

THE 4 PS OF GIVING A GOOD PRESENTATION



...and then, how to handle Questions

Step One

POSITIVE THINKING

Overcoming your anxiety and fear

Fear of public speaking

Over 41% of people have some fear or anxiety dealing with speaking in front of groups. For some, fear of speaking in public is the number one fear of all fears. (The fear of dying is number 7!)

‘There are two types of speakers: those that are nervous and those that are liars’

(Mark Twain. Although, he used bad grammar: it should have read, "... those who are nervous and those who are liars.")

REMEMBER: anxiety is perfectly normal.

A little nervousness is good - it shows you care about doing a good job, it can keep energy levels high - too much is bad – learn to be calm:

Remember the CALM approach

- + **C**onfront the problem positively
- + **A**pproach it as something that can and has to be dealt with
- + **L**ook for the steps that need to be taken in order to deal with it
- + **M**anage it by planning de-stress strategies

C I am frightened of giving my presentation

A I need to acknowledge my fears and recognise that I am not alone. I can then work out how to tackle this fear
What will make it less stressful?

L I will ask for help – I will see my tutor
I will research thoroughly
I will prepare properly

M I will speak to Geoff (or whoever)
I will make time to research (be specific).
I will learn about relaxation techniques, etc

- ✦ To reduce fear, prepare properly and thoroughly. This can help to reduce your fear by about 75%.
- ✦ Proper breathing techniques can further reduce this fear by another 15%.
- ✦ Your mental state accounts for the remaining 10%. Think positively. Think assertively.

Tips on overcoming speaking anxiety

Know The Room - become familiar with the place in which you will speak. Stand at the lectern, speak into the microphone. Walk around where the audience will be seated.

Walk from where you will be seated to the place where you will be speaking.

Visualize Yourself Speaking - Imagine yourself walking confidently to the lectern as the audience applauds. Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear and assured.

When you visualize yourself as successful, you will be successful.

Can you think of any other good tips?

Step Two

Preparing a good presentation

+ **Start early**

Think through what needs to be said. Collect material from unusual sources which may relate to the topic - sleep on these ideas. The end product will be more interesting and fully developed.

+ **State your case**

Using big letters and a bold pen, write a clear statement of the issue/problem and its importance. Pin the statement on the wall above your desk.

+ **Develop your ideas**

Develop the statement into one jargon-free sentence that will catch the attention of the audience. Next, identify the issues you plan to address - brainstorm, plan, etc.

+ **Know your audience**

Think about them. What do they already know? Don't assume they will already be familiar with basic concepts - outline these briefly but clearly early in the talk to avoid confusion.

+ **The 'elevator' presentation**

Try thinking that you have no more than two/three minutes in a moving elevator/lift to explain the essence of your presentation: this exercise forces you to be clear and concise.

+ **You as a facilitator**

Try thinking of your presentation in terms of a problem for which you are offering a solution. Strip it to the essentials: What are your main arguments? What evidence can you offer? Attempt to identify problems or questions the audience may have and address them in the talk, before the audience has a chance to think of these things themselves.

+ **Structuring**

- Arrange these issues in a logical order and sequence (this is flexible). This is easier if you use index cards and put one idea/issue on each card.
- Retention of information by the audience is reduced as a talk proceeds, so if you do want to make a series of points, organize them from the most to the least important. That way, the audience is more likely to remember the important points later. You may even find that the less important points become irrelevant to the focus of the talk as you practice.
- Use transition elements which will help your audience to follow the link from one issue to the next. These should be logical, and may be presented by posing a question, or explaining your own discovery of the link's existence.
- Use short sentences with simple constructions. Your 'message' will be made more clear and the sentence structure is more similar to conversational styles.

+ **Work in drafts**

Run through the talk once at a very early stage (like producing a first draft). Go over it and re-think it. Discard non-essential elements. Be strict about including only what is essential information for the presentation, and removing *all* the non-essential tidbits.

Step Three

Practice

Know Your Material - If you are not familiar with your material or are uncomfortable with it, your nervousness will increase. Practice your speech or presentation and revise it until you can present it with ease. Be prepared. Nothing will relax you more than to know you are properly prepared.

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Remember: 'He or she who fails to prepare is preparing for failure so prepare, prepare, prepare'.

Rehearsing:

- + Initially do it in private.
- + Then use videotape and assess critically. It can be painful, but worth it.
- + Then try the presentation out in front of friends. Ask for feedback, then *act on that information*.

TIP 1: Select those who know a little about your topic, and not those who know a lot. This will focus your attention on attempting to explain why you did what you did in simple terms, rather than encouraging attention to details only specialists care about.

TIP 2: Make sure you know exactly how you will begin. The first impression is vital – try to be interesting and compelling. You are trying to draw in the audience.

