

INTRODUCTION

A presentation is the process of presenting a topic to an audience. It is typically a demonstration, introduction, lecture, or speech meant to inform, persuade, or build good will. A presentation requires you to get a message across to the listeners and will often contain a 'persuasive' element.

Strong presentation skills and the ability to engage and connect can truly set you apart from the crowd. Here are some free tips and resources to help you begin your journey.

A good presentation contains at least four elements:

- Content — It contains information that people need. Presentations must account for how much information the audience can absorb in one sitting.
- Structure — It has a logical beginning, middle, and end. The speaker must be careful not to lose the audience from the main point of the presentation.
- Packaging — It must be well prepared. With a presentation, the audience is at the mercy of a presenter.
- Human Element — A good presentation will be remembered much more than a good report because it has a person attached to it. You must analyze the audience's needs and address them.

Good preparation lays the groundwork for making an effective presentation.

The Key Elements of a Presentation

Presentation:

- When and where will you deliver your presentation?
- What equipment and technology will be available to you, and what will you be expected to use?
- What is the audience expecting to learn from you and your presentation?

Message:

The message is delivered not just by the spoken word (verbal communication) but can be augmented by techniques such as voice projection, body language, gestures, eye contact (non-verbal communication), and visual aids.

The message will also be affected by the audience's expectations.

Reaction:

The audience's reaction and therefore the success of the presentation will largely depend upon whether you, as presenter, effectively communicated your message, and whether it met their expectations.

As a presenter, you don't control the audience's expectations.

Impediments:

Many factors can influence the effectiveness of how your message is communicated to the audience.

For example background noise or other distractions, an overly warm or cool room, or the time of day and state of audience alertness can all influence your audience's level of concentration.

As presenter, you have to be prepared to cope with any such problems and try to keep your audience focussed on your message.

☞ PREPARING A PRESENTATION

THE OBJECTIVE

You have been asked to speak to a group of people. First, ask yourself 'why?' What is the purpose of the presentation, what is the objective, what outcome(s) do you and the audience expect?

It is useful to write down the reason you have been asked to present so you can use this as a constant reminder while you prepare the presentation.

THE SUBJECT

The subject of what you are going to talk about comes from the objective but they are not necessarily one and the same thing.

For example:

- The subject may be given to you by an inviting organisation.
- You may be knowledgeable in particular field.
- The subject may be entirely your choice within certain limitations.

THE AUDIENCE

Before preparing material for a presentation, it is worth considering your prospective audience.

Tailoring your talk to the audience is important and the following points should be considered:

- The size of the group or audience expected.
- The age range - a talk aimed at retired people will be quite different from one aimed at teenagers.
- Gender - will the audience be predominantly male or female?
- Is it a captive audience or will they be there out interest?
- Will you be speaking in their work or leisure time?
- Do they know something about your subject already or will it be totally new to them? Is the subject part of their work?
- Are you there to inform, teach, stimulate, or provoke?
- Can you use humour and if so what would be considered appropriate?

THE PLACE

- It is important to have as much advance information as possible about the place where you are going to speak.
- Ideally, try to arrange to see the venue before the event, as it can be of great benefit to be familiar with the surroundings.
- The availability of equipment, e.g., microphone, overhead projector, flip chart, computer equipment.
- The availability of power points and if an extension lead is required for any equipment you intend to use.
- If the room has curtains or blinds. This is relevant if you intend to use **visual aids**, and so that you can ensure the correct ambiance for your presentation.

THE TIME

Often there will be no flexibility in the time of day that a presentation is made.

If you do have a choice of when to give your presentation - consider the following points:

- Morning:

The morning is the best time to speak because people are generally attentive at the earliest. However, late morning may start to present problems as people begin to feel hungry and think about lunch.

- Afternoon:

Early afternoon is not an ideal time to make a presentation, since after lunch people often feel sleepy and lethargic. Mid-noon is a good time, whereas at the end of the afternoon people may start to worry about getting home, the traffic or collecting children from school.

- Evening or Weekend:

Outside regular office hours, people are more likely to be present because they want to be rather than have to be there. There is a higher likelihood of audience attention in the evening, providing of course that the presentation does not go on for too long when people may have to leave before the presentation has finished.

LENGTH OF THE TALK

Always find out how long you have to talk and check if this includes or excludes time for questions.

