

# Defend Your Ideas

**Unit:** Communication Skills

**Problem Area:** Presentation Skills

**Lesson:** Defend Your Ideas

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Describe guidelines for making a persuasive presentation.**
- 2 Identify different approaches to defending ideas.**
- 3 Identify techniques for defending ideas.**

- **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Development of 'soft skills' in a technical elective. *Tamer Ceylan, University of Wisconsin-Platteville*. Accessed December 14, 2008.

<http://www.asee4ilin.org/Conference2006program/Papers/Ceylan-P6.pdf>.

Five major mistakes in public speaking. *College of Public Speaking*. Accessed December 17, 2008. [http://www.collegeofpublicspeaking.co.uk/5\\_Major\\_Mistakes\\_In\\_Public\\_Speaking.html](http://www.collegeofpublicspeaking.co.uk/5_Major_Mistakes_In_Public_Speaking.html)

Giving the Oral Presentation. *American College of Physicians*. Accessed December 17, 2008. [http://www.acponline.org/residents\\_fellows/competitions/abstract/prepare/oral\\_pres.htm](http://www.acponline.org/residents_fellows/competitions/abstract/prepare/oral_pres.htm).

Now that we have your complete attention. *Fast Company*. Accessed December 17, 2008.

<http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/07/124present.html>.



Ten Simple Rules for a Good Presentation. SCIVVEE. Accessed December 17, 2008. <http://scivee.tv/node/2903>.

Van Fleet, James K., *Lifetime Conversation Guide*, Chapter 13, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984.

## ■ **Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities.**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

## ■ **Key Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ aversion
- ▶ broken-record technique
- ▶ counter-attack
- ▶ credibility
- ▶ defend
- ▶ discredit
- ▶ evidence
- ▶ inoculation
- ▶ persuade
- ▶ reframe
- ▶ substantiate
- ▶ take-home message

## ■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situation. A possible approach is included here.

*Divide the class into pairs to discuss the following questions: What is it like to find yourself in a discussion or an argument in which you must defend your point of view? How do you defend your point of view? What is it like to attack someone else's point or a viewpoint you do not believe in? How do you attack the other person's point of view? Following the discussions, have the students journal their answers and share them in a class discussion.*

# SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Describe guidelines for making a persuasive presentation.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are some guidelines for making a persuasive presentation?

- I. Making a persuasive presentation
  - A. Colleges and universities include the teaching of “soft skills” to maintain accreditation in applied science programs (Development, 2008). Technical “soft skills” include the abilities to establish credibility, to make a persuasive technical design presentation, and to defend ideas.
    1. **Credibility** is being trustworthy or believable.
    2. To **persuade** is to convince others about the credibility and value of an idea.
    3. To **defend** is to preserve ideas, keep others persuaded, and maintain credibility. The need to defend ideas can be minimized by giving a more persuasive presentation.
  - B. Guidelines for a persuasive presentation can be broken into what the presenter must know and what the presenter must do. Knowing the following information helps a presenter give a more persuasive presentation.
    1. It is necessary to know the material being presented.
    2. It is essential to know who is in the audience, what they are thinking coming into the presentation, what they need to hear, and what “hot buttons” to avoid.
    3. It is important to know how to use non-verbal communication to impact a presentation.
  - C. Action steps to a more persuasive presentation
    1. It is important for the presenter to be concise, simple, and honest with a clear **take-home message**—a condensed explanation of an idea that sticks in people’s minds that will be remembered weeks later.
    2. It is critical to make an impact in the first 30 and the last 15 seconds of the presentation. These are good times to emphasize the take-home message.
    3. The presenter should incite the audience, not merely inform. He or she should show some emotion and appeal to the emotions of the audience.

