



# Book The Presentation Coach

## Bare Knuckle Brilliance For Every Presenter

Graham Davies  
Wiley, 2010  
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## Recommendation

This book is different from many other volumes of useful presentation tips in that it provides a sequential process that eliminates any uncertainty about the quality of what you are going to say. Professional speaker and presentation consultant Graham Davies provides a rigorous, adaptable method for writing and delivering an effective speech, no matter what the situation and how little notice you have. While his visual material can be a little disorganized, his style is straightforwardly blunt, sometimes to the point of being confrontational (if a sprinkling of coarse language upsets you, be forewarned). Nonetheless, *BooksInShort* finds he offers a proven, easy-to-follow, step-by-step approach to making outstanding presentations.

## Take-Aways

- You are constantly presenting, either informally or formally. To be more persuasive, plan your words in advance.
- Presentations involve leading an audience from where it is to where you want it to be.
- To make your presentations concise and compelling, use the “Bare Knuckle Method,” which includes the “Preparation Pipeline” and a set of specific delivery techniques.
- Use the pipeline to define your goal and create content that is likely to achieve it. You want to use the fewest words possible to make your point in less than 20 minutes.
- Determine who your audience members are and what they need to hear.
- Write a “Micro-Statement,” one sentence that says what you want people to recall. Support it with three to five “Key Elements” that form your “Hard-Core Content.”
- Use strikingly memorable phrases as “Spikes” to open and close your presentation.
- Precise preparation and powerful delivery is the best way to achieve a specific result.
- What you say and how you say it is far more powerful than a PowerPoint show.
- Your overall attitude should be, “Say It...Support It...Shut It.”

## Summary

### You Present All the Time

In both formal and informal settings you are always presenting, that is, attempting to change someone’s viewpoint by speaking. The following armory of techniques is called the “Bare Knuckle Method” because it encourages you to think of yourself as constantly fighting for the attention of an audience and it prepares you to win.

“You present more often than you think. It does not have to involve you standing up in front of a seated audience.”

The method is based on the principle that every presentation should have a “Micro-Statement” at its core. The micro-statement is what you would say if you only had 10 seconds to speak, a shining jewel that is so valuable your audience members will take it away with them and share it. Use the “Preparation Pipeline” for preparing your micro-statement and all the other content in your presentation.

## Going Through the Presentation Pipeline

To prepare your presentation, precisely follow this sequence of steps:

### 1. Decide What Your “Knockout Result” Would Be

This is the absolutely ideal result you want your presentation to achieve. For instance, “I want to persuade [my listeners] to invest their entire pension fund with this company.”

### 2. Analyze Your Audience

Learn as much as possible about your audience so that you can establish whether your knockout result is really a feasible goal. Ask these questions:

- **Who are they?** – Identify the individuals who will be present and categorize them.
- **Why are they together in that room?** – Make sure that you know whether they are primarily there to hear you or if they are attending for another reason entirely.
- **What do they want to hear?** – They may have not worked this out, but if they have, you should make an effort to find out what it is.
- **What do they need to hear?** – This might be entirely different from what they want to hear. The onus is on you, as the presenter, to determine this for them.
- **What must you tell them during the course of the presentation?** – What do you need to say to give yourself the best chance of getting what you want from giving the presentation? Getting the right answer to this question is very difficult, but it is something to strive for every single time you present.

“A presentation is not about building a lifetime relationship. You should treat it like an affair that is short but memorable.”

Using the answers to the above questions, write out your best estimate of the audience’s “Starting Position.” This is what your listeners understand and believe about your topic before your presentation.

Once you take into account the data you’ve obtained from your analysis of your audience, decide if you need to scale back your ideal knockout result to a less ambitious “Finishing Position.” This is what you want the audience to know, think or feel when you are done. Your job is to lead the audience from the starting position to the finishing position.

### 3. Agonize Over Your Micro-Statement

Your micro-statement should be a sequence of words that quickly and compellingly captures the essence of your presentation in a way that is specifically shaped to meet the needs of a particular audience at a certain time.

“The two most important sentences in any presentation are the first and the last.”

For example, a golf equipment manufacturer’s micro-statement for an audience of golfers might be: “Lazerforce golf clubs are for you because they hit the ball the longest possible distance, in a straight line, for the least amount of money.” The success of the bare-knuckle approach hinges on the quality of your micro-statement, the essential catalyst in leading the members of your audience where you want them to go. Use this sequence to create your micro-statement:

- Write, in one sentence, what you want the audience to remember above all else.
- Create something significantly useful to them.
- Ensure that the statement assertively persuades people to adopt your end position.
- Hone the phrasing to make it memorable and concise.
- Stare coldly at the finished product and ask yourself, “If the only thing that the audience remembered was this micro-statement, would that be a good enough result?”
- Keep working on the micro-statement until the answer to this question is most definitely yes.

### 4. Brainstorm: Generating Ideas

Use the micro-statement as the foundation to generate everything else you are going to say. Draw an oval in the middle of a piece of paper and write your micro-statement inside it. Then think about all the possible bits of material you might conceivably use to support it, such as facts, statistics, percentages, anecdotes, customer experiences and personal opinions. Write these bits of supporting material as one- or two-word headings around the oval, so you eventually surround it with ideas.

