

# Planning and Organizing

Fear of public speaking is high on the list of fears for most people. However, it is critical to personal and professional success to be able to express yourself clearly when speaking to others. We rely on speaking to others not only in our personal lives, but in our work lives as we communicate with coworkers, supervisors, customers, and other associates.

Learning beneficial tips and techniques can help ease fears and nervousness. The more prepared you are, the easier it will be to deliver a great presentation and persuade your audience to act or react in a particular way. As with any skill, applying proper techniques and practicing will help you improve and become a better presenter.

You may be an expert in your field and have a wealth of information to pass on to others, but if you do not convey it effectively in a manner that will hold your audience's attention, your message and purpose will be lost.

You may be called upon to give informal and formal presentations and talks during your career in a variety of situations, including these:

- ◆ Updating your supervisor and coworkers on the progress of tasks
- ◆ Presenting sales or marketing figures
- ◆ Facilitating company training programs
- ◆ Giving workshops and seminars
- ◆ Lecturing or teaching
- ◆ Giving instructions
- ◆ Presenting information to small or large groups
- ◆ Advising customers and clients
- ◆ Selling to customers and clients
- ◆ Presiding over meetings
- ◆ Mentoring
- ◆ Speaking to students and interns
- ◆ Speaking to professional organizations in your field
- ◆ Directing or overseeing community events
- ◆ Giving or conducting interviews
- ◆ Negotiating
- ◆ Conducting or participating in performance reviews
- ◆ Introducing speakers and presenters
- ◆ Giving a dinner speech

## ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

---

You may be called upon to present information, disseminate knowledge, or teach skills in situations ranging from small and large meetings to workshops and conferences. Conveying information in a way that engages your audience can be the difference between communicating with them and failing to connect. The more effectively you can communicate, the more people will want to hear what you have to say. Improve your effectiveness by planning and organizing your presentation from beginning to end.

Do not mistake an informal presentation for an effortless presentation. Oftentimes, presenting in an informal setting comes with pitfalls. For instance, you may feel more relaxed and inadvertently give your audience the impression that your topic is not important. If your audience is made up of your peers, you may feel extra pressure to perform well.

Formal presentations afford an opportunity to display your expertise to large numbers of people. Unfortunately, it can be a painful experience if your presentation is a flop. Do your part to ensure success through thorough planning and preparation.

Besides devoting attention to what you will say and how you will present the information, learn as much as you can about the event. Why is the event being held? What is expected of you and the other presenters? Find out about the purpose of the event, your topic, and other topics being presented. Knowing the other speakers' topics will help you avoid overlapping your information with theirs. What about the venue? If the setting is unfamiliar, ask about the setup of the room, audiovisual support, and any special needs you may have.

### Exercise: Assess Your Feelings

You are asked to give a presentation. Do you know to whom you are speaking and why? What are your feelings toward the size and type of audience? Consider the following scenarios:

- ◆ You are asked to give a formal presentation to a group of 50 professionals in your field.
- ◆ You are asked to present a new product to several clients.
- ◆ You are asked to give a sales presentation to your department. You will discuss sales figures, new products, and outdated products.
- ◆ You are the keynote for an educational conference with hundreds of attendees.

For each one of these presentations, decide how you would answer the following questions:

Are you more comfortable speaking to a small or a large group? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you more comfortable speaking to coworkers and supervisors or strangers? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you comfortable speaking on a topic for which you are an expert? \_\_\_\_\_

How does it make you feel to know you will be in the spotlight for the length of the presentation?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you cool and collected or nervous and stressed when you present? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you imagine you will know what you want to say, or will you forget most of it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you react when asked to speak in front of your peers? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Copyright © 2014, Cengage Learning. All rights reserved.

How do you react when asked to speak to a large audience of strangers? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## GETTING PREPARED

Planning is a critical step in creating a successful presentation, whether for an audience of a few or hundreds. Effective planning helps you gather content, lay it out in a logical sequence, and present it in a results-oriented manner. You will be clear on the concepts you want to present and those your audience needs to hear. A successful presentation will allow you to contribute to others in an influential, positive manner.

Preparation is necessary if you want to deliver a clear message that impacts your audience in a meaningful way, whether the audience is one person or hundreds. If your message is not clear or your facts are distorted, you will not be convincing, and your audience may miss key information. Any time your audience questions what you are saying, you lose the audience for that period of time.

Solid preparation and practice can turn an average or below-average presentation into an excellent one. Lay the correct groundwork by doing everything you can to create an exceptional presentation. Do not settle for good enough—aim for the best. From selecting a topic to researching to organizing to readying yourself, be prepared. It is far better to be over-prepared than to be under-prepared no matter what the speaking occasion. This chapter and the following ones will present guidelines for preparing and delivering first-class presentations.

