So, this is a workshop for effective public speaking. My name is Taureanna. I'm a senior here at Chico and I'm majoring in Communications. My experience with public speaking is I've obviously done in-class presentations like you've probably had to do. And I also served as co-captain of the Columbia Junior College Speech and Debate Team for three years, so I have some experience with competitive speaking and in the classroom, as well. Oh, perfect, thank you. Here are some of these attendance sheets, so no one will see them. And before you leave I'll just initial them on your way out. So one of the reasons public speak something important to students is that obviously you're required to give presentations in your classes, but also employers now report that communication skills are one of the main skills that they want their employees to have when they hire them. So this is something that can prepare you for your classes, but also for when you're done with college, as well. So before we really get into the meat and potatoes, if you will, of public speaking, I want to tell you a brief story. There's an old parable about a young boy who lived in a village, and in this village there was also a wise old woman. One day the boy decided that he wanted to trick the woman, and so he gathered his friends around him, and he said, "Listen, I have this plan, I'm going to trick that old woman. And here's what it is." And he showed them that he had a small bird and he said, "I'm going to take this bird cupped in my hands and go to the old woman. I will say to her, 'I have a bird in my hands, is it dead or is it alive?'" And he said, "If she says it is dead, I will open my hands and let the bird fly free, but if she says it is alive, I will crush the bird to death." And so the young boy took his friends and they went to the woman, and he said, "Old woman, I have a bird in my hands, is it dead or is it alive?" And the old woman stopped, looked at him, and said simply, "It is in your hands".
Now obviously the old woman was wise enough to realize that the bird hung in a sort of limbo between live and death and that it was just not physically in the boy's hands, but that its fate was, as well; that his actions and their outcomes were up to him. Obviously this isn't just a story about a wise old woman or a bird or a young boy, it is story that spans years of human experience and fits any variety of situations. But it is particularly pertinent to public speaking, and this is because how well your presentation goes, how dynamic a speaker you are is in your hands.
It depends on three things: structure, delivery, and recovery.
So Edmund Burke once said that "good order is the foundation of all things," and I think we will come to see that he is actually correct. Structure is very important to solid public speaking skills.
There are four major components: Introduction, body, and conclusion, which is three, and then there are transitions, which can happen throughout the entire presentation, but largely they'll happen in the body.
So the introduction is important because it will set the tone for your entire presentation, and it's also your opportunity to get your audience's interest, tell them why your presentation is significant and preview your major points. So this means that your introduction has to include several things. The first one is an attention getter. This can take the form of a brief story, like the one I opened with, or a quotation, a striking statistic, or a rhetorical question. Secondly, you need to have a thesis statement, which is generally just a precise, clear statement that conveys your main idea for the entire presentation. Third, you have to express your significance, so why should the audience be sitting there listening to you, and this can be, like, will they leave knowing something different, or will this topic somehow affect them in their lives or people they love. It can be pretty much anything you want to generate it based on who your audience is, as well. Like, if you're talking to a group of college students, the significance might be much different than if you're talking to a group of professors or people just like friends. So, finally, the fourth thing that you need to do in your introduction is to preview your points, and this really adds direction and momentum to why your presentation so that the audience knows what main points you'll be taking them through. And it's also something that you can come back to you, as well, and remind yourself how you're going to keep on track. So, an example of previewing your points, it can be very simple, and it might be something as simple as when I said today, we're going to talk about structure, delivery, and recovering from the unexpected.
So once you have your introduction fleshed out, you can move onto the body, and the body is where you're really going to develop all of your main ideas and give examples and concrete details. So what you want to have here is the first thing you need is a topic sentence for each main point, and this is kind of like a mini-thesis statement where it's the main point for that topic. And you want to back this up with concrete details, so this can be quotations or examples, research facts, and finally you need to have an interpretation. So the interpretation means that you don't want to just drop some facts or drop a quotation and then expect it to explain itself. You have to take it one step further and either rephrase it or interpret it, and this shows that you understand your material and you're not just parroting things that you, like, found in a book. And it also demonstrates to your teacher if you are giving a presentation in, like, a class that you understand the information and can apply it. And you would do this for the second and the third points, as well. And in between your main points, you want to have a transition phrase, and this just generally sums up what you just said and introduces what you're going to say next, but it's usually very simple and can be pretty quick. It's like now that we've talked about the body of a speech, let's talk about the conclusion.
