**HOW TO WRITE AN INTRODUCTION FOR A PRESENTATION**

**[[](http://www.dummies.com/store/product/Giving-a-Presentation-In-a-Day-For-Dummies.productCd-1118491076.html)](http://www.dummies.com/store/product/Giving-a-Presentation-In-a-Day-For-Dummies.productCd-1118491076.html" \t "_blank)**

[RELATED BOOK](http://www.dummies.com/store/product/Giving-a-Presentation-In-a-Day-For-Dummies.productCd-1118491076.html" \t "_blank)

**[Giving a Presentation In a Day For Dummies](http://www.dummies.com/store/product/Giving-a-Presentation-In-a-Day-For-Dummies.productCd-1118491076.html" \t "_blank)**

By [**Marty Brounstein,**](http://www.dummies.com/?s=&a=marty-brounstein)[**Malcolm Kushner**](http://www.dummies.com/?s=&a=malcolm-kushner)

Developing an organized presentation starts with your *introduction.*The introduction opens your speech. The common way in which many presenters start their talks — “My name is . . .” or “Today I’m going to talk to you about . . .” — is not much of an introduction. The purpose of a good introduction in a formal presentation is to achieve three goals:

* Grasp the audience’s attention.
* Identify the topic and the purpose or core message of the talk.
* Provide a brief overview or agenda of what you will cover in the talk.

Speakers often overlook the part about grasping the audience’s attention. They just start talking without creating any interest for the audience to want to listen. The key point to keep in mind here is that if you don’t grab your group’s attention up front, you may not have it for the rest of your presentation. Following are some useful opening techniques that gain the audience’s attention in a positive way:

* **Quote someone else.** A quote is a line said by someone else that helps set up what you’re going to talk about. When using a quote, you want to accomplish two things: Cite the source of the line and tie the quote to your topic.

Here’s an example that a company president might use to talk about major changes happening within the organization: “‘The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.’ These were the words spoken by President Franklin Roosevelt to calm the nation during the trying times of the Great Depression. This is a message I want all of you to remember as we deal with what feels like trying times with the organizational changes that I will talk to you about today.”

* **Tell a joke.** A touch of humor in good taste is a great way to break the ice with an audience; that is, to ease the tension and relax everyone. The key, as with a quote, is that the joke must be tied to the topic you’re going to talk about. Otherwise, it serves as a distraction and can turn an audience off regardless of its humor.

If you’re not comfortable as a joke teller, go with another introduction technique. There’s nothing worse than watching someone fumble in trying to tell a joke.

* **Share a story.**A short story — with the emphasis on *short* — is another clever way to kick off a presentation. To work, the story needs to make a point or contain a message that you can tie to the talk that follows.
* **Make a bold statement.** This technique involves a brief, thought-provoking statement that sets up your topic. If you say it with a strong voice, it commands attention and gets the group ready to hear what will follow.

Here’s an example: “Keep this in mind: Service in your jobs is far more than what you do. More important is how you do it.”

* **Get the audience to participate.** With this technique, you start your presentation by having the audience do something, from a brief exercise to responding to questions. This technique gets people’s energy levels up. However, don’t choose an activity that creates such a ruckus that getting the audience to focus back on you becomes difficult. Manage with care.
* **Ask a rhetorical question.**A *rhetorical question* is a thought-provoking question that you ask the audience but don’t expect them to answer out loud. When you ask the question, you want to answer it either within your introduction or a short time later in your talk. Otherwise, the question serves only to confuse people.

Here’s an example for a talk on customer focus-group findings: “If you were a customer doing business with your company, what would most frustrate you in this effort? As I share my findings from the customer focus groups, I’m going to tell you what these frustrations are and what you can do to address them to increase the quality of the service you provide.”

* **State noteworthy facts.** With this type of introduction, you provide the audience with some interesting statistics or other facts that stimulate thinking and help set up your presentation. This technique works well when the facts you report are not common knowledge yet are relevant and stimulating. Just be sure to keep the statement brief so that you don’t clutter your opening with too many easy-to-forget details.
* **Make a list.**This introduction involves using a short list of at least three items that have something in common. It usually works best to say the list and then state what the items or people have in common with one another.

Here’s an example: “Joe Davis, Sue McGee, and Jose Martinez are three people you all know well in this department. They are also three individuals who have used the communication techniques I’m going to tell you about today and have seen their success double in the last year.”

* **Give an interesting example.** In this technique, you start with a demonstration, showing something or describing a situation that illustrates what your topic, and especially its core message, is about. To be effective, the example must be relevant and fairly brief. The example isn’t the actual talk, but it sets up the presentation that will follow. A good example of this technique is the showing of before-and-after pictures from the use of a product or service.