*Display VM–A for discussion. Then use some of the recommended online resources, such as “Now That We Have Your Complete Attention” and “Giving the Oral Presentation” to help students explore digital content related to making persuasive presentations.*

## Objective 2: Identify different approaches to defending ideas.

### Anticipated Problem: How can someone defend an idea?

- II. Defending an idea—When a person’s ideas are attacked during a presentation, the presenter can choose to avert the attack, counter-attack, or further substantiate his or her ideas.
  - A. **Aversion** is the act of defending an idea by deflecting or sidestepping the attack.
    - 1. This approach preserves a person’s ideas by moving the target to avoid a direct hit by the attacker.
    - 2. This approach emphasizes “reframing” the attack to deflect it. To **reframe** is to present an attack from a different point of view.
    - 3. This approach avoids direct confrontation with the attacking member of the audience.
  - B. A **counter-attack** is the act of defending an idea by attacking the attacker.
    - 1. This approach preserves a person’s ideas by attacking the credibility of the attacker.
    - 2. This approach attempts to analyze and show the weaknesses in the attacker’s counterargument.
    - 3. This approach creates a direct confrontation with the attacking member of the audience.
  - C. To **substantiate** is to dispel an attack by arguing that an idea is based on logical proof and **evidence**—information or data that is helpful in forming a conclusion.
    - 1. This approach requires being well prepared for the presentation by knowing the assumptions, elements, logic, and rationale of the design and how they support the presenter’s ideas.
    - 2. This approach requires understanding possible objections critics might make and having evidence that dispels such criticisms.
    - 3. This approach requires communication skills that help articulate how evidence supports or proves the presenter’s idea and does not support the attacker’s counterargument.

*Use VM–B to demonstrate three approaches for defending ideas. Have assigned topics for students to role play “aversion,” “counter-attacks,” and “substantiating attacks.”*

## Objective 3: Identify techniques for defending ideas.

### Anticipated Problem: What techniques help defend an idea?

- III. Different techniques can be used in association with aversion, counter-attacks, and substantiating approaches.
  - A. Aversion techniques are methods for avoiding a direct confrontation or attack. Aversion techniques preempt or reframe an attack.
    1. Preempt technique: interaction
      - a. If possible, the presenter should talk and interact with audience members in the weeks prior to the presentation to test their feelings and general thoughts about the main ideas to be presented.
      - b. Based on this early feedback, a presenter can better understand the audience and can tailor the presentation to fit the audience's predispositions.
    2. Preempt technique: inoculation
      - a. **Inoculation** is the presentation of a counterargument at the same time one's own ideas are presented and in the same moment refuting the counterarguments.
      - b. Audience members perceive that the counterarguments are not valid.
    3. Reframe technique: restate
      - a. The presenter should take an attacking statement and restate it in terms that make it seem irrelevant to the main point of the presentation.
      - b. In using this technique, the presenter should make the attack appear that it is talking about "apples" when it is talking about "oranges."
    4. Reframe technique: reframe
      - a. The presenter should take the attacking statement and reframe it as a topic that can be addressed outside of the presentation.
      - b. The presenter should offer to talk about a controversial topic with an audience member after the presentation. This helps make it clear that talking about the topic during the presentation would not be productive for the audience.
  - B. Counter-attack techniques are methods for discrediting the attacker's point of criticism to preserve one's ideas. To **discredit** is to nullify any belief the audience might have found in the attacker's counterargument. Counter-attack techniques include the following:
    1. The presenter should keep the attacker on the defensive by asking questions and by pointing out weaknesses in the attacker's ideas.
    2. The presenter should speak about the credibility of people with whom the presenter has collaborated, and working on the design helps to discredit the attacker.

3. The presenter should question the information source cited by the attacker. (Why does the source think the way he or she thinks?) The presenter should attempt to show that the attacker is not knowledgeable enough to substantiate his or her criticism.
- C. Substantiating techniques are methods of providing evidence that support a person's ideas more than it supports the counterargument. Substantiating techniques are contingent on "knowing the material."
1. The presenter must know and refer to a relevant, established, supportive research base for his or her design ideas. He or she should connect the ideas to a body of knowledge that is already producing evidence and proof.
  2. The presenter should isolate the simplest, most powerful elements of his or her design (i.e., focus on the take-home message) and then use the broken-record communication approach in the face of counterarguments. The **broken-record technique** is repeating the same simple and powerful elements of one's presentation in response to any counterargument. Getting sidetracked on tangential arguments can discredit the entire presentation; therefore, a presenter should stick to the take-home message by repeating it in several ways.
    - a. The presenter should prepare simple and effective visual aids that show the evidence supporting his or her ideas. A picture is worth a thousand words.
    - b. The presenter should keep the visual aids uncomplicated to the point that the audience can comprehend all of the information in 30 seconds or less.

