

## **Communication Skills: The Briefing**

### **Description**

A briefing is a short informative presentation given to an audience that is generally knowledgeable about the topic of the briefing. Learners might present a briefing to their classmates about their progress on a class assignment, their status on a group or team project, a summary of a reading assignment, or any other brief commentary on a topic relevant to the class. As the name suggests, briefings are usually short and concise. Their length is dependent on the nature of the content, however a typical briefing would last from one to three minutes.

### **Learners**

Briefings can be presented spontaneously or they might be assigned in advance. In either case, if the learner has a template of an organizational format for a briefing, the process of developing the briefing can be facilitated.

### **Equipment**

No equipment is needed; however, depending on the nature of the briefing, access to an LCD or other projection device or a chalk or dry board to present graphic material is helpful. If a purpose of the briefing is to provide feedback to the presenter, listeners should have assessment forms.

### **Facilitator**

The facilitator might play several roles during briefings, as the situation necessitates: keeping time, managing Q/A, encouraging audience feedback, providing transitions to connect briefings, calling audience attention to pertinent areas of individual briefings, or introducing presenters are all possible roles of the facilitator.

### **Instructions**

1. The facilitator states the goal of the briefing and the time requirement: “In two minutes, you will brief the class on the progress you have made on your group project.” The assignment could be given at the beginning of class in anticipation of a concluding class activity; it might be given at an earlier class period, or briefings can be impromptu events.
2. Regardless of the advance or impromptu nature of the assignment, learners should have a template for a briefing that enables them to organize their responses in this fashion:
  - a. An INTRODUCTION that summarizes the goal of the briefing in one or two sentences.
  - b. SUPPORT material that clarifies or expands on the content of the introductory sentence.

- c. A CLOSING STATEMENT that summarizes the support material and may briefly identify immediate future steps.
3. Briefings may be accompanied by graphics that further clarify or explain information disseminated in the briefing.
4. If there is a logical progression to the briefings, the facilitator indicates an order by which the briefings will be presented; briefings could also be presented in random order.
5. Following the presentation of a briefing, a short time might be allowed for Q/A. Facilitators may control the number of questions asked if time is a priority or presenters manage their own Q/A.
6. At the conclusion of all briefings, the facilitator makes concluding comments about the content of the briefings and the manner in which the information disseminated contributes to course content and class objectives.

### **References**

Verderber, R. F. (1991). *Essentials of informative speaking: Theory & contexts*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.