

SO YOU'VE BEEN ASKED TO MAKE A PRESENTATION!

Self-Paced Guide



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HOW WILL THIS GUIDE HELP YOU?

For many people, making presentations is considered as their number one fear, more frightening than death itself!

Just the thought of having to talk in front of others, may make your heart start to race, your face blush with colour and your hands start to sweat!

Do you envy presenters who look calm and in control, who confidently and clearly put their message across?

Have you ever considered that these presenters were not born that way? Looking around the infant school playground, you do not see good or bad presenters. Sure there are some personality trends – some people are introverts and some are extroverts. The simple truth is that good presenters have had lots of practice and most good presenters have been trained to present well.

Being able to put your point, business case, proposal or recommendation forward is as critical to it being accepted as the information itself; therefore making effective presentations is an essential skill and one that can be learnt and improved by taking note of the key elements contained in this guide which will help you to;

- plan the content of your presentation;
- organise the structure to ensure it is easy to listen to;
- start your presentation so that you gain the interest of your audience;
- prepare and use visual aids to support your message;
- end your presentation confidently;
- handle questions effectively;
- use your voice, posture and gestures to complement your message;
- keep nerves under control

You will already be experienced with communicating in a one on one basis; this reference guide will help you prepare for more formal situations.

You will gain tips and hints to make you look professional and feel confident – certainly a good idea for your stress levels!

Continued on next page

What is your objective?, Continued

To complete this learning effectively you need to follow the instructions indicated. Each section will help you achieve one or more of the learning outcomes.

There are a number of activities to help you develop the skills and knowledge required to manage your time effectively. They may ask you to answer questions, discuss issues with others or find additional information.

As you follow the sections, you will notice a number of icon prompts. Each icon signals different types of activities that you may or may not wish to complete.



TIP



HINT



ACTIVITY

As you progress through this guide you may wish to refer to your manager for assistance or information. Your manager is there to support your learning.

HOW TO GAIN THE MOST BENEFIT FROM THIS GUIDE

This guide will be most effective if you use it to assist you with preparing for an actual presentation you are required to make.

By referring to a real scenario and applying the process, tips and techniques covered, you will be able to practice these and see the benefit and value of them.

Whether you are making a presentation in a formal setting or more informally at a meeting or to your team, the principles contained in this guide will still apply. How it is structured, the way you present, the use of visual aids and how questions are handled need to be considered in all forms of presentations.

Before you start to think about what to present, there are a number of considerations that are essential to work through

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

“It takes more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech”

Mark Twain

What is your objective?

Ask yourself the question, “Why am I presenting? What do I want to achieve by presenting this?”

The answers can be varied, but may include:

- To recommend a change in a system or process
- To gain approval for the introduction of a new piece of equipment
- To provide knowledge or information to others
- To persuade others that your proposal will meet their needs
- To gain commitment to an idea
- To get others to take action
- To entertain (e.g. at a wedding)

If you could only say one sentence about this topic, what would it be? For example:

- David Jones should delete xyz brand from their fashion ranges
- This new technology will speed up processing time by 50%

Whatever your objective, ensure you know clearly what you hope to gain from presenting and what outcome you are looking for. This way it will be easier to measure your success.



ACTIVITY

Think about the presentation you are required to deliver

Clearly write down your objective for presenting

Who is your audience?

It's all too easy, when you have to give a presentation to focus on the information you want to present and your feeling about the topic.

Of course, these things are important, but what is even more important is what you want the audience to know, feel and go away and do at the end of your presentation.

Therefore, when planning your presentation, you need to shift your focus solely to the area that matters most: the audience. Try and put yourself in their shoes and find out as much as you can about their interests, attitudes and problems.

Consider what they already know about the topic, how you think they will react to your presentation and how interested they will be. Also think about their demographics (status, age, background, educational level etc) so that you can tailor the language and level to suit them. This is vital if you want to keep them engaged and interested.



ACTIVITY

Thinking about your presentation, consider your audience by answering the following questions:

How many people will there be?

How much are they likely to know about the subject?

What is their attitude likely to be about the topic I am presenting?

What objections are likely to be raised?

What will motivate them?



Tip

Don't be afraid to ask questions, either of the persons who asked you to give them presentation or of prospective audience members to determine their expectations.

