

How to Give a Successful Presentation

[How to Give a Successful Presentation](#) from [English Plus Plus Project](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Practical information

Pre-preparation. Selecting the topic and materials

An essential task at the pre-preparatory stage is to ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the purpose of my presentation?
- What are the main points that I would like to get across?

Start getting ready for your presentation a few weeks before you are due to speak.

Collect the materials on which you would like to base your presentation.

Make a careful selection from the collected materials.

Prepare a reliable bibliography (the author's name, the title of the article/book, the year of its publication, the website address, when the material was retrieved, etc.).

From the material select the keywords for your presentation and do not forget to put them on the handout.

Preparation

- Make the first plan of the presentation (you can modify it later)
- Remember to give your presentation a logical structure:
Introduction - tell the audience what you're going to say
Main Body - say it, developing the above mentioned issue(s).
Conclusions - sum up what you've just said
- Make the first draft of your presentation. Read it carefully. If any of the information is not related to the topic, remove it.
- If there are issues which you cannot express in a precise or clear way, it is probably because you do not really understand them yourself. So it is better not to talk about them.
- Never read from your notes. You should know the material you want to present well enough not to need your notes. If you don't, perhaps you're not ready to give your presentation.
- Prepare a set of numbered cue cards, on which you can write the main points and/or keywords and which will help you during the presentation. Make sure that on the cue card you've marked the appropriate visual aid (a transparency or slide) which you are going to refer to in your presentation.
- Find time to rehearse again and again! By doing that you will make yourself familiar with your own voice, be able to check and adjust how long your presentation takes and see whether the visual aids (if you use them) actually illustrate your presentation and whether you are coordinating them with the points you want to make. If you have problems with the foreign language in which you are presenting the material, it might be better not to use visuals at all. The chances of something going wrong are greater than if you concentrate solely on the oral aspect of the presentation.
- Keep to the time! Do not exceed the time limit. It is better to shorten the presentation by two minutes than to extend it by two minutes. Remember that exceeding the time limit may mean taking the next speaker's time. And this is really unfair!
- Follow the plan of your presentation! Do not digress! Usually digressions take more time than we think. Successful presenters have "spontaneous digressions" well thought over and well planned.
- Leave time for questions from the audience. Questions may help you to get your message across better.
- Design good visuals to help you get your message across more efficiently. Remember that tatty visuals will leave a similar impression on the listeners. Visual aids should speak for themselves in illustrating your point. Give listeners time to take them in. Reading out what you have written on a transparency or slide is counterproductive. Visuals are always welcome - they may help to catch the audience's attention, but if you do not feel comfortable with them, give yourself more time for practice.

Visual aids

There are different types of visuals. The choice depends on the type of presentation and your needs.

- OHP transparencies - overhead projector transparencies

- Presentations in PowerPoint
- Flipcharts
- Whiteboard and marker
- Video
- Short episodes or scenes from films
- 35 mm slides
- Real objects, which you can let your listeners explore

Remember that badly prepared and/or badly used visuals can ruin your presentation!

Make sure you know in advance how to connect the equipment and what to do to have the desired slide or diagram on the screen. Sometimes, during real presentations a technician will be there to operate the equipment. In that case, make sure that he understands your signals, for example, to change a slide.

Slides and transparencies should contain the minimum information necessary to illustrate your point. Too much on a slide makes it unreadable and diverts the audience's attention from what you say.

A slide is said to be readable if it contains no more than ten words in 18pt Times Roman font or bigger and which can be read without a projector from a distance of two meters. Never use pages photocopied from books or other materials as visuals. They are not adapted for such use, not to mention the fact that they do not prove your professionalism.

For transparencies, use multiple colours, but be careful with orange and yellow - they do not come out well on the screen. On slides, the text is often in yellow or white on a blue background. Avoid adding/drawing information on a transparency. While speaking, avoid indicating with your finger or a marker. A pointer and the screen do that job much better.

Turn off the projector if you do not need it for the next few minutes. Two minutes is the maximum time that the same slide should be shown on the screen.

Presentation - dress rehearsal

Your presentation should not take place without having practised it several times in front of a mirror and/or with a tape recorder. Observing and listening to yourself "in action" can be stressful, but is very formative. It provides you with the material on which you can gradually develop your presentational skills and competencies.

Some final tips:

- Speak clearly.
- Avoid raising your voice, whispering or mumbling "under your breath".
- Try to maintain the natural pace of speaking appropriate for a formal, rather than everyday situation.
- Make pauses in places which you consider critical for your presentation; this emphasizes the importance of the information you wish to convey to the audience.
- Try to control your body language; avoid excessive gesticulation.
- Maintain eye contact with your listeners but do not focus on one person.
- Don't turn your back to the audience if you want to show something on the screen and don't 'talk to the screen' either.
- Don't stand in the light of a projector covering the screen.
- Observe your audience's reactions - it might be better to shorten the presentation by two minutes and move on to your conclusions.
- Don't forget to thank the audience for their attention and encourage them to ask questions. If you are not sure about the answer or if you simply do not know it, don't be afraid to admit that, but suggest the source in which the answer can be found.
- Enjoy your presentation. Try to treat it as a new experience and show your enthusiasm!

Good luck!