








Understand research sharing methods

Present research insights

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Change designs using new insights

Week 4 review

Course review

Tips for giving an effective presentation

If you're intimidated by giving presentations, you're not alone! Public speaking makes many people nervous. But as with most things, the more you do it, the more natural it will feel. With time and practice, you'll become more confident in your public speaking skills. Here are some quick tips to help you start to improve your public speaking abilities.



Speak clearly and slowly

Speak clearly and slowly. A common side effect of being nervous while presenting is that you might start to speak too fast. You want the audience to be able to understand everything you say and have time to digest it. So, it helps to pace yourself while you speak. You might even consider tapping your toe within your shoe to keep a rhythm while you speak.



Allow for pauses

Allow for pauses. Pauses display confidence and help set the pace for your presentation. Some ideal times to stop for a pause include when you pose a question to the audience or when you transition to a new section of your presentation. Adding a meaningful pause is also a great way to make sure that you aren't speaking too quickly!



Make eye contact

Make eye contact. As you present, try to make eye contact with different people in the audience. Make eye contact with one person for 3-5 seconds before moving on to the next person. This helps you connect with members of the audience and keeps everyone engaged in your presentation.

If looking someone in the eye makes you uncomfortable, here's another tip you can try: Look at a person's forehead instead of directly in their eyes. Or try to look at each person at eye level, but look directly past at the wall behind them as you scan the audience. This will make it seem like you're making eye contact with the audience without actually doing it.

When presenting virtually, make sure to look directly at your webcam. This will help the audience feel as if you're looking at them, even though you're not in the same room. Try posting your notes to the side of your computer screen so you're not glancing down during the presentation.



Be concise

Be concise. While it's great to use stories and data to keep your audience engaged, be sure that everything you share adds value to your presentation. Keep the information you present concise and to the point. A study found that the average human attention span is now shorter than that of a goldfish [🔗](#): It's fallen from 12 seconds in 2000 (or around the time smartphones hit the scene) to 8 seconds today. This means you have a very short amount of time to hook your audience and keep them engaged!



Have confident body language

Have confident body language. You should move naturally in the free space that you have, and move around the room to engage your audience. Smile and nod as you speak to put your audience at ease. Avoid crossing your arms, having your hands in your pockets, or playing with your hair or clothes.

When you present virtually, you don't have the advantage of using your entire body to make an impact and engage the audience. You have to rely on your face, so make sure your expressions are animated and expressive, and use hand gestures that are visible within the webcam's screen.



Know your audience

Know your audience. Your tone and the content of your presentation should be appropriate for the audience that you are connecting with. For example, your presentation will be more informal and might use different terminology when you're with a group of colleagues versus external clients. Similarly, let your audience know *you*. Be yourself and let your personality shine. This will help you appear more genuine and can strengthen trust between you and the audience.

Handling questions and objections

There will be times where your audience has questions about the information you're presenting, and you'll probably leave time at the end of your session specifically to answer those questions. You might even face objections to the insights you presented. Here are a few tips to handle questions and objections with ease:

- **Know your material well.** Practice, practice, practice! The more you know your material, the easier it will be to speak about it when questioned. Remember to tie your presentation back to the research insights themselves, and you'll have a solid foundation to stand on as you present. If there are areas in your presentation that you think might raise questions or concerns, do extra research and prep beforehand.
- **Repeat the question.** Always repeat the question that an audience member asks, in case the rest of your audience didn't understand or hear it clearly. You can ask the audience member to clarify if you are unsure of the question they're asking.
- **Don't get defensive.** Remember that objections aren't personal. Be polite and professional while answering questions from audience members. If there's a disagreement, make sure it's about an idea and not directed at a person.
- **Be concise.** There's usually a limited amount of time for questions after your presentation, so don't spend too much time answering one question. If possible, allow everyone who wants to ask a question the time to ask one. If you're running short on time, let the audience know that they can reach out to you or your team with questions after the presentation.
- **Don't rush to respond.** Audience members can ask difficult questions! If you are unsure about how to answer a question, you can say "That's a good question. Let me think about that for a moment." If a few seconds isn't long enough to find a good response, you can say, "I might need to think on that some more. Can I get back to you?"

Being a great public speaker means displaying confidence. That almost always comes from being familiar with your content, speaking clearly, and learning how to tell a story that engages listeners. Having confidence also lets you actively engage with questions from a place of curiosity about new perspectives, instead of feeling defensive. So get practicing and put these tips into action!

Mark as completed

