Steps for Planning and Preparing an Effective Presentation

According to speaking consultant Lilyan Wilder (1999), two of the greatest myths about delivering oral presentations are that you're better off "winging it" and that good speakers are "naturals."

In order to give an effective presentation, it is necessary to prepare and practice, practice, practice. Despite the need to prepare, one of your goals still should be to sound spontaneous and comfortable while delivering your message in a clear, organized, and stimulating fashion. The information offered in this self-directed learning activity should help you achieve this goal.

Self-Assessment

Take a few minutes to assess your presentation skills and jot down your answers to the following questions:

1. What is your **experience** in giving presentations?

2. What do you **like** about it?

3. What do you **dislike** about it?

4. What skills would you like to **develop**?

Steps in Giving a Presentation

There are a few steps you need to take before giving your presentation, including thinking about who your audience is, what the expectations for the speech are, and selecting an appropriate topic. The four main steps in the process are:

1. **Plan**
2. **Prepare**
3. **Practice**
4. **Present**

STEP 1 – PLANNING

Before you even open up PowerPoint or write anything, sit down and really think about the day of your presentation. What is the real purpose of your talk? Why is it that you were asked to speak? What does the audience expect? In your opinion, what are the most important parts of your topic for the audience to take away from your presentation? Remember, even if you've been asked to share information, rarely is the mere transfer of information satisfactorily objective from the point of view of the audience. After all, the audience could always just read your handout if information transfer were the only purpose of the meeting, seminar, or formal presentation.

As you begin to plan your presentation, ask yourself these questions and jot down your notes:

1. **Who is your audience?**
2. **Why are they there?**
3. **What is your goal?**
4. **How long will it be?**
5. **Where will it take place?**

Business Card Test

Use the David Belasco test while you're in the planning stages.

David Belasco was a producer who insisted that the core idea for every successful play he produced could be written as a simple sentence on the back of a business card. Try it!

This is a good way to "sell" your message in 30-45 seconds. This too is certainly something you do before you ever begin to open up PowerPoint.

The goal for all talks is to have a list of 3 things you would like the audience to take away from your presentation. If your audience could remember only three things about your presentation what would you want it to be?

(1)_____

(2)_____

(3)_____

Choosing a topic and a focus

Choose a topic that not only excites you, but one about which you either are an expert or can become one. You may not have a choice about your topic, but regardless of the subject, you still make decisions about what direction you're going to take. Try to relate your topic to current issues, whether they are happening at your school, in your city, or in the world. Timeliness can make a presentation more interesting to your audience.

In order to focus on a topic, try to decide what your main goal will be. This will help give your paper direction and consistency. Some important main goals include:

- Interest
- Inform
- Persuade
- Motivate

To create Interest…

"We need to open gaps before we close them. Our tendency is to tell people the facts. First, though, they must realize that they need these facts."

~ Dan & Chip Heath, Made to Stick

Organizing and writing the presentation

Developing an oral presentation is different than writing a report that will be read silently. The audience can't turn back to the first part of your speech and examine what you said. That's why speakers often repeat themselves throughout their presentations. The informal formula for public speaking is *"First, tell the audience what you are going to tell them; then tell them; then tell them what you just told them."*

You should follow this mantra when structuring the notes that will serve as the basis for your oral presentation. Not only should you repeat some things, but you should also be extremely organized, so your listeners can easily follow what you say.

The first step to take before writing your presentation is to create an outline. Write down three to four main points, fill them in with subheadings, order your thoughts and key points.

Suggested Organization

Introduction – Get Attention

In addition to your main points, you need an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction should capture the audience's attention and warm you up. Some experts recommend humor, but exercise caution; if your joke falls flat, you immediately lose your audience. It's better to start on a genuine note. Some suggestions for introductions include:

- Refer to a local event or recent event in the news
- Tell a personal story, preferably one that is humorous
- Read a quote
- Ask a question
- Refer to something that just happened right before you presented

No matter which of these devices you use, they should be tied somehow to your topic. Make a statement that somehow connects the introduction to the body of the talk.

Main theme – Content
Include at least three to four main points.

Summary/Conclusions – Key Messages
Either end with a concluding statement or invite questions, or both. When you end, only use the words “in conclusion,” finally,” or “one more thing” if you are really finished. Also, don’t end your presentation suddenly without recapping what you’ve said (remember to remind your audience of what you’ve just told them).