General audience characteristics

As well as developing a profile of your audience, it's useful to keep in mind some other characteristics that people tend to share when we put them into the role of passive listeners.

A limited attention span. It is very easy for us to think of other things. This highlights the need for speakers to involve the audience as actively as possible in the presentation to maintain their full attention.

A tendency to think in images. The human brain provides us with a constant source of creative and stimulating images. By comparison, the spoken word can seem very flat and uninteresting. Choice of evocative language and use of visual aids can help capture and maintain the attention of the audience.

Many preoccupations. Most people have many demands on their time. Speakers need to be sensitive and achieve a balance between the length of the presentation and the time needed to cover the required information.

Tip



Talk in the 'language' of the audience – include vocabulary, phrases and buzz words they would use.

Use examples, analogies and anecdotes that they will recognise as coming from their background. An analogy that attempts to describe the length of something as 'approximately two cricket pitches' would be helpful to some audiences in the UK but of little use in the U.S.A.

PREPARING YOUR MATERIAL

The Structure

To ensure your presentation is easy to listen to, it needs to be structured, with a beginning, middle and an end.

Put in another way ...

“Tell them what you’re going to tell them

Tell them

Tell them what you’ve told them”

The introduction will gain your audiences’ attention, the body will provide the necessary information to support the subject and the close will summarise the key points and ensure your presentation ends on a positive note.

When planning what will go into each part, the starting point will be the body of the presentation.



ACTIVITY

Watch the news on TV tonight and observe how on every channel with every newsreader, they follow this 3 step approach when delivering the news

The Body

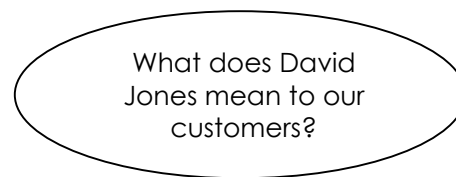
You can only start to work on the content of your presentation when you are clear about your objective and audience.

A useful way to do this is to create a mind map. Mind maps are particularly effective as they use both the right and left sides of our brains. The left is concerned with logic, sequence, language, analysis and detail. The right side with music, images, colour, dimensions and pattern. While the left sees the details and “bits and pieces”, the right sees the whole picture.

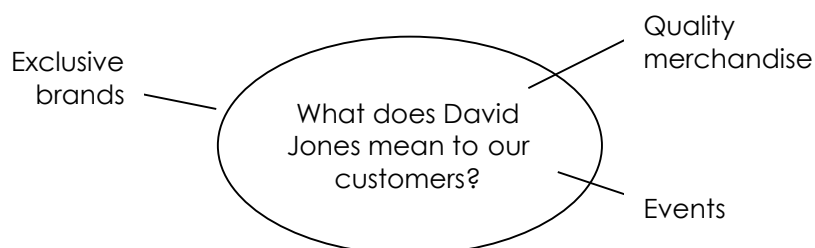
When we start planning our presentation, if we rely on the left we may not always see ‘the wood from the trees’ and potentially miss some important information.

Mind maps are easy to create if you follow these steps:

1. On a piece of paper write the subject in the middle

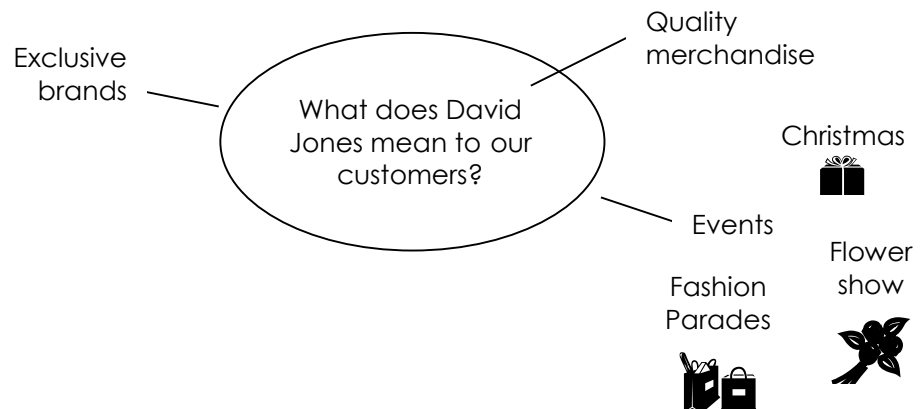


2. As ideas about the subject spring to mind, jot them down around the subject as ‘branches’



3. Try not to evaluate the ideas as this can interrupt your stream of thought

4. As related ideas come to mind, add them onto the branches and keep going



5. Use colour, symbols and pictures to capture your thoughts

Once you have created your mind map, leave it alone for a day or so – ‘sleep on it’ and come back to it to see if you have any further ideas.

