

Oral Presentation Scoring Guide, Hampden-Sydney College

Top-half score (4, 5, or 6): Despite differences among them, *oral presentations that receive a top-half score all demonstrate a speaker's proficiency in the use of spoken language to express an idea: the speaker chooses a topic and develops a specific purpose appropriate for the assignment, audience, and occasion.* The speaker chooses an appropriate organizational pattern for the presentation; incorporates a clear introduction, body, and conclusion; supports the central idea with evidence; and uses effective transitions and internal summaries to guide the audience through the main points of the speech. The speaker's delivery is conversational and professional, with language that is appropriate for the audience and occasion; the speaker uses appropriate volume, vocal variety, and physical behaviors, including eye contact, to enhance the audience's reception of the message. During the speech, the speaker adapts to audience feedback, as needed. In short, in both content and delivery, the speaker succeeds in communicating the central idea of the speech for the particular audience and occasion.

Level 6: The speaker's presentation is both compelling and suited carefully to the audience and occasion. The central idea of the speech is clear, interesting, and even original in both its formulation and its development. The presentation demonstrates excellent organization, transitions, and uses of evidence. The speech in this category employs language that is not only appropriate to the context but also highly effective—sometimes even elegant—in its use of rhetorical devices appropriate to the particular discipline. The speaker demonstrates control and ease when it comes to physical aspects of delivery including vocal variety, eye contact, and gestures. Audiovisual aids and technology, if used, are integrated fluidly. *The speaker projects confidence and enthusiasm, shows command of the material, connects with the audience,* and conveys an impression that goes beyond competence to attain eloquence.

Level 5: A speaker in this category demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic and confidence in the use of spoken language. The central idea may not be as original as that in a level 6 speech; similarly, the central idea may be less developed or more one-sided. *Nevertheless, the speaker crafts a speech that is, on the whole, logically sound and also demonstrates close attention to audience and occasion.* The speech is effectively organized with an introduction, body, and conclusion, and though the speaker may not always signal that structure as clearly as a level 6 speaker, he or she makes effective use of transitions and internal summaries, demonstrating strong control over these devices. The speaker chooses appropriate, varied evidence to support claims, presents that evidence clearly, and notes in particular the appropriateness and credibility of the sources cited. Examples illustrate the claims of the speech. The speaker uses professional, gender-neutral diction largely free of inappropriate jargon. The speaker's vocal variety and physical behaviors clearly help to convey the central idea and show the speaker to be adapting to audience feedback. He or she integrates technology and other supporting materials, if appropriate, with very little or no distraction. *The key difference between a level 5 speech and a level 4 speech is that a level 5 speech is notably strong in at least one area without demonstrating weakness in any other areas.* If not entirely eloquent or moving, the speaker's performance is clear, confident, and appropriate for the audience and occasion.

Level 4: Though the speaker's central idea may not be as original or compelling as that of a level 5 speech, a speech in this category indicates the speaker's grasp of content, audience, and occasion. *Overall, the speaker demonstrates the ability to craft and deliver a message.* The speaker's organizational pattern (such as chronological or problem/solution), introduction, and conclusion are effective. The speaker's use of transitions and internal summaries is adequate. *The speaker integrates appropriate evidence throughout the speech, though not as seamlessly as a level 5 speaker does:* the speaker may introduce an example somewhat clumsily, or he or she may not relate the evidence to the central idea. The speaker uses diction that is conversational, yet professional, and, for the most part, gender-neutral and free from jargon, though he or she may use more verbal fillers (such as "um" or "like") than a 5 speech or occasionally break from using appropriate language. The speaker uses eye contact and adapts to audience feedback during the speech, but these features are not nearly so polished as in a 5 speech and they may even border on distraction. If the speaker uses audiovisual aids, he or she does so adequately, but not necessarily fluently. The 4 speech differs from the 3 speech in that *while it may be far from eloquent, it is nevertheless competent,* and it demonstrates the speaker's control over both content and delivery.

Bottom-half score (1, 2, or 3):

Oral presentations that receive a bottom-half score demonstrate that the speaker is unable to communicate a message effectively: the speaker fails to craft and develop an appropriate central idea, and he or she fails to integrate appropriate supporting material into the speech. The speaker's verbal and/or physical delivery detracts from the message. Overall, it appears that the speaker has hastily cobbled the speech together and has not rehearsed sufficiently. The listener is unable to follow the speaker's central idea. In short, the speaker fails to communicate the central idea of the speech for the particular audience and occasion.

Level 3: *A speech presentation at this level leaves the listener questioning the speaker's understanding of his or her audience, occasion, and/or assignment.* The central idea in a level 3 speech, as opposed to in a level 4 speech, is ambiguous and prevents the listener from identifying the point. The reasons offered in support of the central idea may not be logical. The speaker may use few and/or questionable resources to support the central idea and provides minimal citation of those sources. *The organizational pattern of the speech is ineffective.* The speaker exhibits difficulty in employing clear and concise language, uses minimal transitions and/or internal summaries, and presents a conclusion that may or may not restate the main ideas of the speech. The language, at times, may be too conversational and/or unprofessional; the speaker may use inappropriate slang, jargon, or distracting verbal fillers. The speaker, if using the extemporaneous style, does not consistently maintain eye contact, therefore restricting his or her ability to respond to the audience's feedback. If the speaker uses an audiovisual aid, such as PowerPoint, he or she does so poorly and may focus more on *it* than the audience. Still, a level 3 speech differs from a level 2 speech in that the speaker succeeds in meeting some of the criteria of an effective oral presentation or at least comes close in all of them.

Level 2: A speech in this category generally exhibits the same weaknesses as a level 3 speech, but perhaps in a wider variety of areas or to a greater degree. The speaker may have misjudged the audience and/or occasion for the speech and therefore may have chosen a weak topic and/or may choose words that are inappropriate. *The central idea of the speech may be difficult to identify.* The speech may lack appropriate evidence to support some or all of the main points, and the sources used may not be credible or may not be cited properly. The speech may lack a logical organization and/or the speaker may fail to provide transitions and/or internal summaries to make the organization evident to the audience. The speech may also lack a conclusion or include a conclusion that seems off-topic or otherwise inappropriate. The speaker fails to employ rhetorical devices or employs them incorrectly. *The speaker makes little effort to deliver the speech in a way that sustains interest or encourages a response:* he or she may speak in a monotone, attempt little or no eye contact, or project a lack of confidence through either his or her body language or through the use of excessive verbal fillers. It may sometimes be difficult to hear what the speaker is saying. If the speaker uses audiovisual aids, he or she does so in a way that distracts from the focus of the speech. The level 2 speech differs from the level 1 speech in that it does display some effort to present a central idea with support, and the speaker makes some efforts toward organization and/or engagement with the audience.

Level 1: A speech in this category exhibits little regard for its audience and situation. The topic may be objectionable, insignificant, profoundly unimaginative, or completely unsuitable for the occasion. Organizationally, the speech may suggest no hint of a central idea, let alone any evidence, and it may lack a recognizable introduction, conclusion, or both. *Because of this absence of focusing structures, many ideas seem unrelated to the initial topic.* The speaker's language, as well as attire or demeanor, may disrupt communication between speaker and audience: the speaker may patronize or insult the audience; the tone may communicate apathy, callousness, hostility, or all three at once; the speaker may mumble incomprehensibly; his or her posture and gestures may intrude upon the audience or may interfere with the audience's understanding; or the speaker may establish little, if any, eye contact. If the speaker uses visual aids, the aids may be incomprehensible or irrelevant. In short, the speech differs from a level 2 speech in that it has few redeeming qualities.