### 5. Filter Your Ideas

Use three filters or screens to get rid of anything that does not support your micro-statement. Repeat the filtering process until you are left with three to five headings that back up your micro-statement. If you have more, the audience won’t remember them. The filters are:

- **The micro-statement filter** – Ruthlessly assess the relationship of each heading to the micro-statement. Keep only those headings that profoundly support and

enhance it. Cross out everything else.

- **The factual filter** – Information can be categorized as nice to know, should know or must know. Drop everything except the must knows.
- **“Anti-filter”** – Consider your audience members’ emotional reactions. Though some must-know data will not affect their feelings, your presentation still may need it.

## 6. Create “Key Elements”: Organizing What Matters Most

Now turn the concepts that have survived the filtering process into an ordered list of key elements. This is your “Hard-Core Content.” Arrange your key elements in the most appealing order, which is not necessarily chronological.

## 7. Write It Out

Expand on the facts and concepts in each key element by actually writing out the words you are going to say under each heading. This is useful because:

- **You are more likely to think effectively** – Your best ideas will come up as you reflect about your presentation in front of a computer screen or piece of paper, not while you are on your feet in front of an audience.
- **Faulty ideas are best exposed on paper or screen** – An idea that seems just fine in your head may not look so good once you write it down.
- **Complexity kills communication** – Jotting down your ideas helps you identify confusing content so you can make it simple and understandable.

“When used incorrectly, humor can have disastrous effects.”

Unless the circumstances require it (such as in a chairman’s report to shareholders), there is no need to create a verbatim script. Instead, develop a “Baseline Text,” which will amount to about 75% of the words you are actually going to say and which will ensure that you capture the crucial phrases precisely. Read it through, out loud, twice to be sure it makes sense.

## 8. Edit: Polishing the Diamond

Copyedit your baseline text to omit the fluff, such as long sentences, filler words, overly complex statements, hard-to-pronounce phrases and tired clichés. You want to use the fewest words compatible with getting your point across in less than 20 minutes.

## 9. “Spikes”: Capturing Your Audience’s Attention

The two most important paragraphs in your presentation are the first and the last. Instead of using bland pleasantries, begin and end your presentation with spikes, strikingly memorable sequences of words that are sharp enough to jolt your listeners out of their comfort zone. The “First Spike” should grab the audience. For example: “Icebergs are not a problem in this area of the Atlantic,” said the communications director of the *Titanic*. Such are the dangers of out-of-date information.” Make your “End Spike” equally arresting.

## 10. Nail It: Creating Memory Cues

Never merely read out your script. What is on paper or on the screen should serve just as a reminder of words that you are totally familiar with because of your extensive rehearsals. Nail down your speech by using one of three “delivery reminder systems”:

- **Notes on cards** – Using block capitals, write out key words on four-by-six-inch, lined index cards. Select words that remind you of a chunk of your baseline text.
- **Full script on paper** – Type your speech, double-spaced, in at least 14-point type.
- **Full script on auto cue** – A teleprompter is only credible with audiences of 200 plus.

## Preparing to Deliver Your Presentation

When you are making a presentation, maintain control of four specific areas:

### 1. Control Your Environment

Take these steps to be sure that you master your setting:

- At least one hour beforehand, become familiar with the room where you’ll present.
- Choose the exact spot where you will stand when you speak.
- If you are going to use a microphone, carry out a full sound check.
- Ensure that you know exactly what will be happening and who will be speaking before and after your presentation.
- No matter how informal the setting, politely dictate what you want the person who is introducing you to say.

### 2. Control Your Delivery

To govern the way you deliver your presentation, follow these tips:

- For a few minutes before you speak, focus entirely on the words of your first spike.
- Step into position, pause two seconds before speaking and look into the audience.

- Speak 10% louder, faster and more intensely than in normal conversation.
- Do not wander around: Legs and lips should not mix.
- Spend at least 80% of your presenting time looking into several different parts of the audience to maintain the illusion of eye contact.

### 3. Manage the Question and Answer Session

You can't direct what people will ask, but you can guide how the Q&A session will unfold:

- Prepare answers to all likely, unlikely and unpleasant questions.
- If questions arise during the main body of the presentation, answer them immediately.
- Pause for a moment before answering even the easiest questions so you can start your answers by spontaneously creating a strong spike.
- Do not comment on how good a question is. Just answer it.
- If you don't know an answer, say so.
- Do not exclude the majority of the audience by entering into an extended dialogue with any single person.

### 4. Conquer Special Situations

Only accept an invitation for a media interview, public event or panel appearance if you know that you will gain something by presenting.

“Humor is...a deadly weapon disguised as a box of sweets.”

Always prepare a micro-statement and supporting key elements that you can crowbar into your performance, no matter what the questions are.

Whatever the presentation topic, your motto should be: “Say It...Support It...and Shut It.”

### About the Author

Former barrister **Graham Davies** is a professional speaker and presentation consultant for senior executives, politicians and celebrities.

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