Conquering Computer Communication (Presenting Virtually)

A few months ago, I gave you some tips on hosting or attending virtual Toastmasters meetings. If you haven't checked that article out, [you can read more about that here](#)*! Today, we'll talk more about* speaking *online.*

As more and more of us have returned to our offices, schools, and businesses in person over the last several months, virtual presentations are becoming slightly less common than they were during the height of the pandemic. However, presenting online isn't exactly a thing of the past. So, just in case, it's a good idea to brush up on your skills. Today, I'll be giving you 5 tips about preparing for and delivering a presentation online.

1. **Present yourself appropriately.** As I mentioned in the other blog post, it's very important to dress appropriately for a meeting, even if it's online. This tip carries even more weight when you are actually going to be a presenter, because all eyes will be on you! Also, don't present from somewhere where background noise or activity will distract your audience! Try to find an empty, quiet, neural-looking room for your speech. If you can't find such a place for your presentation, try to at least choose a blurred or professional-looking virtual background, and set up appropriate lighting.
2. **Test out your technology.** Pick applications you have used before and feel comfortable relying on for your big

day. Make sure you know all the controls you may need to use during the call. (Tip: Something I like to do when I'm unsure of a feature is set up a private call and ask a friend or family member to join from another device. Then, I can practice my presentation on them. Not only does this help me know my material, but I can test all the controls I'll be using and ask them for feedback!)

3. **Make eye contact with the camera.** While it's okay to scan your audience for reactions, remember that looking at the camera will give the best illusion of eye contact online. If you find yourself slouching or straining to reach that level, place your device on a higher or lower surface. Try to test out different camera positions to find the one that is the most flattering and also convenient. Just make sure that surface is stable!

4. **Grab your audience's attention.** Engaging presentations don't necessarily need visual aids, but it's easier to keep people interested online when they can see something besides just your face. If you have enough time, preparing a simple but effective slideshow can be helpful. Just make sure your presentation is supplementing your powerful delivery, not replacing it! You still need to know your speech inside and out.

5. **Try standing up or adding extra gestures.** If you were presenting in person, it's very likely that you would have stood up to speak. Likewise, standing up for your virtual presentation is just as effective! If you can set up your camera on a standing desk, go for it. Standing up can also help you slip into presenter-mode and avoid slouching. Using vocal variety and plenty of gestures can also maintain your audience's interest when they don't have much else to watch.

Whether you're presenting virtually or in person, your audience will only be as excited to hear about your topic as you are to be talking about it! Practice as much as you can, have fun, and good luck!