Make Sure Your Presentation POPS
(Prepare, Organize, Practice, and Shine)

Prepare
- **Start and finish strong.** Prepare and memorize short opening/closing remarks (a relevant quote, a question, or compelling idea).
- **Don’t read your slides.** Prepare easily memorized sound bites to correlate with your PowerPoint slides. You can also prepare notecards; just don’t let them become a crutch.
- **Consider glitches.** Think through what can go wrong and prepare. Bring an extra thumb drive, laptop, and/or hardcopies of your presentation. Having a backup plan will give you confidence.

Organize
- **Gather your materials.** Look over your materials and organize them for ease of presentation.
- **Organize your garb.** Be sure to choose professional clothes that make you feel good about you. (Check for snags, wrinkles, and try clothes on for comfort). Ready your outfit in advance, so all you have to do is slip it on.
- **Eat to speak.** If hungry, eat a low carb snack (a handful of nuts, a hard-boiled egg, or a small piece of cheese). A moderate amount of caffeine (too much adds to jitters) may help you to better focus. Avoid consuming a large meal right before you speak (which diverts needed blood flow to digestion processes instead of to the brain).

Practice
- **Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse.** Run through your entire presentation several times. Every time you run through your talk you will gain confidence and new insights. Tape key points into a tape player and listen as you go to sleep.
- **Use creative visualization.** Spend time picturing a successful delivery from start to finish.
- **Make one with your speaking space.** If possible check out your presentation room prior to speaking. Get a feel for where people will be sitting and become familiar with needed technology.

Shine
- **Go from anxious to eager.** Pre-speaking “butterflies” are normal; expect them and welcome them. Remember, every person who speaks (professionally or not) feels some level of trepidation prior to speaking. Try this tension-reducing exercise: *Squeeze your toes tight, tight, tight and release.*
- **Center you.** Walk tall to your speaking area, take a conscious deep breath, smile and then begin. Stay in control throughout. To slow down, pause and breathe. Avoid nervous ticks (swaying from side to side, fussing with your hair, scratching your nose, or clicking your pen) that distract the audience from your message.
- **Don’t apologize, ever!** Poise-under-pressure gives confidence to your audience. If you make a mistake, smile (take a breath) and keep going. Remember: Your audience is rooting for your success!

*Mare Petras is a professional speaker and member of the National Speakers Association. She presents seminars, workshops, and keynotes nationwide to a variety of audiences. She is also a USF-SM graduate student who works as a writing tutor in the Learning Support Services.*