

EXPERT Presentation Skills

Your Key to Powerful Presentations

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GETTING STARTED

Chapter 1



■ Presentations Give You Visibility

Any time you have an opportunity to give a presentation - take it. Nothing can do more for your promotability than giving an effective presentation. So, take every opportunity to speak whether it's for your career or just for fun. You'll get well known quickly.

Once you volunteer to give a presentation, you'll need to plan what you're going to say. That means writing a script. Even if you don't intend to read it, it's important to have something in writing for your practice sessions. And if someone hands you a speech to present, a little tailoring to fit your audience goes a long way.

■ Begin at the Beginning

When writing a presentation, many people start with what they know without considering what the audience needs to know. To give an effective briefing, you must first do your homework on your audience. Who will be listening to your presentation? Who are they? What are their needs? Values? Beliefs? Likes? Dislikes? The more you know about your audience, the easier it is to tailor your presentation to their needs. And, your delivery becomes easier too.

**Approach your presentation from
the audience's perspective - not yours!**

There are several ways of gathering information about your audience:

- Request a list of attendees from the person who asked you to present.
- Study background information on the attendees' organizations.
- Interview others who have spoken to the group, if possible.
- Talk with some attendees in advance of your presentation.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

- ☐ How many people will be there?
- ☐ Who are they?
- ☐ What are the age groups?
- ☐ What are their educational levels?
- ☐ What are their occupations?
- ☐ What are the income levels?
- ☐ Do they have any subject-matter knowledge?
- ☐ What are their attitudes about me, my material, my organization?
(receptive, hostile, indifferent)
- ☐ Will this be informational or will they have to do something?
- ☐ What do they want or need from me?
- ☐ What do I want from them?
- ☐ How will they respond?
- ☐ What would get their attention? What would be negative?
- ☐ What objections or questions will they have?



■ Tips During the Writing Stage

After getting answers to the audience analysis, whether you're writing a speech or if you're given one to deliver, be conversational. Here are some tips to use when designing or tailoring your talk:

- ✓ Determine how long you'll have to speak.
- ✓ Use personal pronouns to make your presentation informal.
- ✓ Watch your use of acronyms - not everyone may know what you're talking about.
- ✓ Use contractions liberally.
- ✓ Vary your sentence length.
- ✓ Ask rhetorical questions to gain attention.
- ✓ Keep words, sentences and paragraphs short.
- ✓ Repeat key words freely.
- ✓ Avoid non-words.
- ✓ Use transitions to allow your audience to follow your thinking.
- ✓ Watch any tongue twisters and big words - they'll trip you up.
- ✓ Use examples to simplify your material.

■ Presentation Format

Most presentations start with this or a similar format, for example an introduction, discussion or body and conclusion.

FORMAT FOR A PRESENTATION		LENGTH
I.	In The Beginning	15%
	A. Get their attention	
	B. Give a preview of your talk	
II.	In The Middle	75%
	A. Identify your main points	
	B. Put them in order	
	C. Support them with details	
III.	In The End	10%
	A. Review your main points	
	B. Include a smashing, memorable ending	
IV.	Question and Answer Period	Varies

"Tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em, tell 'em, tell 'em what you told 'em."

- **In The Beginning**

Since most audiences aren't ready to listen to your main ideas first, don't jump right into the presentation. Audiences usually need a minute or two just to get used to you. So, begin by telling them why you have been chosen to present. This should include your credentials and background on the subject. Once you've introduced yourself, it's time to get and keep their attention. To do that, try an attention-getting approach. Here are some examples:

ATTENTION GETTING BEGINNINGS:

- State a startling fact
- Tell of common ground
- State the benefit for listening
- Ask a question
- Relate a current event or anecdote
- Use a one word lead
- Use a theme, then repeat it throughout your speech
- Tell a joke (only if you are funny)
- Quote someone
- Give an illustration, example, story
- Refer to the occasion
- Point to a historic reference
- Compliment the audience (maybe a shared goal)
- Use a gimmick
- Emphasize the importance of the subject

Next, let them know why it's important for them to listen to the material, and let them know why they should listen specifically to you. In other words: *Why the topic, why you and why now?*

The next part of the introduction should preview your talk. It may include only a sentence or two. This may be a good time to state your purpose or list the main topics to be covered.

DON'T

Never begin your speech by apologizing for anything. A speaker who says, "I don't want to bore you with this, but..." guarantees boredom. Don't start your presentation by using long, slow-moving statements or saying anything unrelated to your topic. And certainly avoid cliches. It may be an honor and a privilege to speak in front of the group, but that's not what they came to hear.