Now that you have generated a mass of ideas for your presentation, it will be necessary to edit, but how will you decide what to leave in or cut out?

The principles you need to think about are:

- Cut out what does not meet your objective
- Keep what meets your objective and is relevant to the audience

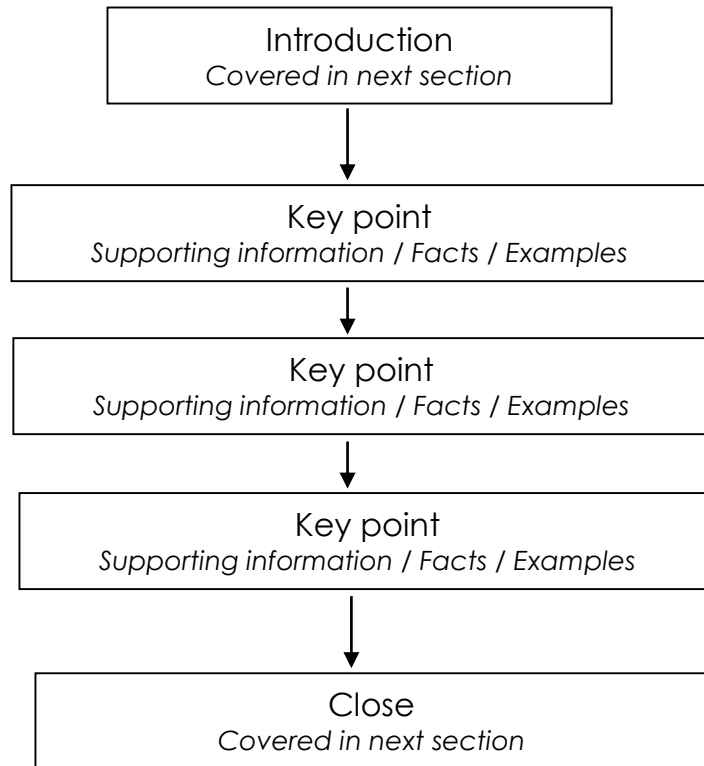
This sounds straightforward but can be difficult to apply. The more you know about a subject the more ideas you will generate, and to you, the expert, all the ideas are relevant.

Another idea is to categorise the content into:

- Musts – items that are essential to include, these are necessary to meet your objective
- Shoulds – items that add value to your presentation, they may provide supporting information
- Coulds – items that could be included if you had all the time in the world, however practically you don’t so these will be deleted

The audience will likely remember only three things from your presentation – plan in advance what these will be and limit the main body of your presentation to these 3 key points.

When preparing your presentation therefore, visually it will look like this:



ACTIVITY

Prepare a mind map for your presentation and identify what the key points are that you will cover.

Consider the logical order and flow that the main body of your presentation will follow and plan what supporting information you will include



TIP

The rule of three is an important one – not only should you limit your presentation to three key points but also use lists of three where ever you can.

Lists of three have been used from early times – they are particularly used by politicians and advertisers, for example.

Veni, Vidi, Vici (I came, I saw, I conquered) – Julius Caesar
Work, rest & play – advertising slogan

If you have four points to get across – cut one out. They won't remember it anyway. In presentations less really is more.

“No-one ever complained of a presentation being too short”



HINT

To keep your presentation alive, consider these 3 principles:

1. Keep it **local** – make sure your facts are local and uncomplicated
2. Keep it **simple** – avoid sweeping statements and an overload of information
3. **Identify** – use words that identify your audience with your subject, make them feel part of it

For example

You might say that 0.13% of Australians are likely to have a heart attack this year. This is too complicated and many people won't appreciate the significance of this fact unless it's simplified. So you might rephrase it in this way. “Twenty thousand Australians will have a heart attack this year.”

