

Presentation and Writing Notes

Presentations

- Know your audience.
- Presentations should have an *hourglass* structure. That is
 - Hook and Preview - describe to the audience what is interesting about the subject, and provide an overview of the results.
 - Methods, Data, and Details - be thorough about how you obtain your result, what are the logical steps that got you there
 - Conclusions and Takeaways - leave the audience with what you believe are the most important conclusions to be drawn.
- If you are using visual aids, be conservative with your choice of color. Avoid loud or distracting colors.
- Additionally, your choice of color should remain consistent throughout the presentation.
- Make sure your text is visible and in a non-distracting font.
- Be frugal with your use of text, and deliver through spoken word.
- Check for typos.
- * Nothing 3D, no animations
- Images can be effective, but don't overuse them.

Writing

General Notes

- * Use the Oxford (series) comma.
- Enclose parenthetical expressions with a comma —parentheticals are clauses which offer no additional or restrictive information
- Make the paragraph the unit of composition
- Use definite, specific, concrete language
- Omit needless words (some examples in the next section)
- Write with nouns and verbs
- Do not overstate
- Apostrophes never make words plural
- Avoid the use of qualifiers
- Avoid fancy words
- Use figures of speech sparingly
- Sentences can end with prepositions.
- If you're writing a number in percent, use the word and not the symbol. e.g. "37 percent" vs. "37%"
- * One space after a period

- * The United States is stylized, "U.S." and not, "US". State postal abbreviations are stylized like "CA," "AZ," etc.
- * The singular "they" is allowed if not preferable
- There is no scale of uniqueness, so it takes no form of grading.

Excise your prose of the following:

- 1 very
- 2 rather
- 3 really
- 4 quite
- 5 in fact
- 6 interesting
- 7 begs the question
- 8 centered around
- 9 firstly, secondly, thirdly
- 10 utilize (use "use")
- 11 lacuna (use "gap")
- 12 impact as a verb (use "affect")
- 13 exclamation marks (unless "gadzooks" precedes it)
- 14 centered around
- 15 end result (omit "end")
- 16 exact same (omit "exact")
- 17 join together (omit "together")
- 18 future plans (omit "future")
- 19 undergraduate student (omit "student")

Here are some words that are frequently misspelled (spelled correctly here):

- bureaucracy
- forty
- hypocrisy
- infinitesimal
- liaison
- millennial
- minuscule
- mischievous
- pejorative
- publicly
- separate

- supersede
- surprising
- threshold
- underrated
- withhold

Here's some other stuff:

- One's interests are "piqued," not "peaked."
- One immigrates to a place. One emigrates from a place.
- You definitely mean "complete 180," and not "360."

These words/phrases are commonly used incorrectly. If you find yourself writing these, I invite you to look them up.

- begs the question
- bemused
- disinterested
- nonplussed
- historic/historical
- exponential growth

And finally, avoid misusing their/there/they're, to/too, than/then, and pass/passed/past. These are errors of haste and not signifiers of intelligence.

N.B. You "pore over" reading material and not "pour over." I don't remember how "lay" and "lie" work, so have at it. The "i before e" rule is useless. And I don't see the phrase "cut of his/her jib" used enough, so if you find a way to fit it in, it wouldn't hurt.

Here are some references:

On Writing Well by William Zinsser

Dreyer's English by Benjamin Dreyer

The Elements of Style by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White

Common Errors in English Usage by Paul Brians

Better Presentations by Jonathan Schwabish