

## One Minute Eloquence

Your basic composition class should have taught you a variety of "rules" about how to construct a good written argument. When you stand up to argue orally, you should follow them all. But you'll also need to work even harder. Why? Consider how speech differs from writing. Speech occurs in time—it flows past. Writing is more permanent; it stays there on the page. What does this mean for communication?

- If your reader doesn't understand your writing, or gets confused, he can go back and re-read it. If he doesn't understand your speaking, it's too late. What you said is *gone*.
- If your reader doesn't pay attention to your writing, he can go back and re-read it. Again, if he misses your speaking, tough luck for you.

Furthermore, arguing is a *particularly* complex communication task. You're asking your audience not only to understand the information you're presenting, but to think about the logic of your argument.

So speaking clearly is harder than writing clearly, and arguing orally harder than other forms of oral communication. In other words, oral arguing is going to take a lot of work.

As a speaker, therefore, you're going to want to help your listeners out as much as you can. Repeat a lot—especially your main ideas—so that if the listener is confused or inattentive at one point, they'll get the idea at another point. Be very exact and precise. Be very organized, and *tell* your listener about your organization.

Here are some specific rules that you should consider following to help you accomplish these things. They won't work in all situations, but in general they'll make your short presentations very impressive—they'll help you achieve "one minute eloquence."

1. The first thing you (or your group) should do is greet your listeners and the other side, thanking them for their attention and/or the speech they just gave. Arguments can be emotionally charged, so you want to make sure that you show *conspicuous* respect for everyone involved.
2. The very next thing out of your mouth should be your one, overall main point. For example: "I stand before you today to argue that GMO crops are evil." You have to be able to state it in one, simple, clear and short sentence.
3. Then tell your listeners what to expect—identify the arguments that will be coming up either using a few words or maybe a sentence for each. For example: "I will argue first that GMO crops are poisonous and second that they support bad economic arrangements."
4. As you make each argument, use words like "first, second" or "next" to notify your listeners that you're moving from one point to another and to remind them where you are in your organization.
5. At the beginning of each "unit" or "chunk" of argument (the oral equivalent of a paragraph), state the conclusion of that argument. For example: "First, GMO crops are poisonous." Remember, if your listener doesn't know what your arguing for, no amount of good reasons (support, premises) is going to persuade them!
6. At the end of each "unit," re-state the conclusion. Use words like "therefore" to reinforce the idea that this is your conclusion. For example: "In sum, GMO crops are poisonous."
7. At the end of your speech, summarize your arguments again, reminding your listener of your main points. Then close by thanking them for their attention, and *always* ask them for a decision/vote in your favor. Remember, people like to be asked.