

Presentation Skills: Strategies for Success

Preliminary Writing of Presentation

- Be comfortable with your topic.
- Research your topic thoroughly enough to convince others that you are knowledgeable.
- Know the audience to whom you will be presenting so you can use appropriate language and visual aids.
- Develop an outline or plan.
- Have examples or personal anecdotes to include to keep it interesting.
- Write a speech or presentation like you would an essay: make it easy to read and follow a structure so it flows nicely.

Before Delivering the Speech

- Know the materials and visual aids you need and be sure you know how the presentation equipment works.
- Practice, Practice, Practice! When practicing your speech, try to get through it at least 3 times without interrupting yourself to make changes.
- Rehearse it in front of others to get some feedback.
- Be sure the presentation is only as long as the allotted time.
- If you can, practice your presentation in the room in which you will be presenting.
- Put your presentation notes into a condensed form, so you're not tempted to read it word for word.
- Know your presentation well enough so that you can continue while getting visual aids ready or, if you lose your train of thought, you can ad lib a bit.

While Making Presentations

- Listen to what you are saying.
- Stay on topic – get your point across.
- Pace yourself – write reminders for yourself in your notes (e.g., slow down, pause).
- Try to enjoy yourself!

After the Presentation

- Be as confident with answering questions as you were with your presentation (avoid unnecessary qualifiers: I think, I guess, etc.).
- Make eye contact while answering questions.
- If you do not know the answer, it's okay to say so.

General Tips for Making Presentations

- Wear clothing that's appropriate to the presentation.
- Ensure that visual aids enhance your presentation, not distract from it.
- Be aware of your gestures and facial expressions.
- Be excited about your topic; the audience will sense your enthusiasm and will be ready to listen.
- It's normal to feel nervous and this feeling can enhance your presentation, but the only way to keep nerves under control is to have confidence in yourself.

A Dozen Suggestions for Making Presentations

Do:

1. Plan the structure of your speech.
2. Plan what you're going to say with your audience in mind.
3. Use visual aids.
4. Tell personal stories.
5. Memorize, to a point.
6. Practice.
7. Stay within time limits.
8. Anticipate questions.
9. Speak loudly and clearly.
10. Look at your audience and smile.
11. Add some movement and appropriate gestures.
12. Stay on purpose and try to teach the audience something.

Do Not:

1. Ramble on without a structure.
2. Use inappropriate language.
3. Let a video replace your presentation.
4. Tell too many stories about your dog.
5. Read your notes word for word.
6. Ad lib an important presentation.
7. Go on forever and have nothing to say.
8. Act surprised when questions arise.
9. Whisper.
10. Hold your papers up to cover your face.
11. Choke the podium or run your hands through your hair too often.
12. Get hung up on the fact that your hands are moving too much or that your knees are shaking, because no one is noticing!