

Tips for a professional presentation

This is a note that summarizes the many documents that can be found on the web searching with the key words “effective/killer (Power Point) presentation”. E.g., have a look to this [link](#).

You've worked hard to put together the research you want to share with your colleagues - make sure that effort pays off by creating a presentation that your audience will remember and appreciate. Below is a list of items compiled to help make your presentation more effective and understandable to your fellow meeting attendees.

Preparation Points

On average, you should budget one hour of writing and practice for each minute you speak. A 10-minute presentation should be backed up by 10 hours of preparation and practice.

A rule of thumb is also that a good slide or sheet takes on average 2 to 3 minutes to present. So for a 10 minute presentation you have to condense your contribution to 5 to 8 sheets, taking the rules below for good sheet design into consideration. Don't forget that you also lose a few minutes at the start for getting the room silent, introduction etc.

Rehearse your presentation several times before you leave for the meeting. You may consider videotaping your presentation, then watching the tape to spot distracting mannerisms or awkward phrasing.

Prepare and rehearse enough that you don't rely heavily on your visual aids to keep you on track. Strive to keep your presentation's tone as a casual conversation with the audience. It should not be a session of the audience staring at the back or side of your head as you read from the screen. And don't read the text from paper, unless you think that your English makes this absolutely necessary.

Organisation & order

Your presentation creates a path for the audience to follow - be sure your introduction lays out where you will be taking the audience throughout your talk. In your introduction, provide a focus (statement of your main idea), a reason to listen (significance of the main idea) and an orientation (structure of the presentation).

Like a newspaper article, a good presentation and paper starts with providing the focus, the statement of the idea, the main conclusion. This helps the audience to follow you, and there is no reason to hide the end result or next steps. The time spent to guess where the presenter is going to, is not spent to understand your points.

Identify the natural breaks in your presentation, and insert some traditional words or phrases ("the second reason..." / "in other words..." / "to conclude...") to provide the audience some "road signs" about the direction of your presentation.

Summarise after you finish each point, to wrap up what you've said and connect it to the next point.

Audiences tend to be very attentive at a presentation's beginning, less attentive during the middle section, and more attentive as it ends. Use your conclusion to re-emphasise the most important elements of your presentation.

You can try to recapture the attention of the audience in the middle section by making an nice joke, or an interesting analogy. A nice picture might also be useful.

Set the pace

A reader of a paper controls the pace herself - what sections she reads more carefully, what elements she skims over. In an oral presentation, you control the speed - stick to short sentences and re-emphasise the main points.

Don't try to include more information simply by speaking faster. A tight, clear delivery that makes the main points and answers common questions is more effective than a rushed delivery that throws too much information at the audience. Some points can be shifted to the questions and answers session by using a phrase like "I could elaborate on that if you have question..."

Don't use the time reserved for discussion or questions and answers for your presentation. You are there to come into contact with colleagues in the room, not to preach. Ask the chair of the meeting to warn you 5 and 1 minute before your time is up. Start summarising your presentation with your last sheet / slide if only 1 minute is left - wherever you are at that moment.

Enthusiasm is contagious!

If you are excited about your information, the audience will be also. If you deliver your presentation with a "flat" vocal quality, the audience may fall asleep.

Audiences can only absorb a few points during a 15- to 20-minute presentation. Concentrate on the most significant points of your presentation and avoid complicated formulas, intricate graphs or lengthy statistics. Your final paper can be read after the meeting, and audience members who want to see your complete findings will be able to do so. If you can convince 10 persons in the audience to read your paper carefully and use it in their own work (by citing you) you have done a great job!

Preparing visuals that are useful

Don't try to prove that you are up for the Nobel prize by writing down formulas on the blackboard or a sheet from your head. Prepare slides or -often even better- a good Powerpoint presentation.

When creating your slides or overheads, remember that "less is more" in visual aids. Limit the number of elements on each slide to maintain readability for the audience.

Limit the amount of information on each slide. Each slide should contain:

- * One main point
- * One thought per line
- * No more than 5-7 words per line. Skip articles ('a', 'the') and stick to nouns and verbs.
- * No more than 5-7 lines per slide

Fine or thin lines in text or graphics will disappear when projected. Text and graphs need to be bold enough to contrast against the background.

Place the most important text at the top of the slide and use the brightest colour. Leave a larger margin at the bottom of the slide to allow for objects in the way of the projector.

Use large text sizes. For most visual aids, titles should be 36- to 48- point and text should be 20- to 36-point.

Use a combination of upper and lowercase letters. Words typed in all capital letters offer few recognisable shapes to catch the audience's eyes.

Colour considerations: for PowerPoint presentations, use dark blues, grays, greens or black for backgrounds. White and yellow text are the most readable and contrast well against dark backgrounds. For overhead transparencies, use light yellow or blue for the background and dark colours for the text and graphics.

Use *italics*, different colours or fonts to add emphasis rather than underlining. Underlined text reduces the distinctness of words and makes them harder to read.

Bullets should be easy to see. Check their size, colour and position relative to the text.

Minimise punctuation in visuals - use size, type style or colour to give your material structure instead.

Don't use complicated Flash technology or other 'moving' texts. It often takes too much time and is disturbing as it distracts from the message. If you have a list of items, project them at once and don't use PowerPoints facilities to show them one by one - unless you have a long story to tell on each item.

Be professional and ask a colleague for comments on your presentation. Your partner is often an excellent reviewer on the design and lay-out of your sheets or slides!

For small groups, if you have a rough idea on the number of persons in the audience, provide a hand-out in advance. That keeps the audience active with the presentation and a possibility to make notes.