So a conclusion can kind of be thought of as the reverse of an introduction because you have a lot of same. You want to restate your thesis, you want to review the points that you covered, and you want to have a creative conclusion that ties back into your introduction. So if you used a quotation, we talked about the Edmond Burk one, and he said, "good order is the foundation of all things." So you might use that in your conclusion and say, like, without the orderly structure if an introduction, a body, and a conclusion, we would not have the necessary foundation for building and conveying our ideas in the clearest way possible, so just to tie it back into the opening statements.
The second component of strong public speaking is delivery and practice. So this means that a public speaker has to be aware of more than just what they're saying, but they have to be aware of how they're saying it. And this usually takes a lot of preparation and practice, even for spur of the moment speeches. And Mark Twain, who was actually not only an author, but also a famous speaker, once said that, "It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech." And if you're unfamiliar with the word "impromptu," that really means spur of the moment. It's like, you have very little time to prepare for it.
So, delivery encompasses two different types of communication, the first being verbal communication, which is what you're actually saying, and the second being nonverbal communication, which means it's how you say it. So the things that nonverbal communication encompasses are things like vocal variety, which means your intonation, how fast or how slow you're talking, if you're using pauses. It also encompasses facial expressions, gestures, and movement, so vocal variety is very important when giving a speech or a presentation because it subtly keeps the audience's interest, but it also adds emphasis and emotion to your words. So it's important that you're also projecting should everyone can hear you, and one technique for making sure you're speaking loudly enough is to imagine bouncing your voice off the back wall. Some theater students do this, and definitely I've done it before, but it just helps you work on your projection so that you know people in the back of the room are able to hear you. Vocal variety is also important, and you don't want to necessarily be something stiff or particularly practiced necessarily, but just use the natural cadences that you would have. And if it's hard for you to talk to a large group, one trick is to imagine that you are really just talking to one or two close friends in a more conversational setting, and that might help you feel more relaxed and also come across as a little more natural. So facial expressions are also very important because they, too, convey emotion and meaning on a level that our words alone cannot. So this is important to use your facial expressions to add to and complement what your words are actually saying. Eye contact is another part of this, and it's really important and powerful when you're trying to connect with an audience, because if you don't have a good connection with the audience, then it's kind of like there's just two separate worlds, so it's really important to try and make that connection.
And it can be uncomfortable sometimes to make eye contact, so, one thing you can do is look just over the tops of people's heads and they'll think you're looking at them, and you aren't. Another thing you can do is to kind of look in the middle in their forehead, like between their eyes, and again, it'll give the illusion of you making eye contact, but you don't actually have to deal with making eye contact. And also one other thing you can do is, you want to cover the whole room so you can scan the room, but then focus on three or four people when you stop to look at someone, and you can do it with the same three or four. And that also can help relax you, because it's like you're not talking to 30 people, it's like you're talking to four or five. Gestures are really important for effective public speakers, as well. They, again, add emphasis, and they are also a good way to kind of channel your nervous energy into something positive. So one thing to keep in mind when you are gesturing is to try and keep it above the waist and keep it purposeful because it's not so meaningful when you're like twitching at your side, which is something that I myself even have problems with. So it might take like a mental note to yourself to be purposeful and gesture above the waist. But when you're not gesturing, a good place for your hands is generally relaxed at your sides. And movement, the final component, can also be a very powerful source for speakers. I would suggest that you own your space and move in it with confidence and purpose, because when you go to the front of a room and there's a table there, lots of speakers will just let the table stay there, and they'll be like skirting around it for their entire presentation, and it really compromises their effectiveness, because now they can't move confidently and they can't own that space. So if that does happen to you in your classroom you can feel free to shove the table to the side so that you have the room you want for your presentation.
Movement can also be really effective for public speakers because you can use it to suddenly indicate when you are transitioning from one point to another. And this is actually called the speaker's triangle, but the goal is that you would start in one place and deliver a point, and then as you deliver your transition sentence, you might take a few steps, and this also puts you closer to the other side of the room. And then as you go through your points, you move to a different spot each time until at the end you began back where you started. And this is not always appropriate for presentations, but often it's a good way to add movement, which keeps the audience's interest in a minor way, but allows you to cover the room a little bit more and indicate when you're transitioning. It's also a good memory technique, because if you get to the end of a point and you know it's time to move, that might help just kind of jog your memory as to what the next point even is.
So now that we've talked about all the different delivery tricks to become a dynamic public speaker, I want you to turn to the person next to you, and use the script down here and try to inject emotion and variety into your delivery of the alphabet, which is generally a pretty dry thing. So go ahead and take a few seconds to try to do that.