STEP 2 − PREPARATION

A Speaker’s 3 Friends
1. Personal Notes
2. Visuals
3. Handouts

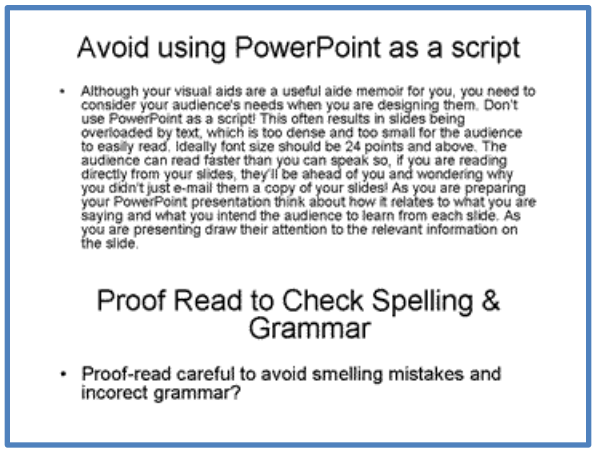
Personal Notes
To be seen only by the speaker, and used as a reminder of the topics and key points to cover.

Illustrative Slides
These slides should illustrate the major points and help motivate the listener. The illustrations should be relevant. They should convey new information. But they need not have words or if they do limit the number of words. They might have data, they might have graphs, and they might have photographs of the product, equipment, phenomenon, or other aspect of the point. They should add to the talk, not distract from it.

Handouts
Here is where the speaker can put the references, the data, and the appendices of the talk. Handouts provide information that can be used later to remember the points of the talk as well as to go on to further study.

PowerPoint Do’s and Don’ts

You clearly need a consistent visual theme throughout your presentation, but most templates included in PowerPoint have been seen by your audience countless times. Your audience expects a unique presentation with new (at least to them) content, otherwise why would they be attending your talk?



The evils of PowerPoint are familiar to everyone, they include:
- Too much text
- Too small to read and is really only serving as a crutch for the presenter
- Clip art and slide templates that have been seen a million times
- Spinning, whooshing, dazzling’s animations

Part of the problem with having so much text onscreen is that it puts off people. If the idea of your presentation is to read from the slides then why are you there? Besides people can read quicker than you can talk so they'll have finished reading your slide and be waiting for the next one, or even worse working on a masterpiece doodle.

Your presentation, PowerPoint or otherwise, should be a supporting aid – you want the main focus on you not your presentation. Ideally, you should be able to deliver an equally interesting presentation should the projector/computer/room/audience break.

Avoid too many bullets as well – it makes the information dull for the audience.

A few guidelines…

> **10 / 20 / 30 rule**
>
> "should have ten slides, last no more than twenty minutes, and contain no font smaller than thirty points."
>
> Guy Kawaski

10
Ten is the optimal number of slides in a PowerPoint presentation because a normal human being cannot comprehend more than ten concepts in a meeting.

20
"You should give your ten slides in twenty minutes. Sure, you have an hour time slot, but you're using a Windows laptop, so it will take forty minutes to make it work with the projector. Even if setup goes perfectly, people will arrive late and have to leave early. In a perfect world, you give your pitch in twenty minutes, and you have forty minutes left for discussion."

30
The reason people use a small font is twofold:

- they don't know their material well enough
- they think that more text is more convincing

Force yourself to use no font smaller than 30 points. It will make your presentations better because it requires you to find the most salient points and to know how to explain them well.

Use the same font set throughout your entire slide presentation, and use no more than two complementary fonts (e.g. Arial and Arial Bold).

Use Color Well

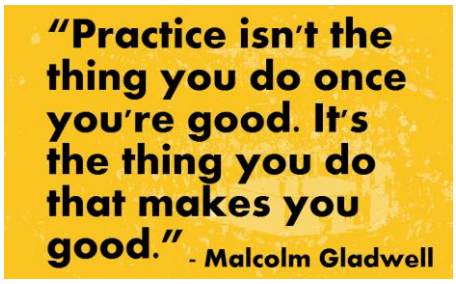
Pick 3 colors and stick to them. Color evokes feelings. Color is emotional. The right color can help persuade and motivate. Studies show that color usage can increase interest and improve learning comprehension and retention.

If you will be presenting in a dark room (such as a large hall), then a dark background (dark blue, grey, etc.) with white or light text will work fine. But if you plan to keep most of the lights on (which is highly advisable) then a white background with black or dark text works much better.

