

Holding an assembly can be useful for a school council in a number of ways. You might have some big news to announce and you need to make sure that everyone in a class, year group or the entire school are aware. Maybe you need to address a problem, and it's too important to just put up on a notice board. Whatever the reason, talking directly to your school, year group or class will make sure they get the message.

Of course, it can be a scary prospect speaking in front of a room full of people, so here's a few pointers to help you put on a really engaging presentation with confidence and clarity.

In preparation

1. **Know your subject:** Make sure you really understand what it is you're talking about. If you can't explain it clearly to yourself then go over it until you can. It will be obvious to your audience if you try and present something without fully understanding it.
2. **Write a script:** By writing a script you'll make sure you have a clear understanding of your subject as well as an outline for how to structure your presentation in the assembly. Try using simple notes to remind you what to say next. If you read word for word from a script it can be a bit boring for your audience and sound unnatural.
3. **Anticipate questions:** You will get the most out of an assembly if you invite your audience to ask questions. It will tell you which parts of your assembly are popular, which are unpopular and which are confusing. It's really helpful feedback, so listen carefully.

While you will hopefully learn something from unexpected questions, it's good practice to think about what questions are likely to be asked and have answers prepared for them. This will let the audience know that you understand what you're talking about, and also help to clear up anything confusing or complicated.

4. **Practice public speaking:** This one is obvious. The more you practice, the more comfortable you will be in front of people. You can also use your practice assembly to get feedback from your school council, friends, teachers or parents before you have to present the real assembly.

During the assembly

1. **Be polite:** It is easy to forget in an unusual setting like an assembly, but simple things like introducing yourself and saying 'thank you' after questions and when you finish the assembly are still appreciated by an audience.
2. **Speak calmly:** If you're nervous, which a lot of people are when talking to a lot of people, there is a temptation to speak quickly and quietly so you can get off the stage as soon as possible. Don't do this! If what you wanted to talk about was important enough to hold an assembly you owe it to your audience to speak loud and slow so they can understand you.
3. **Move around:** It can be difficult to keep everyone's attention in an assembly. A simple way to avoid this is to use the space you've got. Everyone does this differently, so find a style that works for you and try to emphasise your actions in the assembly.
4. **Engage with the audience:** Regularly ask if there are any questions and try to focus on how what you're talking about relates to your audience. This will help keep them interested and you might get some really good questions that make the assembly even more effective.
5. **Have a drink nearby:** An obvious one, but easily forgotten. Talking a lot and being nervous can give you a dry mouth, so make sure you have a drink of water handy, and don't hesitate to take a sip whenever you need.

Hopefully this advice will help you put on a great assembly. If you want more help you could try asking for advice in the smart school councils community forums here:

<http://www.smartschoolcouncils.org.uk/forums/>