TIP 3: Ensure you have a prepared and memorable summary: this 'take home' message is what the audience will remember after you leave.

Step Four

Performance

Think about how you use your voice

- + Speak with enthusiasm – if you don't sound interested your audience won't be.
- + Be conscious of your articulation. Don't "mush" your words or syllables – slow down and practice hitting those consonants.
- + Remember to use pauses to let points sink in.
- + Avoid inaudibility - nothing is more frustrating than having to strain to hear speakers.

Before you start

TIP If possible, greet some of the audience as they arrive and chat with them. It is easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers.

TIP Try to relax:

Sit comfortably with your back straight.

Breathe in slowly, hold your breath for 4 to 5 seconds, then slowly exhale.

To relax your facial muscles, open your mouth and eyes wide, then close them tightly.

The Moment of Truth: Delivering the Presentation

1. **Relax.** Take several deep breaths as you are being introduced (but don't sigh!). Visualize your rehearsed opening statement; don't improvise at the last moment.
2. **Don't joke!** Beware of making jokes. The results can be disappointing, and may suggest an unprofessional attitude.
3. **Speak naturally.** Choose a natural, moderate rate of speech and use automatic gestures. Some people suggest about 100 words a minute.
4. **Don't fidget.** Monitor your behaviour, and avoid habitual behaviours (pacing, fumbling change in pocket, twirling hair).
5. **Avoid distractions.** Don't let any aids detract from your presentation. Make sure you don't distract the audience.
6. **If you go wrong.** If you lose your train of thought in mid-sentence then smile, say "excuse me" and start again. Remember: we all do it. People want you to succeed and are sympathetic. Keep smiling.
7. **Don't be over enthusiastic.** Enthusiasm for your topic is contagious, but don't overdo it - you'll alienate the audience.
8. **Involve the audience.** Converse with them, involve them in the process of the presentation by posing questions and making eye contact.
9. **Focus on the audience.** Pick one (or two) people easily visible to you, and "speak" to them. Remember to also observe others, but concentrate on just a few. This may or may not solve your "audiencophobia" but it will keep you in touch with your audience, and provide you with some feedback.

10. **Don't overrun.** Keep an eye on your time and don't run over your limit. Ever. An audience will always forgive you if you *underrun*; they will never forgive you if you *overrun*.

11. **Cope with interruptions.** Be prepared for interruptions (late arrivals, burnt out projector bulbs, fire drills, etc.).

12. **Stay in control.** If you must turn down the room lights, don't turn them off entirely or for longer than you need - remember to turn them back up!

13. **Don't apologize.** Don't apologize for any aspect of your presentation. This should be your very best effort; if you have to apologize, you haven't done your job properly. Remember that you are of equal value to the other people in the room; apologizing will make you appear subservient.

14. **Don't apologize for being nervous.** Most of the time, your nervousness won't show at all. If you don't say anything about it, nobody may notice. If you mention your nervousness or apologize for any problems you think you have with your speech, you'll only be calling attention to it. Had you remained silent, your listeners may not have noticed at all.

15. **Beware of ad-libbing when you are about to finish.** This will be unpracticed, and will be the last thing many of your audience will hear you say. End your talk with the insightful, firm summary statement you have prepared.

REMEMBER

You need to realize that people want you to succeed – All audiences want speakers to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They want you to succeed - not fail. The only people who *might* want you to fail are struggling with *their own* insecurities, for which you are not responsible.

... and finally,

Handling Questions

The question period is often the part of the talk which influences the audience the most. This is the part of the presentation where your ability to interact with the audience will be evaluated. Preparation is important. Here are a few guidelines:

1. Always repeat each question so the entire audience knows what you've been asked.
2. Before you answer, take a moment to reflect on the question. By not rushing to give an answer, you show a degree of respect for the questioner, and you give yourself time to be sure you are answering the question that was actually asked. If you are unsure, restate the question or ask for a clarification.
3. Above all, wait for the questioner to finish asking the question before you begin your answer! The only exception is when it becomes necessary to break in on a vague, rambling question; this is your show, and you have only a limited time to make your presentation. It is essential, however, that you break in tactfully. Say something like "So, are you asking?" This will focus the question and give you a place to begin an answer. Remember that your ability to interact with an audience is also being evaluated.
4. If a question is asked during the talk, and it will clarify an ambiguity, answer it immediately.
5. Postpone questions aimed at resolving specific problems (or arcane knowledge) until the end of the talk, or private discussion. This is particularly important if the answer will distract either you or the audience away from the flow of your presentation.

6. Avoid prolonged discussions with one person, extended answers, and especially arguments.

7. If you can't answer a question, just say so. Don't apologize. You then may:

- offer to research an answer, then get back to the questioner later.
- suggest resources which would help the questioner to address the question themselves.
- ask for suggestions from the audience.