

Guide to Presentation

There are five steps to achieving an effective presentation:

- [Step 1](#) Define your objectives
- [Step 2](#) Analyze the audience
- [Step 3](#) Prepare the content and script
- [Step 4](#) Write, design and revise
- [Step 5](#) Rehearse

Step 1 Define your objectives

Any effective presentation should begin with an assessment and definition of objectives, i.e. the goals you want to achieve from your presentation. The assessment can be broken into key stages:

analyze the audience; *to whom will you be presenting*
decide on the information you want to impart; *what will you be saying*
examine how you want the audience to react; *what will the audience learn and what questions will they ask*
and finally, decide on the best method to achieve these objectives

Analyzing the structure and objectives of your presentation will help to determine the form that your presentation will take and the media you will use to support your presentation.

Step 2 Analyze the audience

Apart from rehearsing, analyzing your audience is the single most important aspect in preparing for your presentation. Ask some simple questions to identify your audience.

Are they director-level, managerial, or staff?
How familiar are they with the subject of your presentation?
Are they young and enthusiastic, or older and more cynical?

Put yourself in the position of your audience - what would you want to hear? Once you have a clearer understanding of your audience, then you are in a stronger position to create a bespoke presentation with the tone, style and content all tailored to meet the needs of your audience.

Step 3 Prepare the content and script

The first stage is to create a draft outline of the presentation, so that there is a logical structure to what you are going to say. Of the total presentation, 10% of the content should be an introduction, telling the audience what you are going to say. The subject of the presentation should total 70% of the content, whilst the final 20% will be spent recapping and concluding.

Step 4 Write, design and revise

The spoken word is very different from the written word. Reading aloud a document does not constitute a presentation; the script must be written as if it were being spoken, allowing emphasis and verbal punctuation where appropriate. The scripting process should involve reading the words aloud, in order that you can check how your presentation will sound. If you want to hear your presentation, use a tape recorder to record the script.

The content of your visuals must reinforce the message in your script. The mistake often made by many is to simply retype their script into their visuals. This allows your audience to read ahead and become bored during

your presentation. Visuals must be used to support what you are saying and to reinforce key points. If you do not have a point to make, use a neutral image or logo on-screen.

If you have structured the presentation successfully, the transition from one message to the next, or one slide to another, will appear both natural and spontaneous to the audience, as the sequence you have developed has a structure and logical progression.

Text charts

These are the basic speaker support medium, but certain guidelines regarding grammar and style should be followed. Each slide should introduce only one concept, with a heading that should clearly summarize the message. Throughout the presentation, the text should remain in the same tense, whilst the use of prepositions, adverbs and adjectives should be avoided. It is advisable to have no more than 6-8 lines per chart, with no more than 6-8 words per bullet point and a maximum of 50 words per slide.

Graphics charts

The key aspect with any graphic is to use color, but sparingly and consistently. Graphs and line charts can be very complicated so omit all unnecessary detail, make the axes consistent, and have no more than four lines on the graph and ensure that the lines are bolder than the axes.

Pie charts should have no more than six slices, with the most important sector positioned at the upper right of the chart. It is sometimes preferable to 'pull out' sectors that you are referring to during the presentation.

Use of color

Color can play an important part in your presentation, with green providing a positive messages and red a negative. Text should be light in color on a dark background to ensure it can be read easily. Cool colors should be selected as backgrounds with warm colors as highlights, but avoid placing red on green as this cannot be clearly read by those with color vision disorders.

Step 5 Rehearse

Once the presentation is scripted and designed, then you must allow sufficient time for rehearsal and revision. This is where many presentations fail, as the script does not develop into a stimulating presentation. Rehearsals are also important, in order that your timing and delivery can be practiced.

No matter how much preparation has taken place, nerves are always apparent prior to any presentation. If possible, it is always beneficial to have a final rehearsal in the room where you are to present as this provides a useful check that your equipment is working successfully and gives a feeling for the size of the room.

The Presentation

When presenting, remember to speak clearly and not too quickly or slowly. It is important to look up and make eye contact with your audience frequently as this avoids any desire to constantly look at the script or screen. Body language should be used where appropriate, dress appropriately for the audience and avoid standing with hands in pockets. When you complete the presentation, ask the audience for questions and comments.

Final Notes

Always try to put yourself in the position of your audience. Consider what they want to hear or what they expect from the presentation.

If possible, ensure that the audience has a similar knowledge level and is not too varied. That way, you can ensure your presentation is more tailor-made.

When scheduling a presentation, avoid the morning following and the afternoon preceding a weekend, as people's thoughts are usually somewhere else. Also, try to avoid a time straight after lunch.

When arriving at the venue, check the electrical points, lighting controls and curtains/blinds should you need to close them. Always check your equipment before commencing the presentation.

When presenting try to adopt an open-handed, open-armed stance, rather than folding your arms and appearing abrupt and negative.

If you require the use of notes, ensure that you create bold reminder points on small cards. These can then be attached to a loop of string, allowing an easy recovery should you drop them.