*Copy and distribute VM–C, VM–D, and VM–E to demonstrate techniques for defending one's ideas. Divide the class into small groups. Ask them to find two or three examples of people averting, counter-attacking, or substantiating an idea. Then have a class discussion on the findings.*

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle.
- **Application.** Use the included visual masters and lab sheet to apply the information presented in the lesson.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

## ■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

### **Part One: Matching**

1. g
2. f

3. a
4. e
5. i
6. c
7. j
8. d
9. b
10. h

### **Part Two: Short Answer**

1. Three approaches to defend an idea are:
  - a. Aversion
  - b. Counter-attack
  - c. Substantiate
2. The aversion approach does not directly confront the attack but tries to avoid it. The counter-attack approach is a direct confrontation with the attacker.

### **Part Three: True/False**

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. F

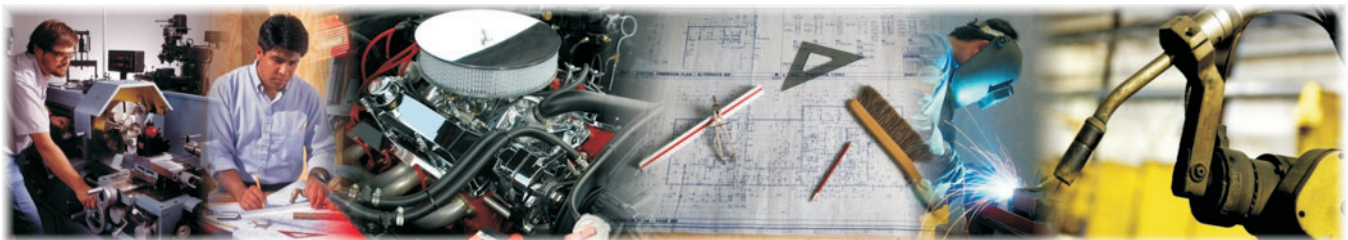
# Defend Your Ideas

## ► Part One: Matching

**Instructions:** Match the term with the correct definition.

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| a. defend            | g. credibility    |
| b. evidence          | h. discredit      |
| c. reframe           | i. aversion       |
| d. inoculation       | j. counter-attack |
| e. take-home message |                   |
| f. persuade          |                   |

- \_\_\_ 1. Being trustworthy or believable
- \_\_\_ 2. To convince about the credibility and value of an idea
- \_\_\_ 3. To preserve one's ideas, keep others persuaded, and maintain credibility
- \_\_\_ 4. A condensed explanation of an idea that sticks in people's minds
- \_\_\_ 5. To defend an idea by deflecting or sidestepping the attack
- \_\_\_ 6. To present an attack from a different point of view
- \_\_\_ 7. To defend an idea by attacking the attacker
- \_\_\_ 8. The presentation of a counterargument at the time one presents an idea and at the same moment refuting the counterargument
- \_\_\_ 9. Information or data that is helpful in forming a conclusion
- \_\_\_ 10. To nullify any belief the audience might have found in the attacker's counterargument







# TIPS FOR GIVING A PERSUASIVE PRESENTATION

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The need to defend one's ideas can be minimized by giving a more persuasive presentation.

- ◆ Know the material being presented.
- ◆ Know the audience, what they are thinking, what they need to hear, and what “hot buttons” to avoid.
- ◆ Know how to use non-verbal communication to impact a presentation.
- ◆ Make the presentation short, simple, and honest. Have a clear take-home message.
- ◆ Make an impact in the first 30 and the last 15 seconds of the presentation. Restate the take-home message.
- ◆ Incite the audience; do not merely inform. Show some emotion and appeal to the emotions of the audience.