What do you hope to accomplish with your presentation? Knowing what you want to get across to your audience will help you formulate clear ideas and specifics. From there you can build a convincing case to persuade your audience to act or react the way you intend.

Know your material well, but do not memorize it. Regurgitating a memorized speech could cause you to speak in a monotone, to rush through the material, or to seem unapproachable. Keep in mind that your audience is there to learn from you. Do not talk over their heads or use jargon they may not understand. It is your job as a speaker to present information in a way that your listeners can understand your message. Chapter 2, “Writing the Text,” discusses ways to get your written message across to your audience. With sufficient preparation, you will be able to gear your speech to the audience.

## PLANNING YOUR PRESENTATION

Regardless of the type of presentation, plan to the fullest extent. First of all, make sure you understand what is required of you and what you are expected to deliver to the audience. Miscommunication can lead to embarrassment and a failed presentation. Ask:

- ◆ Am I clear about what specifically the organizers want me to communicate?
- ◆ What are the organizers trying to achieve through this presentation?
- ◆ Why have the organizers chosen me to present this information?

- ◆ Do I have the ability to meet the organizer's objectives for the presentation?
- ◆ Am I willing to meet the organizer's objectives for the presentation?

Effective presentations require significant planning. Take the time to prepare from the day you know you will be presenting. Avoid procrastinating. You will want as much time as possible to research and practice. When you have a long lead time before your presentation, brainstorm ideas and begin your research. The more you prepare, the better your presentation will likely be.

Treat all presentations, formal and informal, as important. Do not be fooled into thinking an informal presentation for your coworkers or for a single client is not important enough to plan. Many of the one-on-one talks are critical to career success.

Spend time thinking about what you want to say and what the audience needs to hear. You want to be able to convey your message in the clearest, most convincing way possible. If you cannot convince your audience, you cannot accomplish your goal. If you cannot get your ideas across to others, you will not be able to engage your audience and share information. To keep your audience engaged, you will want to convey information relevant to them quickly and succinctly. The best way to do this is through thorough preparation. Question everything that will go into making your presentation a success.

Prepare by asking yourself the following key questions:

- ◆ What is the event, and where is it being held?
- ◆ What is the layout of the venue?
- ◆ Is it a formal or an informal event?
- ◆ What is the purpose of the presentation?
- ◆ Why am I the best person to present the information?
- ◆ What is my topic?
- ◆ What key points about the topic must I include?
- ◆ How much research do I need to do?
- ◆ Do I need to consult other sources (colleagues, experts in the subject, and so on)?
- ◆ Who is my intended audience, and how large is the group?
- ◆ What does my audience expect from the presentation?
- ◆ Does my audience know anything about my topic?
- ◆ How will I create interest?
- ◆ How will I hold my audience's attention throughout the presentation?
- ◆ What is the best way to organize my message?
- ◆ What visual aids will I utilize?
- ◆ What audio visual or other equipment do I need?
- ◆ What handouts will I prepare?
- ◆ What are three to five main points I want my audience to remember at the end of my presentation?
- ◆ What action do I want the audience to take, or how do I want them to react?
- ◆ How will I dress for the presentation?

After you know the type of event and venue, you can decide on an effective method of delivery. For instance, a small meeting may not require substantial visual aids, whereas a large audience may require a high-tech delivery system.

You will need to know what is expected from you as a presenter. Are you selling something? Are you teaching a skill? Do you have vital information to deliver? Will you suggest solutions to problems? You will take a different approach in these and other diverse situations.

Know your time limit, and pace yourself accordingly. Will your message be brief? Are you giving a two-hour workshop? Do you have a time slot between other speakers? Do you need to allow time for interaction with your audience or for a question-and-answer session? In addition, you should plan for unforeseen distractions and interruptions. A number of things can throw off your timing.

Complete the following checklist.

Checklist for Effective Planning	Yes	No
I have a well-defined topic.		
I know the purpose of my presentation.		
I know the type of event and venue.		
I know what material I need to present.		
I know what the organizers want to accomplish with this presentation.		
I know something of the audience’s backgrounds and knowledge of my topic.		
I have an idea of what the audience expects from this presentation.		
I know the size of the group.		
I have an idea of what handouts I will prepare.		
I have an idea of what visual aids I will prepare.		
I know what research I need to complete.		
I know what sources I will use for my research.		
I know the key points I want to discuss.		
I know how to organize my message.		
I have thought about ways to create audience interest.		
I know what I want my audience to take away from this presentation.		
I know how I want my audience to act or react following my presentation.		
I have chosen an outfit for the event.		

