

Basic Guidelines for Speaking in a Classroom

Tips, Tricks & Techniques for a Great Experience!

Who Am I Speaking to?

Here's what you want to find out about the class before you go:

- Grade/age group
- Class focus
- Specific objectives of the teacher (e.g. career exploration—potential jobs for students, software or machining topics, design, running or managing a business, safety, etc.)
- Determine if there is something you can bring for show and tell, for demo, etc.
- Special considerations of the classroom (are there many ESL students? Any special needs?). Ask for guidance on the most effective/recommended approach.

Get these Details from the School/Teacher

- School address with parking information and directions to the appropriate building. Is check-in at office necessary? Is a name badge required?
- Teacher name and building/classroom number
- Date, time and duration of the visit
- Discuss anything you might need for a presentation (projector, electrical cord, sturdy table for equipment, laptop compatibility, thumb drive, etc.)

Choosing a Topic

Here are three popular choices (or develop a specific theme with the instructor):

- 1. Your Personal Story (this often resonates more with students than career specifics. Starting out with “Let me tell you a story...” gets their attention.)**
 - How did you get started
 - Education and training you received
 - Favorite classes in school
 - Mistakes made along the way and how you overcame them
 - Challenges you faced (students may relate and learn from you here)
 - Perks of your career and/or stories of how you spend your free time after your hard work (shows them the fruits of your labor)
 - Would you do anything differently?
- 2. Aspects of your Career Field**
 - A typical day/tasks you do frequently (indoor vs. outdoor; physical work or desk work; hours; dress code—if it's specific, please model it!)

- Personalities, traits that succeed in your job
- Beginning salary and advancements (when can they expect to progress monetarily? Mention hourly rates as well as annual salary. Students are very interested in money!)
- Favorite/least favorite things about the job
- Future outlook of your career field
- What is needed to be competitive in your field? What is needed to advance? (work experience; additional education; special certifications, etc.)
- How does the job change with education and promotions?

3. What Employers Want

- Explain a good work ethic and encourage students to develop theirs. It might include:
 - being on time
 - good attitude (team player, positive, etc.)
 - taking initiative (offering help instead of waiting to be asked, taking on assignments, leading on a project, etc.)
 What skills/attitudes are important for getting and keeping a job? (What worked for you?)
- What behaviors will get you promoted or get you a raise?
- What do you wish someone had told your current employees or coworkers when they were in high school? (e.g. master basic math calculations, be able to write and communicate clearly)

Presentation Strategies

- Storytelling (works well with your personal story)
- Create a PowerPoint (don't read from it, just use it as a tool to show pictures, videos, screenshots, etc. to clarify what you do and get them interested in your specific career or the broader industry)
- Games are great no matter how simple or "low tech"
- A standard presentation is about 30 minutes plus time for questions
- Develop and deliver a presentation with a colleague
- Arrange a demo where applicable to help students understand specific processes, software or machine technologies
- Use cool visuals

Boost your Success

- Incorporate visual aides wherever possible (be selective about things to be passed around as they may cause distractions)
- Avoid overly technical language. Explain acronyms and special terms (and that all fields have them!)

- Involve the students! Ask questions and let them ask questions. (Do they know anyone in your industry? Are they familiar with your type of work? Be prepared if they don't answer right away—they need time to think.)
- Provide anecdotes. They make your information memorable.
- Try a small activity with students (use a tool, solve a problem you have to solve at work).
- Vary your style (attention spans are short!) Intersperse speaking with pictures, demos, etc., then return to speaking.
- Don't read from a script. Make a list of bullet points and use it as a guide.
- Shift your position around the room. Get close!
- Bring give aways -- tape measures, pens, safety glasses, etc.
- Relax! Have fun. Students like new people and are interested in why you are in the classroom.

A Few “Don’ts”

- Attempt to sell the students any product or service
- Glorify illegal substances or activities*
- Swear or use bad language*
- Cancel without notification

**Sometimes people do this in an attempt to “be cool” or to try to “relate” to the students but it doesn’t go over well.*

After the Event

- Thank the teacher for sharing the classroom; thank any administrators for help in arranging the visit.
- Send any pertinent follow up information or links.

Encore Performance

- Save your material for a repeat performance! It can be modified as well to adapt to different ages/grades.
- Congratulate yourself for *paying it forward* and for being a caring adult, taking the time to make a connection with young people and offering them guidance, inspiration and hope for a successful future – and for possibly influencing students favorably towards jobs in manufacturing.



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