

# The Pitch with a Twist: Perform Your Speaking Anxieties

## Assignment instructions

---

### *Learning Objectives:*

The objective of this assignment is to enable students to better manage their anxiety when speaking publicly. Students will:

- Identify stress factors for presenters.
- Reveal how anxiety physically manifests while speaking publicly.
- Plan vocal and nonverbal communication tactics to reduce anxiety symptoms.
- Demonstrate professionalism and confidence when presenting.

### *Prompt:*

The instructor will lead a discussion that helps students identify specific aspects of public speaking that make them feel anxious. This could include the technology failing, feeling judged, limited time to prepare, or other stressful scenarios relevant to delivering presentations. Subsequently, you will be asked to describe how the anxiety physically manifests in your body (such as an elevating heart rate, losing your train of thought, speaking too quickly, avoiding eye contact, pacing, perspiring, etcetera). Next, students plan a 2-minute pitch targeting a recruiter at a job fair. Focus the pitch on the internship you hope to have this summer. You will deliver one pitch during which you will act out the nervous symptoms that you typically experience when speaking publicly. Students are encouraged to over-emphasize their symptoms, to be dramatic, and to have fun during this first pitch! Then, you will brainstorm tactics to lower stress prior to speaking and to manage nervous symptoms while presenting. Finally, you will deliver a confident, professional pitch omitting the symptoms of anxiety previously identified.

### *Time limit:*

Students will be given 20 minutes to plan their pitch and 2 minutes per pitch to present.

### *Evaluation:*

The presentation skills rubric will serve as the evaluation criteria for the final pitch. Students should offer persuasive content about their job qualifications, a targeted appeal to the recruiter, a logical flow of information that maintains the time limit, vocal control, and nonverbal communication as described in our course rubric.

*Note for instructors: Rather than delivering these instructions to students in advance of the assignment, you can use the slides provided to walk students through the exercises as making the twist a surprise is an effective method of engaging students. To save time, the nervous symptoms pitch can be conducted peer-to-peer with one partner role-playing the recruiter.*