

Speaker Tips: Dos and Don'ts



DO have fun. Simply think of this as a conversation with friends who want to learn about your experience. Be sure your answers are animated, and engaging, yet concise.

DO speak about personal experiences, and feel free to talk about what motivated you to serve.

DO ask questions of audience members. If you lose your train of thought or simply want to get some feedback, say something like, "I had an amazing two years in Zambia. Is there anything specific you would like to learn from me about the Peace Corps or about Zambia?"

DO bring photo albums, PowerPoint presentations, artifacts, and/or articles of clothing for display.

DO select 10-20 photos when creating a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation should last no more than 20 minutes. Select photos that walk the audience through your experience, with photos from training, host families, housing, work projects, travel, friends, landscapes, and cultural events.

DO weave colorful glimpses of the Peace Corps experience, utilizing at least three snippets of anecdotal material. This adds emotional depth to the presentation.

DO remember that you are someone who is fun and interesting to listen to. You are an expert on Peace Corps! Your audience probably doesn't know anything about the country where you served or your experience. Your personal stories inspire and create possibilities in other people's lives.

DO keep in mind that audiences will see you as a representative of the Peace Corps, a person who - in the words of founding Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver - "personifies our best qualities and deploys to the world the vision of what the United States stands for." What you choose to say - and how you say it - matters.

DON'T read your PowerPoint slides word for word. The audience can read your slide while you talk about an experience related to the subject.

DON'T generalize about the Peace Corps experience. What you experienced is unique. Each Volunteer has a different experience. Say, "This is what I experienced" or "I can tell you about what it was like in my village."

DON'T use Peace Corps acronyms like RPCV, PCV, IST, APCD, PCMO, and COS. These terms are meaningless to someone who has not served in the Peace Corps.

DON'T try to explain everything about the culture or history of the country where you served. The details will be lost. People remember a personal story more than a history lesson.

DON'T go on and on with horror stories. It's all right to share stories about getting sick or about giant spiders. Try to seek some balance. If you speak about getting sick for 15 minutes and you talk about your work for 5 minutes, then your audience will take away the negative part of your experience and not the positive. How did you receive help or guidance to get through the difficult situation? Why would you join Peace Corps again despite those hardships?

DON'T cite statistics unless they are particularly relevant to any anecdotal material you happen to use. And if you do, only cite those statistics that are from a reliable source.

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