Did you know that the average person uses 12-20 notes when speaking? An actor, whose livelihood is expression, uses 36 notes. Can you expand your range, even a little bit? Expand out of your comfort zone, even slightly, to make yourself a more interesting speaker.

Vocal variety consists of:

- Rate (fast/slow, pauses)
- Volume (loud/soft)
- Clarity (clear/unclear)
- Pitch (high/low). An additional note on pitch: Audiences prefer a generally lower-pitched voice. Include variety of pitch but use the lower end of your natural range for most of your talk and your audience will find you easier to listen to.

Think of a popular actor or comedian, such as Bill Cosby or Eddie Murphy. When you hear them perform, you will hear an example of every type of vocal variety. While their performances are more extreme than what you will want to do in your sessions, their example can help you be aware of the possibilities.

Exercise: Try out your range by reading any paragraph with different aspects of vocal variety. Read it fast and slow, loud and soft, high and low. Expanding your range even a little bit will make your presentations more interesting.

Distractions

I have good news and bad news. First the bad news: After you read this section, you will forever be hyper-sensitive about vocal distractions in yourself and other speakers. The good news is that awareness is the first step to improvement. Most vocal distractions are habits that are difficult to stop at first. You may get frustrated with yourself. Don't give up! As you become more aware, your distractions will gradually decrease.

Common vocal distractions include:

- Um
- Uh
- You know
- Throat-clearing

Reducing vocal distractions is a worthy effort because your voice can be a help or hindrance in your quest to keep your audience's attention. Vocal distractions can irritate your audience and take their attention from your important message.

What should take the place of these distractions? Your goal is a ***silent pause***. Audiences do not mind a silent pause but speakers usually find them uncomfortable. If you need a moment to gather your thoughts while speaking, get comfortable with pausing silently instead of filling the space with an "um" or "you know." Your audience will be grateful.

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Exercise: Ask a friend or colleague to count how many times you say “um” next time you give a presentation. If you have a high number, next time try to notice when you say “um.” Then set a goal to have fewer “um’s.” Gradually you will be able to decrease the number and your message will come across with more clarity.

Body Language

In addition to your voice, there are many ways that your body language can make a difference when you speak.

Eye Contact

Let’s start with your eyes. Be sure to look at all parts of the room: left, right, front and back. Sometimes a speaker will look at one person or one spot. This can make other audience members feel left out. Be aware of where you look and make your whole audience feel like they are a part of your conversation.

As you speak, make eye contact with different members of your audience. Speak to each one as if you are having a one-on-one conversation with him/her, while the rest of the audience listens in. This will help you come across in a personable manner that is easy to listen to.

Exercise: Next time you present, speak to one audience member for one sentence, then look at another audience member for your next sentence. Be aware of shifting who you are looking at for different parts of your talk.

Facial Expressions

Unless your topic is serious, it is always best to start with a smile. This projects a positive tone, helps the audience feel that you are happy to be with them and encourages them to like you. This is important since people are more receptive to others if they like them.

Aside from smiling, be aware of the range of possible facial expressions you can use. You can raise your eyebrows to show curiosity and interest. Knitting your eyebrows shows concern. Show expressions on your face that match the material you are presenting to animate your session.

Gestures

Gestures are a natural part of speech. Notice how you gesture when you are comfortable talking with friends. When you get in front of a group, your comfort decreases and so do your natural gestures. Most people, if they use gestures at all, gesture from their elbows. You will be more expressive if you gesture from your shoulders.

Exercise: Become aware of your range of gestures by spreading your arms as far as they will go, side to side and up and down. Notice what gestures are natural to you and remember to use those that may be helpful when you address a group.

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Distractions

Distractions include swaying, shifting foot-to-foot, fidgeting with clothing, jewelry or objects such as a pen. As with vocal distractions, these distractions can be irritating and distract audience attention from your important message. Your goal is a relaxed, natural posture, mostly standing in one place and sometimes purposefully turning or walking.

Look in the Mirror

Practice your presentation, or even just part of it, in front of a mirror. You may be surprised by what you see and by what you can learn from the immediate feedback a mirror can provide.

Exercise: Practice a talk in front of a mirror. Notice your gestures, facial expressions and distracting behaviors.

Props

Props can add interest and help your audience learn and remember material. They should relate to the point you are trying to make and be clearly visible to all audience members.

Examples:

- In a talk about the new Medicare legislation, a large stack of papers was held up. This gave a visible image of the immensity of the legislation and the task of learning to effectively implement it.
- In a speech about the pharmacy community, a former ASHP president used nesting boxes which he took apart and put back together to symbolize the interdependence of the community.
- For internal staff reports and other meetings about ASHP's Summer Meeting, props used have included a beach ball, sunglasses and flip flops.

Exercise: Next time you are giving a presentation or educational session, think about if any props may be relevant to your subject.

Managing Nervousness

Do you get nervous before you give a presentation? Congratulations! You are normal. Now you will come to value your nervousness. You may not realize, it but nervousness can be a speaker's best friend – ***if*** you know what to do with it.