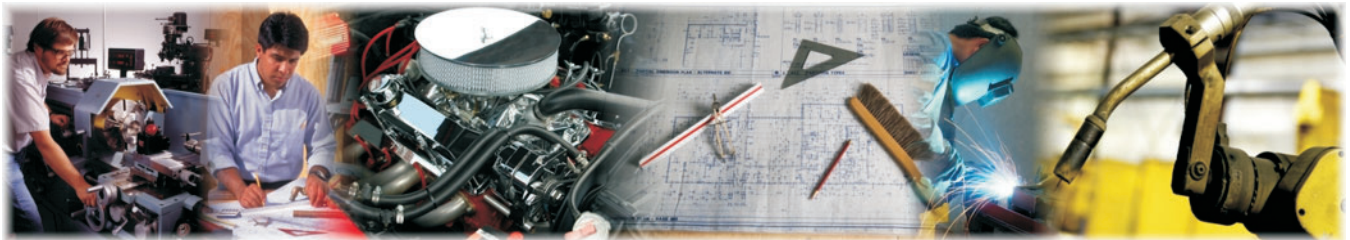
## KEY TERMS

- ◆ Credibility—being trustworthy or believable
- ◆ Persuasion—being convinced about the credibility and value of an idea
- ◆ Defending—preserving your ideas, keeping others persuaded, and maintaining credibility

# THREE APPROACHES TO DEFEND AN IDEA

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- ◆ Aversion is the act of defending an idea by deflecting or by sidestepping the attack.
- ◆ A counter-attack is defending your ideas by attacking the attacker.
- ◆ To substantiate is to dispel an attack by arguing that your idea is based on logical proof and evidence. Evidence is information or data that is helpful in forming a conclusion.



# AVERSION TECHNIQUES AVOID DIRECT CONFRONTATION

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## 1. Preempt technique: interaction

- ◆ Talk and interact with audience members in the weeks prior to the presentation to test their feelings and general thoughts about the main ideas to be presented.
- ◆ Early feedback helps a presenter understand the audience and tailor the presentation to fit the audience's predispositions. Feedback helps avoid controversial topics that might provoke attacks from the audience.

## 2. Preempt technique: inoculation

- ◆ Inoculation involves presenting counterarguments at the time you present your own ideas and, in the same moment, refute the counterarguments.
- ◆ Audience members perceive that the counterarguments are not valid and are less likely to bring them up later.



### 3. Reframe technique: restate

- ◆ Take an attacking statement and restate it in terms that make it seem irrelevant to the main point of the presentation.
- ◆ Make the attack appear to be talking about “apples” when the presentation is talking about “oranges.”

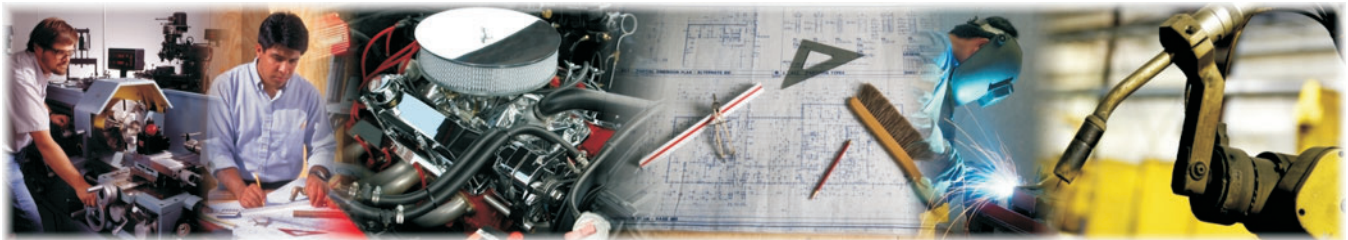
### 4. Reframe technique: reframe

- ◆ Take the attacking statement and reframe it as a topic that can be addressed outside of the presentation.
- ◆ Indicate that you would like to talk more about the topic after the presentation, and make it clear that talking about the topic during the presentation would not be productive for the audience.