You should have answered yes to each item in the checklist. Work toward correcting any negative answers.

## Exercise: Plan a Presentation

The next time you are called upon to give a presentation, complete the following exercise.

Presentation topic \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of my presentation

---

---

---

Type of event and venue

---

---

What I hope to accomplish

---

---

---

Size and background of audience

---

---

---

What I think the audience expects from the presentation

---

---

---

Key points I will discuss

---

---

---

Research sources I will use

---

---

---

How I will create interest

---

---

---

How I will organize my presentation

---

---

---

Handouts and visuals I will use

---

---

---

What I would like the audience to gain

---

---

---

## Brainstorm Ideas

Brainstorming allows you to produce lots of information quickly without judging the ideas as good or bad. List your topic at the top of a piece of paper (or on a whiteboard if you are brainstorming with others). Write down as many ideas as you can think of concerning your topic as well as ideas for supporting information. Do not dismiss concepts you believe are worthless at first thought. They may turn out to be the best ones in the long run. The idea is to write everything down and later eliminate whatever you feel will be useless for your presentation. It is easier to cut ideas than it is to come up with them in the first place.

If other people are involved in the presentation, ask for their input. Add facts from anyone else who might have something relevant to contribute. Add information from other sources. The more ideas you have, the greater the chance of finding the important, dynamic ones that will make your presentation resonate with your audience.



If other speakers are participating in the event, check that your topic and ideas are not redundant. Although speakers for a particular event may be presenting along the same line, you will not want to repeat another participant’s presentation.

### Choose the Best Ideas

After compiling your idea list, trim it to three to five key points. Write down your topic sentence. Branch out from there by choosing relevant key points. Think about the information that will be most useful to your audience.

Although you may feel that all of your ideas are important, you have a limited amount of time. You must focus; your audience will tune you out if they are overloaded with information. Concentrating on a few relevant concepts will keep your audience from becoming overwhelmed and distracted. Limiting information will also help you avoid jumping from point to point in a confusing manner.

### Exercise: Brainstorm Ideas for Your Presentation

Create three headings: Introduction, Main Body, Conclusion. Under each of the headings, list what you would like to cover during your presentation. Concentrate your key points in the main body.

### Exercise: Choose Ideas for Your Presentation

The next time you are called upon to give a presentation, complete the following exercise.

Presentation topic \_\_\_\_\_

Brainstorming ideas

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

From your list of brainstorm ideas, write down three to five key points to cover and how you will support them.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Presentation Skills: One Hour Workshop

2. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

## Gather the Content

All effective presentations are based on meaningful content appropriate for the audience. To avoid omitting important information, create a detailed list of everything you definitely must cover, and build your talk around this list. Review what you know about your topic, and write it down in a logical order. Take care to avoid recycling information from former presentations or sources that may be outdated.

In addition to counting on your own expertise, some places to gather content include company materials, journals and magazines, books, colleagues, and other experts in the field.

## Do Your Research

Research the latest information on your topic, and add it to what you know. Uncovering innovative, original information will give you a fresh perspective and ensure that your audience is given the latest facts. Extensive research gives you a solid foundation on which to build your presentation and from which to choose supporting data for your essential key points. All researched information must be current and credible; take the time to get your facts right, and double-check your sources.

Make your content relevant to your audience. How do you plan to address their needs? No one wants to waste time hearing you talk about something that has nothing to do with them. Is the information you plan to present the information your reader needs and wants to hear? Each audience and speaking opportunity is different; plan accordingly.

Although you should limit the information you deliver to a few key points, gathering as many facts as possible about your topic will give you an abundance of research from which to develop your presentation. This extra information will be useful when you are called upon to discuss a particular point or to answer questions. Know your material well so you will not be caught off guard by someone questioning your facts or during the discussion or the question-and-answer session.

Focus on your topic, taking a narrow approach to the treatment of the subject. You will want to select vital information and eliminate the extraneous from the talk itself. Enhance your subject with supporting evidence to build believability, but keep everything focused on the key points.

Look for unusual and interesting facts and figures that will excite your audience, not bore them. Oftentimes a little-known fact is enough for people to sit up and take notice. Limit the content of your talk to uncomplicated material and the essential facts and figures. Your audience may become disinterested if your presentation is too heavy on figures, charts, complicated facts, and long passages of dull material.

Consult company materials when developing a company-based presentation. Read the latest journals in your field, and scour newspapers and magazines for useful articles. Textbooks and business books might provide valuable facts, illustrations, statistics, and additional research sources.