Find out if there are other speakers and, if so, where you are placed in the running order. Never elect to go last. Beware of over-running, as this could be disastrous if there are other speakers following you.

It is important to remember that people find it difficult to maintain concentration for long periods of time, and this is a good reason for making a presentation succinct, well-structured and interesting. Aim for 45 minutes as a maximum single-session presentation.

🌀 ORGANIZING THE PRESENTATION MATERIAL

Regardless of whether your presentation is going to be delivered formally, such as at work or informally, for a club or perhaps a Best Man's speech. You should always aim to give a clear, well-structured delivery. That is, you should know exactly what you want to say and the order in which you want to say it.

Having thought about and planned a good structure will also help to alleviate any nervousness you may be feeling in the build up to your talk.

Organizing the presentation material may include the following:

- Blue sky thinking (The Ideas)
- Selecting the Main points
- Deciding whether to Illustrate.
- Introduction and conclusion

BLUE SKY THINKING (THE IDEAS)

"An idea is the tool for development, changes, and progress." The idea, the impetus behind the creation of this project or the presentation should be demonstrated to the listeners. Explain in brief, this drives the attention of your listeners towards your speech, well begun is half done.

SELECT YOUR MAIN POINTS

The talk/presentation should be divided into three sections:

- Introduction (beginning)
- Main Content (middle)
- Conclusion (end)

A useful structure would be the following:

- Tell the audience in the introduction what your subject is and how you have organised the presentation (by stating the key elements).
- Then tell them the details of the key elements and/or messages (by expanding and qualifying the key points in more detail and providing supporting evidence).
- Then tell the audience what you have just told them (by summarising the key points, concluding with the main subject again).

Work on the main content first.

From your notes decide on the most important things that need to be said. If you have too much material, be selective.

As a guide:

- 3 key points are sufficient for a 10-15 minute presentation.
- 6 key points are sufficient for a 30 minute presentation.
- 8 key points are sufficient for a 45 minute presentation.

Arrange the key points in logical order and expand them with supporting material - discussion, argument, analysis and appeal. If you are hoping to persuade people then it is advisable to address potential objections within the presentation so that you present a reasoned, well-balanced view.

DECIDING WHETHER TO ILLUSTRATE

Most talks benefit from personal anecdotes, real-life situations or hypothetical examples to bring them to life.

If the presentation is short and informal it is probably not necessary to use any visual aids. Use visual illustrations if anything requires expanding, clarifying or simplifying. Illustrations of any type should be relevant and fully explained. Bear in mind that a talk will last longer if visual aids are used.

PowerPoint or other presentation software is often used to support a presentation, although care needs to be taken to ensure that this technology aids the presentation and does not detract from the main essence of your talk. Do not use visual aids or PowerPoint just for the sake of it or to show off your technological prowess, there is nothing more distracting than whizzy and pointless PowerPoint animations in a presentation.

INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION

The introduction should give a preview of what you are going to say and should gain the attention of the listeners with a statement of purpose. Make it clear whether you wish to accept questions as they arise during the presentation, thereby breaking your flow and risk being side-tracked, or will invite questions at

Most presentations are divided into 3 main parts (+ questions):

1 INTRODUCTION

2 BODY

3 CONCLUSION

4 Questions

As a general rule in communication, repetition is valuable. In presentations, there is a golden rule about repetition:

1. Say what you are going to say...
2. say it...
3. then say what you have just said.

In other words, use the three parts of your presentation to reinforce your message. In the introduction, you tell your audience what your message is going to be. In the body, you tell your audience your real message. In the conclusion, you summarize what your message was.

We will now consider each of these parts in more detail.

Introduction

The introduction is a very important - perhaps the most important - part of your presentation. This is the first impression that your audience have of you. You should concentrate on getting your introduction right. You should use the introduction to:

1. **welcome your audience**
2. **introduce your subject**
3. **outline the structure of your presentation**
4. **give instructions about questions**

The following table shows examples of language for each of these functions. You may need to modify the language as appropriate.

Function	Possible language
1. Welcoming your audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good morning, ladies and gentlemen• Good morning, gentlemen• Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman• Good afternoon, everybody
2. Introducing your subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am going to talk today about...• The purpose of my presentation is to introduce our new range of...

3. Outlining your structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To start with I'll describe the progress made this year. Then I'll mention some of the problems we've encountered and how we overcame them. After that I'll consider the possibilities for further growth next year. Finally, I'll summarize my presentation (before concluding with some recommendations).
4. Giving instructions about questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do feel free to interrupt me if you have any questions.• I'll try to answer all of your questions after the presentation.• I plan to keep some time for questions after the presentation.