Using Images

- use high quality images
- use images to support your point
- use a consistent theme

STEP 3 – PRACTICE



You should practice your presentation at least once before you present it. Practice in an environment that is as similar as possible to where you'll be giving the presentation. Practice in front of people and use your visual aids. Your talk should be a combination of entertainment, information, and intellectual stimulation; all delivered with a spontaneous and comfortable feel. The following guidelines will help you achieve this:

1. **Do not memorize a paper and deliver it verbatim**. You may want to memorize certain small sections, and you will want to know the order of your presentation by heart, but the goal is to sound natural. Reading lines does not sound spontaneous unless you're a really good actor.

2. **Write in large, boldface letters, regardless of whether you use note cards or regular paper for your notes**. In order to engage your audience, you should look up from your paper or notes several times during the presentation, and you don't want to lose your place when you look back down at the text. Using note cards makes it easier to find your place, but some people don't like flipping through cards. Use what works best for you.

3. **Try recording yourself and listening to the tone, pitch, and speed of your voice**. Work on sounding natural and relaxed.

4. **Pause naturally as you would in conversation**.

5. **Practicing your speech out loud can help you clarify your thoughts**. As you practice, don't be afraid to add ideas or change what you've planned.

6. **You may want to add directions on your notes like "slow down," "look at the audience," and "remember to pause."** These will remind you to do the things that are sometimes hard to remember during the excitement of speaking in front of a group.

Logistics

If you're going to use any kind of equipment, make sure that everything is in working order before you arrive for your presentation. Try to anticipate what problems might arise, and how to solve them. For example, "what will I do if the computer crashes?" Or, "what will I do if the

person who speaks before me takes up too much time, and I have to shorten my presentation?" Be prepared for all possible things that can go wrong.

If you're not giving your presentation in a familiar location, check out the space before the day of your presentation so you know how big the room is and what kind of technical options are available (and functioning).

- ✓ Will you need a microphone?
- ✓ Is there internet or wireless connectivity?
- ✓ Do the electrical outlets and lights work? How are they controlled?
- ✓ Do you need a projection screen? If so, how does it work?

These are all important details.

STEP 4 – PRESENTING

You should use different language for an oral presentation than you would for a research paper. A speech should not sound as formal as a report. Remember that you're talking, and that people will respond better when the language is familiar.

You are the most powerful visual aid:
Introduce:

- What you're going to tell them
- Why you're telling them
- Why it's important

Make a strong start

You've heard it before: First impressions are powerful. Believe it. The first 2-3 minutes of the presentation are the most important. The audience wants to like you and they will give you a few minutes at the beginning to engage them – don't miss the opportunity. Most presenters fail here because they ramble on too long about superfluous background information or their personal/professional history, etc.

Show your passion

Let your enthusiasm come out. The biggest element that separates mediocre presenters from world class ones is the ability to connect with the audience in an honest and exciting way.

Move

Get closer to your audience by moving away from or in front of the podium. The podium is a barrier between you and the audience, but the goal of your presentation is to connect with the audience. Removing physical barriers between you and the audience will help you build rapport and make a connection. Make eye contact and pick out people in the audience as anchors.

Smile

Try looking at individuals rather than scanning the group. If you're using a computer, you never need to look at the screen behind you – just glance down at the computer screen briefly. One sure way to lose the audience is to turn your back on them. And while you're maintaining great eye contact, don't forget to **smile** as well. Unless the topic is very grim, a smile can be a very powerful thing.

Dealing with Questions

Using the TRACT technique

1. **T**hank the questioner
2. **R**epeat the question for all to hear
3. **A**nswer the question
4. **C**heck with the questioner if they are satisfied
5. **T**hank them again

Video - Tips on Giving Oral Presentations with Mr. Brewer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKOO99UjsSE ,
(2:07 minutes), Presented by Josh Brewer, March 3, 2013

Take time to watch the video for some humorous but important tips when giving a presentation.

Summary of Information presented in the video to remember

1. Be aware of you **Volume** - not too soft and not too loud
2. **Pace** – talk in a normal voice
3. **Expression** – be excited
4. **Body Language** – face audience and don't fidget
5. Maintain **Eye Contact** with your audience and don't read your presentation

Always remember to be prepared. When it's all over, ask for feedback, and remember that this is a learning experience. You'll continue to become a better public speaker the more times you through this process.

Sources:

- How to Prepare an Oral Presentation, Corporate Britannica
- Presentation Skills, Dr. Mark Matthews
- Tips on Giving Oral Presentations with Mr. Brewer, You Tube

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