

# Preparing for an Effective Presentation: HANDOUT

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## **Preparing a Presentation**

- Ask yourself:
  - Why am I giving this presentation?
  - What am I trying to say?
  - What do I want my audience to get from this?
  
- Know your audience:
  - Who are they?
  - What knowledge of the topic do they have?
  - What are their demographics? Age, sex, level of education?
  - Why will they attend your presentation?
  - What are their expectations?
  - What specific needs do you need to address?
  
- Choose visual aids that best convey your message: PowerPoint, Transparencies, Videotape, Chalkboard, Handouts, Props, Combination?
  
- Tell a story (and KEEP IT SIMPLE)
  - Clear opening
  - Body: list and prioritize the main messages (3-4) you want to convey with your presentation. What is your ‘take home message’?
  - Strong Conclusion: reemphasize key points
  - Create a road map and direct your audience through it.
  
- KEEP TO TIME. For a 20 minute presentation:
  - Intro: 2 – 3 minutes
  - Body (with 3 or 4 key messages): 10 minutes
  - Conclusion: 2 – 3 minutes
  - This will leave 4 -6 minutes for QuestionsFor a 1 hour presentation
  - Intro: 4 – 6 minutes
  - Body (with 3 or 4 key messages): 30 minutes
  - Conclusion: 4 – 6 minutes
  - This will leave ~15 minutes for Questions

## KEY TIPS

### CONTENT

- Create a title that is reflective of your talk.
- Create slide titles that provide information as to what is on the slide
- Ensure the audience leaves with a clear message.
- Be concise. Summarize whenever possible.
- Use pictures versus text
- Limit each slide to one unified idea.
- Anticipate questions from the audience.
  - Be prepared to be interrupted.
  - Think of the top 10 questions and prepare answers.
  - Prepare additional slides to answer questions, if necessary.
- If you don't know, say so or offer to find out and follow up. This is better than answering incorrectly.
- Continue discussions later if they are consuming too much time or do not involve more than one audience member.

### STYLE

- Use a consistent layout (same slide background, font, font size, bullets, etc.)
- Use an easily legible font and don't overcrowd the slide.
- Use PowerPoint animation to focus attention. Do not overanimate
- Graphs, Tables and Figures should be bold, simple and contain only essential details.
- Colour on slides should be minimal.
- Use background colours and text colours that are legible (if you can't see it your audience will not be able to either)
- Always face the audience, maintain eye contact and stand still.
- Stand comfortably with arms relaxed and feet shoulder width apart.
- Keep your hands relatively still.
- Speak with confidence and enthusiasm in a clear, strong voice.
- Vary the volume and rate of your speech.
- Talk to the back of the room, to ensure everyone can hear clearly.

### GENERAL PREPARATION

- Rehearse your presentation several times **out loud**, until you feel confident. (Check the timing). Practice before 'friendly' colleagues for advice.
- EDIT your slides carefully.
  - Remove superfluous information
  - Correct typos and grammatical errors (have someone else check).
- Dress appropriately for the occasion.
- Verify you are comfortable with the room set-up and equipment.
- Get yourself a glass of water
- Pay attention to other presenters: learn from their mistakes or borrow effective techniques.

## THINGS TO AVOID

### TIME

- **Do not exceed the allotted time.** This is very disrespectful to the audience and can make people very uncomfortable
- 2 minutes per PowerPoint slide
- Audience questions can provide different views of your topic and can initiate fruitful collaborations and interactions. **Make time for them.**

### VOICE

- Muttering, especially when answering questions
- Chewing gum.
- Talking too quickly.
- Use empty words such as 'uh, like, you know, uhm', etc.

### STYLE

- Reading directly from the slides or your presentation handouts. Tone of voice changes when reading and can be difficult to listen to.
- Memorizing your speech. Sometimes it is useful to memorize one or two opening statements for sections of your presentation but if every point has been memorized and you get lost or too nervous, the audience will be able to tell that you've memorized whole sentences (especially if you mess up halfway through one)
  - use cue cards with key phrases or ideas for each slide of the presentation.  
**DON'T WRITE OUT FULL SENTENCES.**
- Flipping through slides too quickly.
- Making rapid movements with the pointer.
- Aiming the laser pointer at the audience
- Repetitively circling objects on the slide or moving beyond the slide onto the wall or ceiling
- Tapping the screen with a stick pointer (the screen will then start moving)

### BODY LANGUAGE

- Pacing (especially if you are wearing noisy shoes).
- Blocking visuals. If you see you are in someone's way, try to accommodate them. (Remember to keep watching your audience to maintain a relationship with them)
- Fidgeting with keys, pocket change, or your hair/mouth
- Turning your back to the audience.

## **References and Useful Websites**

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## **References for Preparing a Poster**

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