Colleagues in the field and coworkers can be good resources for information to round out your talk. Make sure they are authorities on the subject and their information is up to date and credible. Resist the urge to use someone else's presentation, as you may not be able to deliver the information successfully when it is not yours.

The Internet is another good source of information. Type your topic into a search engine, but be selective. Much of the information on the Internet is written by individuals who have no expertise in the area or no credentials in the field. Be sure to consult highly regarded, well-known sites that are most likely to have accurate information. If you find information you can use, you can view it or store it on your computer or print it out. Be aware that this information could run several printed pages. Do not commit plagiarism by taking someone else's work as your own or infringe on a copyright.

Always cite sources. Keeping track of where you find information will be helpful when you need to make the citations in your presentation. Use a spreadsheet or similar format to record source information.

## Exercise: Research Sources

The next time you are called on to give a presentation, create a list of viable sources to use for researching your topic.

## Decide on Content

Sort through your notes, and decide what the single most important point is for you to cover. What is the next important point? Jot down items you want to discuss and those you want to reinforce. Include challenges, solutions, action the audience should take, consequences for failing to act or react, and benefits of taking appropriate action. Content for each of your key points should be limited to critical information. You want enough information to support your point, but this is not the time to share everything there is about the subject. Skip unimportant details and less relevant information. Include information that supports your topic and delivers what the audience came to learn.

Overloading the presentation by attempting to cram in every detail about the topic could cause you to overrun your time limit and cause the audience to quit listening. Advance planning will help you determine suitable content that conveys the essence of your message.

Complete the following checklist.

Content Checklist	Yes	No
I have narrowed the focus of my talk and decided the most important point I want to cover.		
I have limited key points to three to five.		
I have focused my talk on what I believe is important to my audience.		
I have thoroughly researched my topic.		
I have found sufficient information to support my key points.		
I have found unusual, interesting facts.		
I have eliminated irrelevant information from my talk.		
I have checked all my sources.		
I have given proper credit to my sources.		
I have not plagiarized or infringed on any copyrights.		

You should have answered yes to each item in the checklist. Work toward correcting any negative answers.

## ORGANIZING YOUR PRESENTATION

A well-organized presentation shows in the implementation. Position key points in strategic places, and keep everything in logical order to allow people to follow easily. If your audience cannot follow your logic, you will lose them. Be absolutely clear.

Ideas must be presented coherently and consistently if the audience is to believe you know the material well. Rearrange the order of your presentation if there is any doubt about the sequence of information.

Scattered thoughts sabotage a presentation. You do not want listeners to feel as if they walked in on the middle of your presentation.

Jot down a few words pertaining to each idea on individual index cards to jog your memory throughout the presentation. Avoid writing out your entire speech on the cards. Number the index cards so you will be able to rearrange them if they become out of order.

Organize handouts and visual aids in the order in which you will need them to avoid shuffling through them to find the right one at a particular point in your presentation. (Handouts and visual aids are covered in detail in Chapter 3, “Developing Visual Aids.”)

A good way to organize your entire presentation is by using a binder with plastic sleeves. Store together in the same plastic sleeve the individual note cards and specific handouts or hard copies of visuals that go together. Note cards that do not have matching visuals or handouts can be stored by themselves in individual sleeves. Arrange the material in the order in which you intend to present it. All handouts, note cards, and hard copies of visuals can be stored in the binder. Add anything else that pertains to your presentation, such as flash drives.

Complete the following checklist.

Checklist for Effective Organizing	Yes	No
I have organized everything I need for my presentation in a binder.		
I have decided on the relevant points to present.		
I have written out my speech in a logical order.		
I have sufficient information to support my key points.		
I have prepared note cards to aid my memory.		
I have organized visual aids and handouts in the order in which I will use them.		
I have appropriate examples, stories, or anecdotes to use during the presentation.		
I have a takeaway for the audience.		
I have determined how I want my audience to act or react after my presentation and organized my presentation to that end.		

You should have answered yes to each item in the checklist. Work toward correcting any negative answers.

### Exercise: Organize Your Presentation

The next time you are called upon to give a presentation, complete the following exercise.

Presentation topic \_\_\_\_\_

Sources for research notes

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Key points to cover

1. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Anecdotes or examples I plan to use

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Supporting information for key points

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Visual aids I plan to use

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Handouts I plan to use

---

---

---

---

---

Copyright © 2014, Cengage Learning. All rights reserved.

The takeaway for my audience

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

The reaction I hope to elicit from my audience

---

---

---

---

---

---

---