

How to Deliver Effective Testimony

Tips from Public Health Advocacy Experts

Testifying before policymakers is a critical advocacy skill that you can expect to use at some point in your career. Your testimony can establish you as objective, credible, and trustworthy, which can position you as a valuable expert for the future. Here are our best tips for providing effective and memorable testimony.

1

Always have an “ask”.

As a public health champion, be prepared with solutions to the issues you’re presenting.

2

Know your audience.

You need to have a deep understanding of the decision makers you’re trying to reach - what has shaped their beliefs, opinions, and actions.

3

Know your message.

Stay focused on a few key points, and don’t bury your message in too much data.

4

Be concise.

Take your time, be deliberate, and stay focused on your key points.

5

Approach written and oral testimony differently.

Oral testimony should be more concise, engaging, and dynamic.

6

Try not to read your testimony.

Use the text as a reference for all the practice and preparation you did. If you need to, read your text and glance back up.

7

Be prepared and practice.

Be prepared for difficult questions and possible misinformation. You'll need to redirect the conversation back to your message.

8

Handle emotional challenges with grace.

Aim to be polite and composed, even when receiving negative questions or comments.

9

Be intentional in your presentation.

How you represent yourself and your issues affect how your message is received.

BONUS TIPS

- Bring hard copies of your testimony.
- Have references on hand.
- Bring a copy of the bill related to your issue.
- Pack water and a snack.
- Bring pen and paper.