FORMAL RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

Once you have completed your research project, you'll want to share your findings and conclusions with others, helping each other add to the knowledge base you will all draw on as you continue your conversation with others in the field.

WHAT TO SAY

- Begin by making a sentence outline of your entire paper—this entails summarizing each paragraph in a single sentence and organizing those sentences into smaller paragraphs of related points.
- Then, keeping in mind the time allotted for your presentation, cut out any of these sentences that are interesting but not vital for an audience's understanding.
- Using your pared-down sentence outline, find one or two specific pieces of evidence from your research to support each; then work on smooth transitions between all the sections. Depending on the context of your presentation, you might add introductory remarks about your methodology.

HOW TO SAY IT

- Although one or two well-placed quotations can help add some power and authority to your presentation, don't overwhelm your audience by reading many long quotations from other sources, no matter how interesting or well-written they may be—listeners might get confused about where the quote begins or ends, or whether it's a quotation at all.
- Similarly, decide which statistics, facts, figures, or dates are essential for you to discuss aloud. If you must show a progression over time or make a comparison of statistics, use a visual aid of some sort to display the information rather than trying to make listeners strain to keep it all straight.
- Prepare ahead of time for questions: rehearse your presentation in front of a friend or WORD Studio tutor and ask them to lob the questions they might imagine your listeners having.
- If possible and permissible within the context of your presentation, add an interactive element, something that asks the audience to respond to you or to each other. This can be as simple as taking a show of hands on a few questions to see how much your audience knows, or asking them to describe to you what they see on a visual aid (for example, telling you what a graph seems to be showing).

VISUAL AIDS:

- Handouts can be useful for showing data that you want everyone to look at several times (rather than having them squint at a PowerPoint slide); handouts can also be a place to gather some of the important quotations that you don't read aloud during your presentation. Avoid the temptation to simply read a handout straight through to your audience; even consider not giving the handout out until near the end of the presentation.
- PowerPoint might be preferable to handouts if you have many different data sets you need to go through, or if you want to display visual images (photographs, maps, etc.) to complement your discussion. Using PowerPoint well is an art; consult with good online guides or a WORD Studio tutor for more advice.

Active Listening and Peer Feedback

- If you've heard your classmates' proposals, you may already have an idea of what the presentation will cover. Before a classmate begins speaking, therefore, identify at least one question you have and listen to see how (or if) they answer it.
- Use other speakers' handouts actively: take notes, underline key points, jot down questions in the margin.
- If the speaker gives a PowerPoint presentation, consider it a visual outline of the overall presentation. Don't attempt to write down everything on a slide; instead, write down one key point from each to remind yourself of questions and observations later.
- If this is a final research product, offering structural feedback might not be that helpful. Instead, aim for questions about content that might engender further thought in the speaker and the rest of the audience—even if the speaker never revises this particular research project further, he or she will have been exposed to new venues of exploration through your questions.