

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING SPEAKING NOTES

While several of these reminders might strike you as obvious, speakers often ignore them when preparing to speak.

- Use an outline format for your notes:
An outline helps you visually recall the structure of your talk. Placing numerals and letters by the various points in your talk also helps you distinguish main points from subordinate ones. If you indent supporting points, the outline will be easier to read while you are speaking.
- Keep the outline as brief as possible:
Too much detail on your notes encourages you to read them to your audience. When this happens, you can't maintain eye contact with your listeners and you lose any sense of engagement with your audience. (Remember the three steps in the ball-throwing exercise: 1-Are you ready? 2-Throw the ball. 3-Did you get it? Stay engaged with your audience as you throw out your ideas.)
- Place visual cues on the outline if necessary:
A good speaking outline includes the content of the talk as well as reminders about how you wish to proceed. You might mark certain sections of notes where you wish to pause, or to speak more slowly or loudly to achieve emphasis. You might remind yourself about when to use a visual aid. Perhaps you want to pause at particular spot to ask the audience for questions.
- Make your speaking notes legible:
Under the stress of speaking before a group, you may suddenly be unable to decipher your own writing. You'll need to be able to read your notes at a distance -- they need to be clear and large enough for you to do so easily.
- Practice speaking with the notes you have prepared:
That's the only way to tell for sure if your notes will make sense to you at the time you'll be giving the final presentation.

Adapted from the Mary Washington College Speaking Intensive Program
<http://www.umw.edu/spkc/resources/students/handouts/structure/suggestions.htm>