Whilst better, this is still not local, so consider rephrasing again. “One person in every twenty in this room could have a heart attack this year.”

However if you really want your audience to identify with this fact, try this approach. “Statistically, two people in this room will suffer from a heart attack this year.”

This way you are talking to the people in front of you. They are not hearing about anonymous millions – they are potential heart attack victims.

Back to the beginning

The first 2 minutes of a presentation are of enormous importance and therefore a good strong start is critical. Whether we like it or not, audiences will make decisions in those critical moments that will impact their attention for the balance of the presentation

The introduction needs to be well prepared and rehearsed and should include the following:

Purpose

What are you hoping to achieve from the presentation? Why are you presenting?

Benefits

You need to give the audience a reason for listening and ensure they understand what they will gain from listening to you – the “What’s in it for them”. The benefit must be personal and tangible; benefits to the organisation will not have the same impact.

Create interest

If you don’t grab your audience’s interest at the start of the presentation you will be unlikely to engage them at all. Interest can be created a number of ways - an interesting statistic, a quotation, an anecdote, a shocking statement or an exciting visual may work well. Whatever you choose, ensure it is directly related to the subject.

Structure

The audience needs some idea of where you will be taking them before you set off. You should therefore give the key points you will be covering and how the presentation will be structured eg. if they will be required to form groups, when questions will be taken etc.



ACTIVITY

Prepare the introduction for your presentation. Write down what you will say and practice. Think about how it sounds and rework and practice until you are happy with it.

Ending your presentation

The close is the reinforcement of your ideas, expressed in a way, which will leave your audience in no doubt about the purpose of your presentation.

It must be put positively, clearly and simply, as the last statement you make is likely to be the best remembered.

Closing Techniques

The Summary Close – this is particularly useful if you want the audience to remember the key features of your speech after you have finished talking. Rather than saying, “Now, let me summarise...”, a more effective close might be using phrases such as “You will remember that”.or “Just think”

For example

“Just think for a moment what benefits can be gained from introducing this new incentive scheme; highly motivated employees, increased productivity and true recognition of our talented sales employees – I’m sure you’ll agree this will be a positive move.”

The Question Close – it is sometimes a good thing for the presenter to let the audience go away trying to think of the answer that has been put to them.

For example

“We have made significant progress with ensuring our customers receive good service on each visit and the new strategies covered will ensure this continues to improve. What is critical for us all to consider now is *What more can we do that will not make our service not only great but truly extraordinary?*”

Closing with a Poem or Quotation – If you are confident with your voice and articulation, a poetic close can be used effectively.

For example

“So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable”

The Story Close – this appeals if the story is relevant and interesting – it can be serious or humorous.



ACTIVITY

Prepare the close for your presentation. Consider what you can say that will reinforce what you have covered and how you can make it memorable.

***“A speech should be ended, not allowed to expire.
The end should be a climax, not an anti-climax”***

Visual Aids

Why should I use visual aids?

Research has shown that people take in information through our various senses as follows:

- Sight 17%
- Hearing 15%
- Touch 6%
- Taste 2%
- Smell 2%

Therefore, you need to take advantage of your audience's preference of seeing information by using visual aids to reinforce your verbal message.

Using visual aids provides a focus point for your audience and prevents them being visually distracted by something else in the room.

Visual aids can include Powerpoint slides, flip charts, videos and handouts.

A variety of visual aids can make your presentation more stimulating and memorable.

Visual aids should be used to:

- Create and hold interest
- Focus your audience's attention
- Reinforce key points of your presentation
- Illustrate information that is hard to visualise



HINT

When we mention visual aids slides, flipcharts and videos come to mind. These are the conventional things that you see in most presentations. However, a visual aid can be anything that helps you get your message across.

You are only limited by your imagination, the more unusual the visual, the greater likelihood that the message will be remembered.

Continued on next page

Ending your presentation, Continued



5 Tips for successful PowerPoint presentations

PowerPoint slides can add terrific visual value to your presentation, or they can put the audience to sleep.

So, how do you use PowerPoint to your advantage?

