

Phoenix College  
**ASSIGNING AN ORAL PRESENTATION**  
*“the whys and hows for faculty”*

**WHY SHOULD I ASSIGN AN ORAL PRESENTATION?**

*Benefits to your students*

Oral presentations are ‘student-centered’ classroom activities.

- Students explore their own interests within the parameters of your class.
- Students are able to better retain and interact with the content of your class.
- Students get to practice skills in organization and articulation of thoughts.
- Students enjoy increased learning through peer research and presentation.

Oral presentations develop oral communication skills employers seek and demand in the workplace.

Oral presentations reinforce research skills.

Oral presentations promote creativity in your course, especially in objective-based courses.

Oral presentations allow your students to listen to someone other than you!

**HOW DO I BEST DEVELOP AN ORAL PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT?**

*Increasing the teaching and learning of your class assignments*

**Topic Selection and Preparation**

In oral presentations, less is more when it comes to the audience being able to interact with and retain the content. Therefore, provide a specific framework for the student presenter. **Focused** assignments allow presenters to clearly plan what they should do and, more importantly, allow for increased listening on the part of the audience.

**Unfocused** – “Give a speech on a business topic that we haven’t had time to cover in class.”

**Focused** – “Prepare a 5 to 7-minute informative presentation on a customer service training issue for employees in a medical-related company.”

**Unfocused** – “Give a speech where you take a stand on a current event.”

**Focused** – “Prepare a 3 to 5-minute persuasive presentation that convinces your audience to take action on an issue relevant to the management of the City of Phoenix.”

Encourage your students to turn in a **one-sentence summary** of their oral presentation. Can they state what their presentations are “about” in one sentence?

Encourage your students to follow the basic Introduction, Body and Conclusion **format**:

- **Introduction** – “Tell Them What You’re Going To Tell Them”
- **Body** – “Tell Them”
- **Conclusion** – “Tell Them What You’ve Told Them”

Set a relatively **short time limit** for the oral presentations. If your students cannot say what they need to say in 3-10 minutes, they most likely have not pared down their thoughts and are beginning to ramble in a disorganized way. Shorter time limits...

- Force students to prioritize their information.
- Teach students that working within time limits is a real-world skill.
- Use less of your class time.
- Allow for better listening on the part of the audience.

(continued on back)

## Delivery

Encourage your students to abide by the following effective delivery practices:

- Students should speak for the purpose of informing or persuading an *audience*. Have your students **keep their audience in mind** as they prepare their topic, choose supplementary materials for communicating that topic and choose language with which to communicate that topic.
- Allow only **note material** containing key words and phrases. A written manuscript promotes the temptation to read – and then all eye contact is lost.
- Speak in a **conversational tone** rather than read a written paper. Written speech sounds different than conversational speech and is harder on the audience's ears.
- Give **eye contact** to the whole audience (and not just the instructor). Eye contact is the one true “physical” connection between a speaker and his or her audience.

## Assignment Format Options

There are three common formats for presenting the oral presentations:

- 1) All students can present back to back, taking up one to two days of class.
- 2) One to three students can be assigned to present at the beginning of a class period. You can then move on to other content for the rest of the period. All students will eventually present over the course of several weeks.
- 3) Break up the class into groups of about five students. Each student presents to the other four speakers in his or her group. This way you can have several groups in action all at once. Of course, this arrangement will impact your ability to grade individual presentations, so you will have to have the graded part of the assignment come in another form, perhaps in an written abstract or a written outline (but not a written manuscript!).