# COUNTER-ATTACK TECHNIQUES

To discredit is to nullify a belief the audience may find in the attacker's counterargument.

1. Put the attacker on the defensive by asking questions. Point out weaknesses in the attacker's ideas.
2. Speaking about the credibility of people with whom you have collaborated while working on your design helps to discredit the attacker.
3. Question the information source cited by the attacker. Why does the source think the way he or she thinks? Attempt to show that the attacker is not knowledgeable enough to substantiate the criticism.



# SUBSTANTIATING TECHNIQUES

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1. Know and refer to a relevant, established, and supportive research base for your design ideas. Connect your ideas to a body of knowledge that is already producing evidence and proof.
2. Isolate the simplest, most powerful elements of your design (i.e., focus on the take-home message), and then use the broken-record communication approach in the face of counterarguments (repeating the same simple and powerful elements of your presentation in response to any counterargument). Getting side-tracked on tangential arguments can discredit your entire presentation.
3. Prepare simple and effective visual aids that show the evidence supporting your ideas.
  - ◆ A picture is worth a thousand words.
  - ◆ Keep the visual aids uncomplicated to the point that the audience can comprehend all of the information in 30 seconds or less.

# Presenting and Defending Ideas

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to create a mock presentation and to practice defending ideas.

## Objectives

1. Create a role-play presentation for a requested design idea.
2. Demonstrate approaches and techniques to defend an idea.

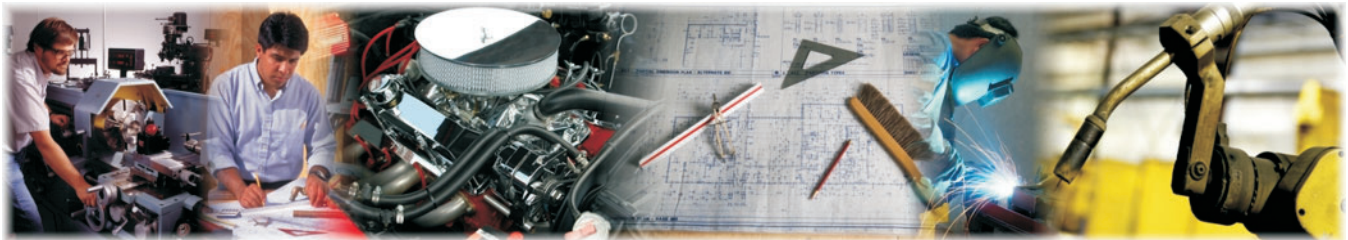


## Materials

- ◆ VM-C handout for each group
- ◆ VM-D handout for each group
- ◆ VM-E handout for each group
- ◆ paper for sketching and scripts
- ◆ writing utensil

## Procedure

1. Break into groups of four to five students.
2. Ask your teacher to describe the audience for a design presentation.
3. Based on the audience description and design requested, create a design idea.





4. Sketch the design as a starting point for the group presentation to the audience.
5. List possible counterarguments to the group's design idea that may be proposed by the audience.
6. As a group, write a skit that presents the design idea in a role-play format.
7. Present the skit. Model ways to defend the group's design.

**Skit Guidelines:**

- a. One or more students will present the design.
- b. The remainder of the group will role play the audience and present the counterarguments.
- c. Presenters will take three to five minutes to introduce the design idea and a sketch of the design.
- d. After the short presentation, there will be a question and answer session in which the audience will launch attacks on the presentation. Each group will decide which arguments to make and how each argument will be defended. Skits should include techniques for defending ideas from each approach: aversion, counter-attack, and substantiate.

# Presenting and Defending Ideas

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Possible audiences requesting a design presentation:

1. The school board wishes to build an addition to the Architecture and Drafting classrooms.
2. A local park district wishes to build a playground and picnic area for a diverse neighborhood that includes young families, retired couples in single-family homes, and elderly people from a condominium complex. Money is no object. The goal of the project is to entice all three groups to use the park facilities.
3. A theater group needs set designs for an upcoming play. Cost limitations and a small stage are design considerations. The theater seats 200 people.