

GOOD ORAL PRESENTATION TIPS

(re : University of Tasmania, Aus)

Presentations are a good learning opportunity, and give you practice in:

- Critical thinking
- Organising your ideas
- Questioning positions and attitudes
- Defending a position
- Explaining clearly
- Arguing a point
- Talking through a problem

You may have the knowledge, but it is another thing to communicate that knowledge. Giving oral presentations should also be a learning experience for your audience.

1. What makes a good presenter?

What do you admire in good presenters? Is it that they:

- show enthusiasm?
- give clear explanations?
- show interest in the audience?
- have a sense of humour?
- are not boring?
- know what they are talking about?
- are well prepared?

2. Factors relevant to successful presentations

a. You as a presenter. You need to know...

- what you need to make this a successful presentation. Research? Resources?
- your level of confidence. If very nervous, what can be done to help?
- your own learning behaviour. How do you learn best? Is it by doing? By discussing? By reflecting? This knowledge can guide you to appropriate presentation styles, though you need to be aware that people learn in different ways.
- your expertise. It will be expected that you are well informed about the subject.

b. Your material. You need to know...

- the purpose of your presentation. What are you trying to achieve? What do you want the audience to know at the end of your presentation?
- its structure: introduction; main points; conclusion
- what language is appropriate. Oral delivery requires less formal delivery than written presentations, so avoid jargon and technical terms when addressing a lay audience
- which audio/visual aids will enhance your presentation: Overheads? Printed handouts? Computer assisted presentation?
- the time constraints and time management.

c. Your audience. You need to know...

- its composition. Who are they?
- their level of knowledge (assume less than yours)
- how to gain their attention and interest
- how to help them to understand
- how to handle their questions.

d. Your environment. You need to know...

about the venue and equipment: check out beforehand
about the seating arrangement: use a circle (if possible) to facilitate interaction.

3. Use of Audio-visuals

clarity and legibility are important
graphics can help
colour can add interest

When using the **overhead projector** ...

point at the projector - not at the screen
use overheads to emphasise main points
don't crowd the transparency – leave plenty of white space
give one message at a time. Use multiple sheets if necessary
use big fonts (BUT NOT UPPER CASE: IT'S NOT AS EASY TO READ)
you could provide your overheads as a handout, too
practice. It's not as easy as it may look

When using **PowerPoint** ...

ensure that the venue has the appropriate facilities
use the same principles as listed for making overhead transparencies
avoid using hard to read colours such as black text on a red background

4. Managing Nervousness

Remember that it's normal and healthy to be nervous.

Ask yourself:

What exactly am I scared of?
What is the likelihood of that happening?
If that did happen, how would it affect my life?

Prior to the talk, relax yourself and imagine doing the presentation as you would like to. Do this a few times if needed. Practice in front of 'safer' people beforehand. Organise to have a support person in the audience, or not to have anyone you know if that's easier. If you're still very nervous, talk it over with a counsellor.