

Seminar presentations – how to be successful

PREPARATION, PLANNING AND PRACTICE

1. Preparation of content

- Objectives - consider the reason(s) for your talk (e.g. to inform/instruct/convince etc.)
 - what are the key things you want your audience to know?
- Subject - not too complex
 - of real interest to you
- Set boundaries - if working in a group, decide who does what.
- Research fully (e.g. use interviews, reports, newspapers, magazines, journals, books, Internet)
- Decide main points/themes
- Plan the format

2. Planning the format

Start well - use:

- ✓ humour
- ✓ audience involvement
- ✓ realism
- ✓ a role play/story/anecdote/personal experience maybe?

Consider questions? discussion? when? how?

Know your audience (e.g. prior knowledge, age, educational background, interests etc)

Finish well with:

- ✓ brief summary
- ✓ reminder of a successful part/key point
- ✓ an intriguing question

3. Preparation of tools

- *Lectern or table*
- *Paper / writing tools*
- *Posters/ flip charts*
- *White board and pens*
- *Video? CDs PowerPoint slides?*
- *Handouts: copies of PowerPoint slides*
- *Summary notes (Pamphlets/posters? Given out how/when?)*
- **Note** - *If you distribute handouts while you are talking, be prepared to lose your audience's attention briefly.)*

Important - If you are using any technology for your presentation, test it well before the presentation, on the actual equipment you will be using.

4. Practise and rehearse your presentation

- ✓ Rehearse two or three times - at least once with full equipment. Become so familiar with the material that key words on a page or cue cards will trigger a key point for you, and you can talk while maintaining eye contact.
- ✓ Rehearse in front of a practice audience and get them to critique it for you.

Check:

- Content.
- Timing.
- Whether you can be heard and understood.
- Non-verbal communication.
- How well you use the tools.

5. The presentation - on the day

- Dress appropriately and comfortably for the temperature in the room.
- Be early - check everything is ready.
- If nervous, try to relax - use deep breathing.
- Adopt a comfortable stance.
- Remember to move a little - hand gestures, facial expressions.
- Don't block audience's view of whiteboard or screen.
- Don't turn away from audience when speaking.
- Maintain eye contact - move your gaze around the audience, a section at a time.
- Project your voice - speak clearly and not too fast. Vary your tone.
- Try to relax, smile, and respond to any humour from audience.
- Repeat important points for reinforcement.
- Use humour and stories to make your presentation "real".
- Don't over-run your allocated time.
- Don't let interruptions distract you - listen politely (briefly) and then take control again.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say "I'm not sure about that but I could find out for you."
- Finish well with a strong statement, a joke or an interesting question.

Presentation checklist

Topic: _____

Objectives: _____

Research Checklist

- Textbooks
- Library
- Newspapers
- Internet
- Friends and Family
- Professional Bodies

Audio-visual aids

- PowerPoint
- Handouts
- Whiteboard and markers
- Posters / Flipboard
- Video / DVD / CD
- Realia (real life objects)

Planning checklist

- Introduction

- Middle (Key) Points

- End – summary of key points

- Anticipated Questions

Design tips for effective PowerPoint presentations

Good visual aids illustrate the points you are making, not just restate them

Keep the writing to a minimum

Keep slides uncluttered with plenty of space between any words or images.

- **Write in note form** rather than whole sentences.
- **Write your points large** in a minimum of 20 point font so they are easy to see.
- **Don't have more than 5 – 6 points** on any one slide.
- If possible, **use pictures** to illustrate your point rather than words that repeat what you say.

Use design wisely

- **Develop a colour theme** or use one that is built into the program. Too many different colours become distracting. Two colours that either accent or contrast one main colour tend to give variety without becoming overwhelming. Dark colours usually can be read more easily.
- Also, generally **use the same font throughout** and use the same font sizes for titles, headings and text.
- Likewise, if you are using animations in your text or when changing slides, **use the same animations throughout** so that it is consistent.

Keep graphics relevant

- Effective graphs or charts are those which **show only the information which is relevant** to the points you are making. Too much other information will only clutter your graphics and your audience will not be able to clearly see the points you are making. You may need to redraw

or adapt any graphs and charts you find for your presentation.

- Additionally, any **pictures, cartoons or diagrams used should be immediately relevant**. They should add to your presentation rather than confuse your audience because their relevance is not immediately clear.
- Ensure that any graphs or pictures you use are **large enough** for your audience to see.

Using Visual Aids

While PowerPoint slides and other visual aids can be very powerful in a presentation, they can also be very distracting if they are not used correctly.

- Be careful **not to block anyone's view** while you are talking. Position yourself carefully so that everyone has a clear line of sight.
- **Refer to all the points and illustrations** that you put up to avoid confusion for your audience. There should be a clear link between what your audience hears and what they see.
- When talking about anything on the screen, **look at the audience not the screen**. Otherwise with your back to your audience, they will find it harder to hear and you lose eye contact with them. You may be able to have the computer screen in front of you so that you can see what they see without turning around.
- **Practise your presentation** using your visual aids. That way you will be able to use them smoothly without having to stop and think about what you are doing. Your audience will then stay focused on you rather than being distracted by your aids and miss the main points of your presentation.

This work is a derivative of "Tips for visual aides" by QUT:
http://studywell.library.qut.edu.au/pdf_files/PRESENTINGTipsforVisualAids.pdf



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