Get Excited

Consider this: What is the difference between how you feel when you are nervous and when you are excited? For both, your heart rate increases, you breathe faster and harder, your palms may sweat, you feel agitated. In fact, the physiological reactions for nervousness and excitement are the same. When you start to feel nervous, decide to feel excited instead. This will energize your presentation. The fact is that you *are* excited. You

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are nervous/excited because you care. You want to do a good job. You want the audience to appreciate and understand the material you will present. So let the excitement flow!

A participant in a presentation skills workshop confirmed this. She described how she had once been so nervous about a presentation that she took a tranquilizing drug. The drug took care of her nervousness. She was so relaxed that she didn't care anything about her talk. Her drug-induced, lackluster absence of enthusiasm ruined her entire presentation. Her boss noticed and, afterward, asked her what went wrong. Now she values her natural nervousness and has sworn off pre-speech medications.

Prepare

Another way to manage nervousness is to thoroughly prepare. The more prepared you are, the less nervous you will be. When you know you have been thorough, your material is well researched and organized, it will help you be more excited about presenting it, rather than feeling self-doubt about any possible deficiencies.

Focus on Your Material and Audience Needs

Nervousness is exaggerated when you focus on yourself. "Do I look OK?" "Will the audience like me?" "I'll feel stupid if I make a mistake." Once you are satisfied that you are well prepared, turn your attention to your audience and your interest in your content. Think about how much your audience will benefit from what you are offering them. How can you best help them? Soon you will be so busy thinking about these more important matters that you will forget about yourself and your nervousness will melt away. This is why most speakers are most nervous right before and at the beginning of their presentation. Once you are into it, you are no longer thinking about yourself.

Focus on Your Body, Not Your Thoughts

Your thoughts are doing you in. "What if my mind goes blank?" "What if someone asks me a question I can't answer?" This causes your body to tense. So turn your mind off by focusing it on your body. Where do you feel tense? Tense and relax different muscle groups. Exhale completely and take a refreshing breath. By focusing on your body, you'll relax physically while you occupy yourself more productively mentally.

Practice

If you know you've already done it successfully, you will be more confident that you can do it again when you are in the spotlight, thus reducing your nervousness. As an added benefit, practice will help your presentation be more polished and prevent it from being "rough around the edges". The ideal balance is to practice enough to be confident and polished but not so much that you lose your freshness.

Ending Your Session

The speaker has that "deer-caught-in-the-headlights look". He has said everything he has to say. Now what? Flustered, he stammers, "W-well – I guess I'm done!" There are better ways to end a presentation. Presenters are often so focused on what to include in their session that they don't give forethought to how to end it.

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Listeners will best remember your opening and closing. You've covered a lot of territory so summarize your main points. Then add any last impressions you'd like to leave. What do you most want to leave your audience with? Find a way to convey it. Think of ending your presentation as the final touch in wrapping a gift: Tie it with a bow. Add that special touch with a memorable ending.

Summary

When preparing an educational session, remember to:

- Capture audience attention
- Use your creativity, enthusiasm, voice, body and props to add interest
- Plan an ending to your session: "Tie it with a bow."

Conclusion

I decided to work on my presentation skills when I came to the realization that the world would be a better place if it did a better job of listening to what I have to say! If you are honest with yourself, don't you feel the same way? You should! You have something important to offer. Follow the tips in this section for maximum impact and a first class presentation.

Reference

1. Collins, Jim. Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't, HarperBusiness, HarperCollins Publishers, 2001, page 1.

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**Appendix
Speaker Feedback Form**

This feedback is only for speakers who request it and is confidential exclusively for them.

Guidelines for giving effective feedback:

The feedback is intended to be helpful. Speakers need to be aware of their strengths so be sure to comment on them. Give suggestions for improvement gently and without making negative comments. For example, say, "It would help keep my attention if you vary your pitch."

Don't say, "You are a monotone."

Directions: Rate your agreement with the following statements according to the following scale: 1=Strongly disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Neutral (N) , 4=Agree (A), 5=Strongly Agree (SA), Not applicable=NA.

Speaker's Name: _____ Evaluator's Name (optional): _____

	SD	S	N	A	SA	
Had rapport with the audience.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Had good eye contact with the audience.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
In the opening, it was clear about the importance of the presentation to the audience.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Opening was attention-getting.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Used effective vocal variety.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Was effective in use of the following voice/speech elements:						
Pitch (<i>Circle one</i>) Too high Too low Just right	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Volume (<i>Circle one</i>) Too loud Too soft Just right	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Rate (<i>Circle one</i>) Too fast Too slow Just right	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Clarity	1	2	3	4	5	NA
If/when appropriate, made effective use of gestures.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
If applicable, made effective use of visual aids, props, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Avoided, or minimized, distracting behaviors	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Closing was effective.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Presentation was interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Content of presentation was useful.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

What were the strong points of the presentation?

Were there distracting behaviors that the speaker should be aware of (describe)?

What are your suggestions for improvement?

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