

Speaker Guidelines

Considerations for all Members of Your Audience

- Remember that disabilities may not always be visible or obvious. It is wise to assume there will be some members of your audience who will have trouble seeing visual aids (such as slides, overheads, etc.) and/or some who will have difficulty hearing what is said.
- For large audiences, it is helpful to reserve a few front row seats for those individuals who may not have the best possible opportunity to see and hear the presentation otherwise, and several seats in the rear for easy entry and exit.
- When making slide presentations, images should be projected high enough to be fully visible to all persons seated.
- All speakers should use a microphone whenever possible as there will be people in the audience who have difficulty hearing and/or who use hearing aid devices.

Considerations for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired

- Visual aids must be accompanied by an oral narrative. Describe in detail the information that is being presented on the overhead projector or screen.
- Any printed materials that are to be used by a presenter (such as handouts, articles, slides, and overhead projector transparencies) should be available in a format that meets the needs of an individual who is blind or visually impaired (such as braille, large print, or on diskette). When creating large print documents, most sources recommend using an 18 point, bold, plain font, such as Helvetica, on paper that does not produce a glare.
- Check for adjustable lighting in the meeting room; this is particularly important for people with low vision.
- Caution against relying solely on oral presentations and gestures to illustrate a point, or using visual points of reference (e.g., “here” or “there”).

Considerations for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- People who are deaf or hard of hearing need to sit where they can see the speaker easily. When using an interpreter, they must be able to see both the speaker and the interpreter. For most sessions, there will be a minimum of two interpreters. The interpreter may stand close to the speaker or within a direct line of sight to allow viewing of both the speaker and the interpreter within a quick glance. Speakers should remain aware of the location of interpreters and attempt to keep this line of vision clear. Interpreters will generally give significant environmental sounds, such as laughing, as well as various directions and cues.
- Allow extra time when referring to a visual aid or handout or when pointing out the location of materials because the listener must look, then return attention to the speaker/interpreter for further information.

Hawaii Psychological Association Workshop / Convention Toolkit

- When presenting, avoid talking in a darkened area of the room or platform. It is important to continually provide a direct and clear view of your mouth and face.
- Repeat all questions or statements from the audience. This practice is also helpful for individuals who are hard-of-hearing. Questions or statements should always be repeated when sessions are being taped since the microphones for the speakers will often fail to pick up voices in the audience. In dialogues or discussion, have one person speak at a time, and identify the speaker so that audience members or those listening to the tape will know who is talking.
- When not using an overhead projector, turn it off. This reduces background noise and helps focus audience attention on you, the speaker.
- Speak clearly and distinctly, but do not exaggerate. Use normal speed unless asked to slow down.

Considerations for Persons with Mobility Impairments

- Keep front seats and rear of room clear for persons who may be using wheelchairs, canes, crutches, or motorized vehicles. This dramatically aids in access for your audience.