Body

The body is the 'real' presentation. If the introduction was well prepared and delivered, you will now be 'in control'. You will be relaxed and confident.

The body should be well structured, divided up logically, with plenty of carefully spaced visuals.

Remember these key points while delivering the body of your presentation:

- do not hurry
- be enthusiastic
- give time on visuals
- maintain eye contact
- modulate your voice
- look friendly
- keep to your structure
- use your notes
- signpost throughout
- remain polite when dealing with difficult questions

Conclusion

Use the conclusion to:

1. **Sum up**
2. **(Give recommendations if appropriate)**
3. **Thank your audience**
4. **Invite questions**

The following table shows examples of language for each of these functions. You may need to modify the language as appropriate.

Function	Possible language
1. Summing up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To conclude,... In conclusion,... Now, to sum up... So let me summarise/recap what I've said. Finally, may I remind you of some of the main points we've considered.
2. Giving recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conclusion, my recommendations are... I therefore suggest/propose/recommend the following strategy.
3. Thanking your audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many thanks for your attention. May I thank you all for being such an attentive audience.
4. Inviting questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now I'll try to answer any questions you may have. Can I answer any questions? Are there any questions? Do you have any questions? Are there any final questions?

Questions

Questions are a good opportunity for you to interact with your audience. It may be helpful for you to try to predict what questions will be asked so that you can prepare your response in advance. You may wish to accept questions at any time during your presentation, or to keep a time for questions after your presentation. Normally, it's your decision, and you should make it clear during the introduction. Be polite with all questioners, even if they ask difficult questions. They are showing interest in what you have to say and they deserve attention. Sometimes you can reformulate a question. Or answer the question with another question. Or even ask for comment from the rest of the audience.

MAINTAINING AND PREPARING VISUAL AIDS/USING VISUAL AIDS DURING PRESENTATIONS

Visual aids are essential to all successful presentations. The use of visual aids, coupled with good public speaking skills, work hand-in-hand to create effective presentations.

DESIGNING THE PRESENTATION:

The Three step approach

- ✍ Establish your objectives
- ✍ Plan and organize your material and
- ✍ Use appropriate visual aids

By establishing your objectives first, you can prepare material that supports each objective. The use of visual aids will move you further along toward your objectives by illustrating and emphasizing your ideas more effectively.

Establishing the Objectives

The key to designing your presentation is determining these objectives. Establishing the objectives for your presentation requires an analysis of your own goals, as well as your audience's needs and expectations. Select appropriate points of emphasis in your presentation and develop a useful level of detail

Planning and Organizing Your Material

When you have determined the characteristics of your audience, tailor your approach accordingly.

Prepare an outline of goals, major issues to be discussed, and information to be presented to support main themes. Limit content to your major point and no more than five key supporting points.

When organizing your material, consider an "old chestnut" of public speaking – "Tell them what you're going to tell them; tell them; and tell them what you told them."

This recommendation:

Recognizes the importance of reinforcement

Completes the communication for the listener

Informs people who arrive late of what they have missed

Using Visual Aids

Visual aids help you reach your objectives by providing emphasis to whatever is being said.

Clear pictures multiply the audience's level of understanding of the material presented, clarify points, and create excitement.

Visual aids involve your audience and require a change from one activity to another: from hearing to seeing.

Visual aids add impact and interest to a presentation.

They enable you to appeal to more than one sense at the same time, thereby increasing the audience's understanding and retention level.

Retention of Information

People tend to eye-minded, and the impacts visual aids bring to a presentation are, indeed, significant. The studies, below, reveal interesting statistics that support these findings:

In many studies, experimental psychologists and educators have found that retention of information three days after a meeting or other event is six times greater when information is presented by visual and oral means than when the information is presented by the spoken word alone.

The studies suggest that three days after an event, people retain 10% of what they heard from an oral presentation, 35% from a visual presentation, and 65% from a visual and oral presentation.

The use of visual aids, then, is essential to all presentations. Without them, the impact of your presentation may leave the audience shortly after the audience leaves you. By preparing a presentation with visual aids that reinforce your main ideas, you will reach your audience far more effectively, and, perhaps, continue to "touch" them long after the presentation ends.

