

Basic Tips for Presenters

Using PowerPoint, Prezi etc

Key Point: Ultimately, it's about you and your content, not your presentation.

A. Preparation – avoiding death by PowerPoint

Start with your content and then build the presentation around it, not vice versa. Using a mind-map is a useful way to help clarify what you want to cover and then work out the sequential logic of the topics and sub-topics.

There is no magic number of slides, but fewer, high quality ones are better than lots of mediocre ones. Ten to twenty slides for an hour session (including Q&A) is plenty, with no more than 4-5 bullet points and 30-40 words per slide max.

1. **Make sure your slides are visible and legible**

Some people will probably be a long way from the screen and many of us don't have the sight we used to. Fonts should be about 30pts and never smaller than 22 pts.

2. **Keep It Simple, Stupid (KISS) principle**

The content of your slide is there as a prompt or summary of the main points that you want to deliver. Most adults can read reasonably, so **NEVER** simply read the text to your audience (this is probably No. 1 rule).

3. **Use PowerPoint masters and templates - with care**

PowerPoint layout guides are great, but be careful not to tamper with them to avoid format problems.

4. **Some variety is great, but not too much**

An endless parade of bullet points can be mind-numbing, so look for ways to vary your visuals – pictures, diagrams, videos, web-links are all useful to help keep your audience interested. And don't forget to intersperse slides with audience interaction both with yourself and between audience members. Don't make them dizzy with your slide entries and exits.

5. **Have several practice runs beforehand, including doing a quick check in your actual venue if possible**

Hiccups with presentations are somehow inevitable, but you can minimise them by careful practice runs. And always be prepared for a total melt-down (like power failures) by having print copies of your presentation available for you to talk from.

6. **Be fully familiar with your presentation content, anticipate the audience's questions and prepare your replies.**

7. **Tell them what they will learn at the beginning and then remind them what they have (probably) learned at the end**

It's useful to give your audience an outline of what you will be covering in your session and then summarise your key points at the end.

8. **Know your way around the presentation tools you use**

If you are not very familiar with the software you will using, take some time to familiarise yourself with its various shortcuts, different ways to carry out functions etc.

B. The presentation

1. Avoiding distractions

To maximise their attention, tell your audience that you will make your presentation available so that they will not need to copy your content during the session. Some people prefer to hand out paper copies beforehand or provide a web-link, but these can be distracting.

2. Never trust the technology

Be prepared for the fact that technology may well let you down on the day. Check that the technology you are using is working and is set to the correct settings.

3. Presenting

Remember, the presentation is there as a prompt for you and not a script. Be prepared to be flexible in your delivery if necessary. Other suggestions:

- A laser light from the \$2 Shop is a useful tool for pointing out key points, details in a graph or photo
- Move around, don't be tied to a single place (also useful for demonstrating confidence and quietening nerves)
- Engage with the audience with eye contact, asking them questions, checking that they understand your content
- Vary the pace and pitch of your voice

4. Dealing with nerves

We all suffer from nerves (to varying degrees). There is no magic answer to solving this problem apart from building up experience. Knowing your content through thorough preparation helps and probably the best way to make a good impression is to be yourself and engage the audience with a relaxed, natural delivery.

5. Engaging the audience

Your presentation should only be part of your repertoire in delivering your content. Audiences like to feel involved rather than passive recipients of your wisdom. Look for ways to engage them throughout your session – they also have experience and knowledge that you can tap in to and they will certainly have questions to ask you – you don't need to wait until the end to answer these.

Good teaching always involves checking with your audience that they understand what you are teaching, so look for feedback (non-verbal as well as questions – 'Is there anything I need to clarify about what I have covered so far?') throughout your session.

It's a good strategy to distinguish between people wanting clarification and making comments. You can for example, call first for clarification questions about your content and then call for comments once these are finished.

If your session is an hour-long, plan for say a third of the time to involve some sort of activity apart from your presentation.

Above all, don't fall for the ultimate PowerPoint sin: 'I'm sorry we've run out of time, but does anyone have a quick question?'

Based on: trainingzone.co.uk & virtualsalt.com | Other resources: Brainybetty.com & Presentation Zen