

THE PRESENTATION

The day for your presentation finally arrives and you are nervous. To be a little nervous is good as it means you care for the subject and your audience. But despite all preparations, here are some common mistakes we tend to make which take the shine out of the best of presentations. Some do's and don'ts are being given here for last minute corrections and pitfalls to avoid.

Do's and Don'ts

1. Reach the presentation area well before time.
2. Take time to check your appearance.
3. Familiarize yourself with surroundings and use various technical devices, e.g. LCD.
4. If your presentation is on slides, carry a copy and save it in the computer. Check that it runs smoothly.
5. Check there are no technical glitches and problems of software incompatibility.
6. If you have a presentation outside your company, then contact the person concerned prior to the visit and confirm the facilities available there. (Request information such as computer configuration, software available, file formats that are compatible, if desirable)
7. Know your subject well and rehearse several times.
8. Request for a podium in advance and avoid leaning on it too much. It is meant for only keeping your papers and not for lying down.
9. Take an object to point and not to play.
10. Breathe deeply and slowly before speaking.
11. Do not stand in one place, move during the lecture. But that does not mean that your movement should be a dance around the room.
12. Approach the lectern with assurance and enthusiasm.

NUANCES OF DELIVERY

Sometimes even if everything is well rehearsed and prepared, last minute delivery could make or break a good presentation. The tone and manner of delivery needs to be decided on the basis of type situation, audience and purpose of the presentation. There are four methods of delivering a speech.

Extemporaneous method: The extempore speech is spoken preferably on the basis of a previously prepared outline or notes which may be on a A4 paper. The method allows permanent eye contact with the audience and the rapport is easily established.

Manuscript reading method: Manuscript reading is used where the data or information to be handed during delivery is technical and complex in nature. While

reading, the speaker should look at the audience often, otherwise it will become a boring monologue. Hence, avoid reading word for word. This type of method can be seen used by government officials in press conferences and important meetings where they read their messages so that they are not misquoted. The manuscript from which the speaker reads should have wide margins and text should be in large font size, making reading easier.

Memorization method: These are short speeches which are memorized but on delivery should appear spontaneous, e.g. Debate speeches which are 2–3 minutes long are memorized speeches. In the case of long speeches, it is a difficult method to apply. Hence, only main points can be memorized. Remember, some of the best speakers do not memorize word for word, but make a mental note of the main ideas.

Impromptu method: When you are called upon for comments spontaneously, you speak impromptu. It is done all the time—at meeting, conferences and even in your classroom. Your prompt answer to your teacher's question is impromptu method of delivery. Good listening along with jotting down a few notes while the person is speaking is a way to improve impromptu statements.

PARALANGUAGE

Paralanguage refers to the non-verbal elements of communication used to modify meaning and convey emotion. It may be expressed consciously or unconsciously and includes:

1. Voice or vocal quality
2. Volume
3. Pitch
4. Speed and silence
5. Pronunciation and accent
6. Tone
7. Stress
8. Non fluencies

Voice or Vocal Quality

A voice can be described by using the following words: husky, throaty, loud, vibrant, dynamic, mooring, weak, strong, harsh, effeminate, mason, line, gentle, squeaky, muffled, falsetto, silvery, vanishing, clean, ringing, effortless, serene, flexible, and colourful. We perceive in great measure people by the quality of their voice. Your voice during your conversation adds to a verbal impression of you.

For example, in movies, a crooked person has a croaky voice; an executive has a quite and steady voice; and a person in authority or a hero fighting all ills of society a heavy baritone signifying the seriousness of his objective.

Our voices are somewhat conditioned by the design of the larynx, mouth, lips, teeth, hard and soft palate and nose. Singers are gifted with some difference in their anatomical structure, which makes them successful. The voice quality cannot be

changed overnight. If you have a voice that does not make you happy, you must see a doctor. However, if deep breathing is practiced, it can help in strengthening the lungs. Simultaneously, rehearsals of basic sounds can help clear voice. That is why school children are given some basic singing and music lessons.

Volume

Volume is the loudness and softness of the voice. The voice should be loud or soft for contrasting in emphasis. To emphasize, the sounds can be loud or soft. You can also accent syllables as well as important words you feel should orally stand out.