ADDING THE VISUAL DIMENSION

Visual aids and audio-visuals include a wide variety of communication products, including flip charts, overhead transparencies, slides, audio-slide shows, and video tapes. Demonstrating a process or simply passing around a sample of some equipment or model are also effective way to clarify messages visually. If visual aids are poorly selected or inadequately done, they will distract from what you are saying. The tips listed below will help you in the selection and preparation of visual aids.

Tips on Preparing Visual Aids

Start with at least a rough outline of the goal and major points of the presentation before selecting the visual aid(s). For example, a particular scene or slides may trigger ideas for the presentation, providing the power of images. Do not proceed too far without first determining what you want to accomplish, what your audience wants to gain, and what the physical setting requires.

Each element of an audio-visual product - a single slide or a page of a flip chart presentation, for example, - must be simple and contain only one message. Placing more than one message on a single image confuses the audience and diminishes the potential impact of visual media. Keep visual aids BRIEF.

Determine the difference between what you will say and what the visual aid will show. Do not read straight from your visuals.

Ask the audience to read or listen, not both; visual aids should not provide reading material while you talk. Rather, use them to illustrate or highlight your points.

Give participants paper copies of various graphic aids used in your presentation. They will be able to write on the paper copies and have them for future reference.

Assess your cost constraints. An overhead transparency presentation can always be used in a formal environment if 35 mm slides are too expensive.

Account for production time in your planning and selection process. Slides must be developed, videotape edited - you do not want to back yourself against a wall because the visuals are not ready. You can often get production work done in 24-48 hours, but it is much more expensive than work that is done on an extended schedule.

Use local photographs and examples when discussing general problems and issues. While a general problem concerning welding safety, for example, may elude someone, illustrating with a system in use at the site can bring the issue home.

Use charts and graphs to support the presentation of numerical information.

Develop sketches and drawings to convey various designs and plans.

When preparing graphics, make sure they are not too crowded in detail. Do not over-use color. See that line detail, letters, and symbols are bold enough to be seen from the back of the room.

Do not use visual aids for persuasive statements, qualifying remarks, emotional appeals, or any type of rhetorical statement.

If you have handouts, don't let them become a distraction during the presentation. They should provide reinforcement following your address. Consider giving them out after the presentation, unless the audience will use them during the presentation or will need to review them in advance of the presentation.

Practice presenting the full program using graphic materials so you are familiar with their use and order. If you use audio-visual materials, practice working with them and the equipment to get the timing down right.

Seek feedback on the clarity of your visuals and do so early enough to allow yourself time to make needed adjustments.

What to Use, How to Choose

The question of what to use and how to choose is an excellent one. The next several pages will help you answer this question by identifying the advantages and limitations of each type of visual, as well as the development techniques required in preparing each. By looking at these pros and cons, you can more easily decide what will work best for your presentation.

OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES

Overhead Transparency

Projector Overhead transparencies are useful for audience settings of 20 to 50 people and can be produced quickly, easily, and inexpensively.

Any camera-ready artwork, whether word charts, illustrations, or diagrams can be made into transparencies using standard office paper copiers.

Most manufacturers of paper copiers offer clear and colored acetate sheets that run through copying machines like paper, but transfer a black image into acetate for use as overhead transparencies.

Limitations:

The projected image size is sometimes too small to be seen from the back of a large room.

Often, the image does not sit square on the screen, as the head of the projector is tilted to increase the size of the image.

It is difficult to write on the transparency while it is on the projector.

Sometimes the projector head gets in the audience's way.

Some speakers feel captive to the machine, because they must change each transparency by hand.

When removing a transparency from the machine during the presentation, slide the next immediately underneath it to achieve a smooth transition.

Ideally, set the projector on a table lower than the surrounding tables or platforms to make it less imposing.

Transparencies with too much information are confusing. Keep transparencies simple.

Consider making use of a laser printer that can produce good quality transparencies in a variety of bold type styles.

Audio-Slide Show

Audio-slide shows are self-contained programs having pre-recorded sound tracks that are coordinated with slides by use of electronic synchronizers.

They can impart considerable information because color and a wide array of audio-techniques and visual images can be used.

If multiple projectors are used with dissolve units that allow images to "fold" into one another, even a sense of movement can be created.

They usually can be produced in-house, equipment is accessible, and they offer a presenter the flexibility of changing slides to meet the needs of specific audiences.