1. Use slides sparingly

One of the biggest problems is the overuse of slides. You should have no more than one slide for every two minutes of your presentation.

2. Make slides visually attractive

Think about your audience and what will be the best way to represent the information in each slide. Pictures, bullet points, graphs, flow charts, etc. will illustrate your message more clearly than lots of text. Remember a picture can be worth a thousand words.

3. Avoid unnecessary slides

If something is simple and can be stated verbally there is no need for a slide.

4. Present one key point per slide

Keep the message on the slide clear and simple. Any more than one key idea per slide can detract from your message and confuse your audience.

5. Ensure the slide is legible

Can the audience read everything? Walk to the back of the room and make sure everything on the slide can be read clearly. (The minimum font size should be 20pt).

PowerPoint Traps

- Do not fall into the trap of putting all of your information on the slide. Remember, if all of your presentation is on the slide and you are reading out the same information – then one of you is redundant! Use your visual aids to emphasize your key points only and provide the relevant detail yourself.
- PowerPoint allows you to animate your slides, have words fly in, build lines up, have different animation to change slides, etc. Use these sparingly. Your mission is to deliver a message, not to impress the audience with how clever you are with PowerPoint.

Continued on next page

Ending your presentation, Continued

Flipcharts

While PowerPoint slides are today's preferred method of visual communication there are other aids available. One of the more traditional is the familiar flipchart.

Flipcharts can provide you with an easy, inexpensive way to make colourful visual aids that can present key words and ideas to increase the retention of the key presentation ideas.

They are also an excellent tool for group activities such as brainstorming or problem solving exercises.

Tip



Tips for using flipcharts

- Flipcharts must be legibly written. Illegible or small writing will frustrate your audience. Use letters of at least 5cm tall.
 - Use key words only don't crowd the page with words, you want to keep your audience focussed on the important points
 - Use bullet points
 - No more than 5 points per page
 - Use dark colours (black, blue) for words, other colours for graphs or illustrations
 - Prepare pencil guidelines for graphs, illustrations, etc. beforehand
 - Leave a blank sheet between pages so that the audience isn't distracted by the next flipchart
 - If you will need to refer back to a previous flipchart during your presentation, stick it to the wall with blu tac to avoid having to turn back pages
-

Handouts

Handouts are an effective way for your audience to be reminded of your key message after they have left the presentation.

They allow you to:

- Provide more detailed information than you would put on a slide
- Provide statistics, diagrams, graphs etc to support your message
- Provide material to be reviewed later (e.g. summary of key points)

You don't need to limit your handout to the topics covered in your presentation. You can include related information that supports your message.

Continued on next page

Ending your presentation, Continued

Videos / DVDs

A video or DVD or a section thereof can be used to support the information you are giving.

They can:

- Provide examples
- Show an 'expert' on your subject
- Provide variety and a change of pace to your presentation (but don't use it for this reason only - if it doesn't add value to your topic, don't use it at all).

Make sure that everybody can see the screen, that there is no glare on the screen from lights or windows and that the volume is adequate for the people at the back of the room without being too loud for those closest to the monitor.

Always introduce the video to give it context to your presentation. At the conclusion of the video summarise the content and relate it back to your message. Ensure the link is clear and not tenuous.



ACTIVITY

1. Read through your presentation.
2. Using the information and tips in this section decide which visual aids will enhance your presentation.
3. Prepare your visual aids.

Note: if you wish to use PowerPoint and have never used it before – find a colleague who has to assist you. These presentations can be fairly simple to create and still provide excellent visual support to your presentation.



Tip

Using more than one visual aid can add interest to a slightly longer presentation; however in a short presentation it may be more practical to stick with one to ensure a good flow.

Staying on track

Preparing Notes

You have spent some time carefully creating the content of your presentation.

Some people may be tempted to write the presentation out word by word. While this can be useful to check the logical flow of the material, it is not recommended that it be used during the presentation. Presenters who read word for word from a 'script' do not have eye contact with their audience and tend to read in a monotone without any variance in tone or pitch.

Nor are you expected to memorise the entire presentation word for word. How then do you stay on track during the presentation?

Most presenters use cue or prompt cards. These contain brief information, which can be understood at a quick glance and 'prompt' the presenter to the next point.