The second way of deciding the volume is by controlling your breathing. Unless you breathe deeply, you cannot generate a strong volume. Your lungs must be filled with enough air to produce a pressure level high enough to propel air forcefully past your vocal cords. Adopt your volume to the size of your audience. Speaking to fifty people without amplification would require more volume than a small room with five people.

Pitch

Pitch is the highness or lowness of your voice. A pitch of a voice could suffer from:

- *Monotone:* Sameness of voice. There is no variation.
- *Voice too high or low:* The voice is either upper range or lower range.
- *Lack of word value:* Each word is spoken in the same pitch regardless of its value.

An example can be given here:

1. Ram come here now!
2. Ram come here now!
3. Ram come here now!
4. Ram come here now!
5. Ram come here now!

Speak each sentence with a higher pitch for the underlined word. You would have noticed that example 1 does not have any word underlined. Hence, it is to be spoken at the same pitch and word value. The variety of pitch is necessary. Not to use variation is risking being called a monotonous or uninteresting speaker.

Speed and Silence

The speed or note of speech also enhances monotony and makes a speaker uninteresting. Whereas a fast speaker makes the listener uncomfortable and can also be ridiculed. Research shows that the range for public speakers lie between 80 and 160 words per minute. For some people conversing informally, the rate may range from 80 to 250.

A key important aspect related to speed is pause or oral 'while spaces' or little silences in your speech just as they occur in your writing. As in writing, a pause in speaking lets your receiver reflect on the message and helps break the flow of thought. A pause or a moment of silence is an excellent way to collect your

thoughts. It lets you move your visual and rest your voice. Just as paragraphs are indented, pause or momentary silence will alert your audience that there is a change of topic.

Pronunciation and Accent

We are displeased when someone mispronounces our name. Jargons are organizational or departmental form of abbreviations used among the company employees. These in-group pronunciation outside your group cause confusions. Pronunciation is also affected by the accent of the speaker. This happens particularly when the mother tongue spoken by the speaker is a language other than the one he is expected to give his presentation in. In India, 33 languages are spoken by more than one hundred thousand people. Out of these, the Constitution recognizes 22. English and Hindi are the official languages. But the dialect or pronunciation changes in India at every two km, giving rise to a mind-boggling pronunciation effects in every language. Hence, India has varied regional accents.

While speaking, be careful not to add sounds such as uh'hm, ya..., know'err..., ok... between words and sentences. Avoid unclear speech which occurs because of speaking too fast. The words appear as clashing into one another, mixing pronunciation together.

E.g. How do you do?

Speaking fast could make the 'how do you do?' sound like HOWDYDO? clashing all the words together.

To improve the pronunciation, one should listen to the educated and cultured people of one's community. You can also consult a dictionary where phonetic symbols are given for each word and learn to pronounce a word correctly. Good pronunciation leaves a lasting impact on the listener. Hence, learn to speak and pronounce each word clearly and distinctly.

Tone

The finer attributes of voice and delivery are tone. The tone of a voice tells whether a person is in pleasant or unpleasant mood, while he is issuing a command, a request or asking a question. Say the following words in accordance with the condition set before them

Command	come here!
Request	come here.
Question	come here?

As you can see, the exclamation mark, period and question mark emphasize the tone set by three examples.

Stress

A sentence comprises many words. All words cannot have the same quality or stress in a sentence. Some portions would require greater stress so that the audience

can distinguish the relevant from the not so relevant. The stress while speaking a sentence can be delivered by using the following methods:

- By pronouncing loudly some word
- Changing the tone
- Slowing down and carefully emphasizing
- Starting by saying 'The important point is ...' or 'The important aspect is ...'.
- Choice of right words with right meanings.

Non-fluencies

Everyone is not fluent in a language. Hence, a person feels lack of confidence as he does not have adequate communication skills to give a good presentation. Command on a given language is an advantage, but confidence must be on the part of the speaker. This is possible only if there is a sincerity of approach, careful thinking and planning. There are some guidelines to overcome these drawbacks:

- Choose easy and simple words.
- Construct simple and short sentences.
- Logically sequence your thoughts.
- Rehearse a number of times.
- Think of all the possible questions that can be raised by the audience and their subsequent answers.

SUMMARY