

Oral Communication Resources

Presentational Speaking

Support

Support Materials

Support materials include facts, statistics, examples, explanations, documentation, claims that have been proven already, illustrations, and any material that helps you establish the legitimacy of your position. You cannot use everything you discover during your research, so you need to choose those materials most relevant to your purpose with this audience.

Remember that each discipline has criteria for determining appropriate support materials. What is considered adequate in one discipline may not be appropriate in another. For example, in the Humanities, older texts such as ancient primary sources are crucial. In the Natural Sciences, a source may be considered too old if it is more than a year old.

The kinds of questions you are asking will also determine the kinds of sources that are essential to your argument or discussion. I am assuming that you have done your research, utilizing the methodologies appropriate for your discipline. Given that, the development of your presentation should be guided by the following question: What support materials do you need to present in order to accomplish your purpose with this audience?

General Principals

- Support materials must support your focus.
- Clarify your points with examples, analogies, statistics, explanations, narratives, or any other support materials that will help you make your ideas clear to your audience.
- Make abstract ideas concrete with examples, analogies, explanations, narratives.
- Provide evidence to support your assertions. Your opinion alone is not sufficient. You must provide evidence and documentation that shows that your opinion is well-informed.
- Provide the reasoning needed to show your audience why your evidence is relevant. Show how the evidence builds your case. Remember: facts do not speak for themselves—you have to show how they relate to the issue.

Evidence is crucial. Your audience will be much more inclined to think about what you have said if you give them the evidence to support your assertions. Simply making an assertion will not go very far with a discerning audience. Even if it does, it is unethical. Furthermore, your position is completely vulnerable to an opposing argument that is supported.