**Presentation Skills**

Presentation Skills are valuable life skills. It creates a direct reflection of one's personality as a communicator or leader. Effective presentation skills enable the learner to communicate clearly, precisely and effectively in a variety of modes and settings. The ability to communicate with the audience and giving presentations is essential for a successful working life.

An effective presentation demands preparation which can be done by following the three steps:

Planning a presentation

Preparing a presentation, and

Making a presentation

**PLANNING A PRESENTATION**

While planning a presentation, the following should be taken care of:

* Structure and format
* Relevant and sufficient information
* Visual aids
* Choice of suitable formal language
* Audience analysis
* Time management
* Venue management
* Other logistic supports

**Structure and Format:** Plan the structure and format of the presentation. Your presentation should include an introduction, the key facts in the most logical order, the objective and purpose and the conclusion. Choosing a topic is also included in this step. Topics should be age-appropriate and fit your knowledge and skill level.

**Relevant and Sufficient Information**: Allow yourself to acquire information from different sources. Sources can include:

* Books and/or magazines
* Extension publications and project books
* Experts/authorities on the subject
* Your own experiences
* Newspapers
* Authentic websites

**Visual Aids:** Visual aids are used to enhance your presentation. They are often useful in explaining complex ideas. They can help the audience learn faster, understand better, and remember longer. If you are planning to make a PowerPoint, your slides should offer an illustration supporting the concept that you're discussing. Remember that visual aids should not overpower your presentation, rather simply reinforce what you are saying.

**Notes and Language**: Make detailed notes as a part of your planning. Do not read aloud what is written on your slides, instead use them as a starting point from which you expand and develop your narrative. Don’t use slang language. Include descriptive phrases that can help the audience understand what you are saying. For example, instead of saying “100 yards,” say “as long as a football field.”

**Audience Analysis:** Audience analysis involves identifying the audience and adapting a speech to their interests, level of understanding, attitudes, and beliefs. It is advised to consider their age, gender, ethnic background, job or Career and education while planning a presentation. In addition, use plenty of references and data to back up your points. Further, give basic facts and try to relate information to something people understand.

**Time Management:** At the planning stage you will need to consider the timings of your presentation. Time limits are set for a reason - falling short or going over this limit will likely result in a loss of marks, especially if it is a part of an assessment or exam.

**Venue Management:** Seeing the venue ahead of time can help the presenter feel relax and confident about the presentation. It is important to note the arrangement of the room so you can be prepared to address the audience in the most engaging way. You may see that how is the room arranged? Are there enough seats for the expected number of attendees? Is the podium and audio-visual system arranged?

**Other Logistic Support:** If you intend to provide hand-outs for your audience, distribute them at the beginning or end of your presentation. Doing it halfway through can disrupt your flow.

**PREPARING A PRESENTATION**

1. Structure the presentation with the audience's knowledge level. Use examples to explain complicated concepts or processes. When reviewing the examples, ask yourself, "Is this an appropriate example?” or “What will the audience learn from this example?” The same strategy works for facts and figures. It is important to consider the background of the audience, such as education, occupation, age, etc.
2. You should rehearse early and often. If you are giving an impromptu speech, it is important to practice. Mark Twain is credited with saying, “It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.” Moreover, have people give you topics at random and practice quickly determining your statement of intent and finding supporting points.
3. Arrive early. Don't aim to arrive on time, be early. If you're presenting in an auditorium, you may have to do sound checks. However, if you are in a conference room or a classroom, you will likely need to put up your audiovisual setup.
4. If you are using PowerPoint, use color sparingly. Bright colors can be distracting in many ways. Therefore, use only those colors which are relevant to your message. To make your slides more visually appealing, have a graphic or pattern as the background of the slide. However, this should be used with caution. Moreover, be consistent with your font and format of the slides.
5. Bring back-ups of your documents and print out a few copies of the slides to share if things go wrong. You should not rely too heavily on your slides. Always be ready to give your presentation using your notes or index cards as memory aids.

**MAKING A PRESENTATION**

1. **Introduction:** The introduction should achieve three goals: a) Grasp the audience's attention, b) Identify the topic and purpose of the talk and c) A brief overview of what is to be covered in the presentation. It may also start with a quote to grab the audience's attention. Example:

*My name is Rajesh Kumar. I am an Engineer at XYZ Company. Today I would like to talk about our current infrastructure and its limitations. We will also discuss about the plans to turn it around.*

1. **Quoting someone:** Quoting someone is also a great way to start a presentation. Make sure that the quote is relevant to the purpose of your presentation and is credited to the owner.
2. **Facing the audience:** To give a confident impression, make eye contact with your audience. If you are using a screen, stand at a 45-degree angle. In this way, you may maintain a good view of both your audience and your slides. Moreover, do not lean on the podium or table. Avoid pointing with fingers.
3. **Maintaining a moderate pace while speaking:** Maintain a moderate pace. Do not speak too fast or too slow. Take a breath at the end of every sentence or point you make. Besides, avoid using slang words.
4. **Considering 4 C's of Effective presentation:**
5. **Clarity:** Clarity is the quality or state of being clear. It improves connection and engagement and reduces misinterpretation and failure in communication. To ensure clarity in communication is to be specific and crisp. Avoid using terms and phrases that could mean different things to different people. For example,

*Once upon a time, as a walk through the woods was taking place on the part of Ravi Kumar.*

It can be clearly said as:

*Ravi Kumar walked through the woods.*

1. **Conciseness:** Conciseness involves being mindful of word choice. A presenter should choose appropriate and influential words to illustrate his/her point. Conciseness can be achieved by avoiding unnecessary phrases and over explanation.
2. **Completeness:** A good presentation is inclusive of all facts required by the audience. The sender of the message takes into consideration the receiver's mindset and conveys the message accordingly. Example: *All participants are requested to assemble tomorrow at 10 am.*

The above information incomplete as the venue is not announced. It can be presented as: *All participants are requested to assemble tomorrow to the hall at 10 am.*

1. **Consistency:** Consistency refers to the similar structure and format of prompts presented to the audience. Fonts, background designs, and formatting should remain consistent. It is also important to take care of upper and lower-case letters, font size and the positioning of headings. They should appear the same on every slide. For example, all slides should be presented in Times New Roman or in any format provided that it is clear and readable.
2. **Conclusion:** The final part of a powerful presentation is the concluding device. A concluding device is essentially the final thought the presenter wants his/her audience to have when he/she stops speaking. It also provides a definitive sense of closure to the whole speech. Avoid using “Well, umm, I guess I’m done.'' Conclude by visualizing the future or summarizing your presentation or propose a solution, advice or put an appeal for action.
3. **Leave time for questions.** Be prepared to face any questions that come your way. You have to have a tone of solutions and not an accusatory tone. It is also important to develop a positive attitude so that your idea is acknowledged by the audience.
4. **Leave Taking:** At the end, include strong call to action. You may also add a memorable quote. Include thank you to the audience with a gesture of greeting. For example,

*I would like to end this session by quoting Mark Twain, “Twenty Years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you did not do than by the ones you did. So, throw off the bow lines, catch the trade winds and sail away from the safe harbor” Thank you for your patience. Have a nice day.*