[ Background conversation ] So has everyone had a chance to practice this script? How did it go? Was it hard or was it okay?

It was confusing.

It was confusing. So I did hear a lot of emphasis and inflection, which was awesome. If you were someone who had trouble with it, then you know that might be something you want to practice when you're preparing to give a speech or a presentation.
So speaking of practice, there are a few practice strategies that you can use when you're preparing for a presentation. First of all you want to do it on your own, and this might include a variety of different things, like just saying it over in your mind, saying it out loud, even recording yourself or writing it out by hand can sometimes help you to remember it and get more familiar with your content. You also want to practice it in front of others, so this could be friends or family, and you know, people you trust, especially at first. And then you also want to practice often. Like Mark Twain said, it took him three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech, so imagine how long it might take you to prepare one that's actually supposed to look prepared.
The other thing is memorization is sometimes important for your presentations. One trick that I recently learned is to imagine that your speech is a house and each point is a different room. Now the reason this can help you is because, let's say you imagine the general, like front of the house as your introduction. So maybe there's a brightly colored, eye-catching potted plant on the step, and if you link that image to your attention-getter, you're more likely to remember your attention-getter. And then if the welcome mat is perhaps your thesis statement, you're more likely to remember to say your thesis statement, and maybe there's, like, three steps down into the house and those could be your preview of points. But by attaching these images to your components of your speech, you're more likely to remember them and be able to deliver them. Because also if you're standing up at the front of the room visualizing a room in a house and there's an umbrella stand that you know you haven't talked about, then you know you're forgetting something. So what are some of your memorization strategies that you have used in the past, either for presentations or just general, like tricks and tips that you've learned along the way. Yeah, go ahead.

Like writing things down and saying them out loud.

Okay, yeah, so writing things down and saying them out loud. Anything else? Yeah.

Try and associate it with an image.

Yeah, okay, so associating it with an image. What else?
Yeah, so, memorization can sometimes be tricky, but there are these little things that you can do to make it little bit easier.
So we're going to talk about a couple of things that you can just keep in mind, and one is kind of a part of delivery, but it doesn't actually have to do with what you're saying, it has to do with the way you're dressed. A general rule is to dress one step above your audience so that you look nice, but you're not out of place for afterword and you're not making them uncomfortable for feeling under dressed.
And then we're going to talk about the last one, recovery, or keeping your cool. And George Jessel once that the human brain is a wonderful thing. It starts working the moment you are born, and never stops until you stand up to speak in public.
So there are several things that can go wrong when you get up to give a speech, and one is equipment failure. So the only real cure for this is to be prepared and have a backup plan. One thing that I would recommend is if you've ever heard of Lily Walter's book, "What to Say When You're Dying on the Platform." She has a wide range of different things that can go wrong during presentations, and then she offers solutions to them, and they're often like very quick and humorous, like, you can say it and get the audience back on your side and you're good to go. So equipment failure is one of the things she talks about in that book. So things you can do are e-mail your presentation to yourself, as well as having it on one of those flash drives. Bring your laptop, so in case for some reason the room's computer isn't working, you can hook it up to the projector. And finally, if everything is just going disastrously, you can have handouts or other activities planned so that you maybe don't even need to use your Power Point. One other tip from her is that if you do lose your Power Point slides or the computer is not working and you can't use it, don't say to the audience, "so if we were looking at my slide right now, here's what it would have looked like," and going into detail and explaining like the image you might have had. She says just pretend that the slides, like, don't even exist, like you don't even need them and carry on with the presentation, like, so you're not weighing people down with strange descriptions of images.
The second thing that can happen is sometimes you will try to be establishing a rapport with the audience and you have a joke that falls flat or they don't get your story. So a couple of options is that you can respond humorously and really just make fun of how badly your joke went. One option is to say, "I happen to be doing subliminal humor. You may be staring, but your 'liminal' thinks it's hilarious." – Unknown

Another one is to say, "That wasn't meant to make you laugh, and from your reaction I can see I succeeded." – Current Comedy Newsletter

Generally the audience will be on your side if you're having, like, technical difficulties, and also especially if you're in a classroom. If you're required to give a presentation, everyone else in that room is probably required to give a presentation as well, meaning that you are all in the same boat, and hopefully the people in the audience would understand that it's hard if you have equipment failure or if things are not going well.
One other thing that can happen is you just start to lose your place or freak out or panic because public speaking just gives you the heebie-jeebies, which is okay. That happens for a lot of people. You've probably heard this before, but some studies have suggested that a fear of public speaking comes before a fear of death for some people. So some people just really don't want to do it, and it's okay if that's you. There are ways you can deal with panicking, and one of them is to just know that it is okay to stop and take a moment until you can find your place again or recollect your thoughts, and then go ahead and start again. Most of the time pauses that we take feel like forever to us, but to the audience, there are sometimes not even that noticeable. They might think that you're just pausing for effect, while really you are mentally scrambling to regain your foothold. Yeah, so silence isn't always a bad thing, and sometimes the pausing can actually add to your presentation, and people are on your side, like I said. So with these tips, hopefully, you can endure anything that comes unexpectedly and not break a sweat.
And so today you leave here armed with several tips and tricks for creating an effective presentation and being an effective public speaker. We talked about delivery -- well, first we talked about structure and then we talked about delivery, and you learned some techniques for memorization as well as practicing, and then we looked at ways to recover from the unexpected, because sometimes no matter how much you prepare, these things still happen and you have to have back up plans. So with these tools you can become effective public speakers, and much like the boy in the story who held the fate of bird's life in his hands, you hold the fate of your presentation in your hands. It is in your control, and if you do have a presentation in the future, using these tips and tricks will hopefully make it go better.