Limitations:

Time must be allotted for developing script, sound-track, title and credit slides, visuals, and for production.

Each presentation requires securing and assembling proper equipment synchronizer, tape recorder, projector(s), screen(s).

When Developing a Program:

Photograph or borrow slides of scenes that emphasize your points.

Also, gather charts, drawings, books, or other resource materials pertinent to the subject which may be photographed or reproduced graphically as slides.

Keep images to one message per frame.

Secure permission to use commercial or otherwise copyrighted music or material.

Keep credit slides to a minimum and use simple design for clarity.

TESTING THE DESIGN OF YOUR PRESENTATION

When you have prepared the visuals you want to use in your presentation, you must practice using them.

Do a practice run in full, preferably with someone you know well and with someone you do not know well.

Seek feedback. This will enable any needed changes to be incorporated easily.

This feedback should include an evaluation of the presentation's length, logic, clarity, and interest level; the speaker's rate of delivery, voice level, and conversational pattern; and the usefulness of the visual aids.

Check with the meeting organizer to make sure the equipment you need will be there.

If at all possible, arrive at the location of your presentation an hour early to check your equipment and room arrangements.

Rehearsal is a fundamental step in developing and refining effective presentations.

DEALING WITH QUESTIONS

The main rule of question sessions is to treat your audience with the respect you would like to have shown to you, and answer their questions directly and honestly.

At the start of your presentation, you should make it clear whether and when you would prefer to deal with questions - as you go along or at the end of the presentation.

If they have asked a question, it is because they want to know the answer.

If a question is provocative, answer it directly. Never be rude to the questioner or show you are upset. Do not compromise yourself but maintain your point of view and never lose your temper.

This tactic can be difficult to maintain but the key is being assertive.

Many presentations today are followed up with a question and answer period. To some people this can

A 5 step approach to handling questions along with some additional tips to make your next question and answer session go smoother.

Listen to the entire question

Listen to the entire question BEFORE you begin to answer any questions.

Not waiting to hear the entire questions can result in you providing a response which had nothing to do with the question. Make sure you understand the question

1. **Pause** and allow yourself time to value the question and listener. REPEAT the question. It is important that everyone "hear" the question

Repeating the question, will allow you some additional time to evaluate the question and formulate a response.

2. **Credit The Person** for asking the question. You may say something like, "That was a great question" or, "Glad you asked that question" or even, "I get asked that question by many people".

One word of caution. If you credit one person with asking a question, be sure to credit EVERYONE for asking a question.

Never say, Wow! What a question or Great Question, it's a sign of embarrassment.

3. **Respond to the Question** honestly and the best you can.

Be honest, and tell them you do not know but DO promise to research the answer for them and DO get back to them.

4. **Bridge** to the next question by asking them a question. "Does that answer your question?", "Is that the kind of information you were looking for?".

This is critical. Once they respond to you, "YES" you now have permission to go on to the next person. This also gives them one more opportunity to say, "No" and allow them to clarify their question more by asking it again.

Additional Tips on Handling Questions

- A. Ask people to stand up when they ask a question. It makes it easier for the audience to also hear the question.
- B. Have small sheets of paper available for people to write down their questions during your presentation.
- C. Allow people to pass the questions to you if they feel uncomfortable standing up and asking the question out loud.
- D. Always repeat the question - this does three things: (1) it makes sure you understood the question, (2) it gives you a chance to value the question and think of an answer and (3) it assures the other people in the audience can hear the question since you are facing them.
- E. Always take time to think "before" you answer all questions. Responding too quickly to those questions you are most comfortable with will only bring attention to those questions you do not.
- F. Have a pencil and paper available for you to write down questions you can't answer. This way, you can properly follow up with the person who asked the question you couldn't answer.

If you like to deal with questions as they arise, but you are concerned about the pitfalls, there is an easy way to handle this. In your introduction, explain that there are 3 types of questions:

- 1. The sort that seeks classification of something that has just been said - you will answer those immediately.
- 2. The sort that asks a related question about something that you plan to cover later - you will answer those later in the presentation; and
- 3. The sort that is best dealt with offline because most of the audience probably won't be interested, or it's outside the topic of the presentation - you will make a note of the question and come back to the questioner afterwards.

When a Type 2 or 3 question is asked, you can say something like:

"That's a type 2 question, so I'll park that for now, and cover it later. If you don't think I've covered it by the end, remind me, and I'll go over it."