What you write on your prompt cards is a matter of personal style. It should be what information is important and relevant to you as a guide to your presentation, but it should be kept brief.

The use of prompt cards is widely accepted and you can openly refer to them throughout your presentation without concern.

You can either hold the cards in your hand, or you may choose to lay them on the table.

Rehearse using the cards and the pauses for the prompt will seem like a natural part of the presentation and not distracting to the audience.



Tip

Practice using the Load, Aim, Fire technique:

- Load - Look down at your card, digest key points
- Aim - Look up and engage your audience
- Fire - Deliver your message

Continued on next page

Staying on track, Continued



Tips for Creating Effective Prompt Cards

- One key message per card (this ensures that you have covered all of your key points)
- Do not use too many words or it will become like a script and you can either end up reading from it or continually referring to it
- Write on one side of the card only (this saves the distraction of turning the card over)
- Write larger than normal with a space between the lines (even bolder and larger if laying them on a table)
- Number the cards – so if you drop them you can resort them quickly
- Make a note on the card of when visual aids are used (this can be a symbol or a drawing)



ACTIVITY

Create prompt cards for your presentation.

PREPARING YOURSELF

The 3 V's of Presenting

"It's not just what you say, but how you say it!"

The message you are delivering to your audience is communicated in a number of ways.

Visual 55% of your message comes through the visual aspects of your presentation – your facial expression, your body language and your gestures.

Verbal – 38% comes through the way you say it – tone, rate of speech, pitch and volume.

Vocal – 7% comes through what is said – the words themselves.

Standing in a rigid position with little animation and speaking in a monotone without eye contact is a sure way to deliver a dud presentation. We communicate with much more than just our words; our nonverbal actions carry our feelings.

You should look to present in a natural conversational style, literally as if you were having a conversation with the audience. This is the style that most people are familiar with and relate to.

It is therefore very important that not only should you prepare the words themselves, but prepare yourself to deliver the visual and verbal aspects of your presentation.

VISUAL

The visual side of your presentation is about your body language. It includes your facial expressions, gestures, movement and general appearance. These should give your presentation credibility and reinforce the message you are giving.

Eye Contact

Make eye contact. Look in people's eyes as you speak. Again this makes it personal as well as personable as you relate with your audience as individuals.

Continued on next page

The 3 V's of Presenting, Continued

VISUAL (continued)

Stance and gestures

Find your natural stance for presenting and practice in front of a mirror, friends or family. Your natural stance should be comfortable but not too relaxed and not distract from your message. Exactly what is appropriate will depend of the formality of the presentation, how you stand to present at a conference will be different to how you will stand when talking with your team in a weekly briefing.

Gestures are used for emphasis in normal conversation without thinking about what we are doing with our hands. When speaking in front of a group people become very conscious about their hands.

Doing any of the following may be unnatural and distract from your presentation:

- Keep both hands in your pockets
- Keep your hands 'handcuffed' behind your back
- Keep your arms crossed
- Wring hands nervously

Practise gesturing in front of a group exactly as you would do in a conversation with a friend. Use the gestures to reinforce your message. When aligned to what you say, gestures can be very valuable. Between gestures relax your hands by your side – do not hold them up in front of you with your elbows bent.

Movement

Try not stand in one spot all of the time. Even a half step to the side will help ease muscle tension. This will also make you appear relaxed and natural to your audience

However, too much movement, such as pacing up and down, can distract your audience.

When you are standing, stand up straight, with your weight evenly distributed. Changing weight from foot to foot can be distracting.

Mannerisms

Be careful of distracting mannerisms such as rubbing your nose, scratching your neck, looking constantly at your notes, fiddling with a pen or jewellery etc.

Continued on next page

The 3 V's of Presenting, Continued

Mannerisms (continued)

As we noted in the section on Visual Aids people are attracted by visual activity. Distracting mannerisms will divert attention from your message.

VERBAL

The main aspects of verbal communication are tone, rate of speech, pitch and volume.

The following suggestions can help you develop voice control and speak with a strong, clear voice.

- Remember to breathe – take a deep breath before you start. Shallow breathing will constrict the voice and raise the pitch.
- Speak clearly – don't shout or whisper. Judge the size of the room, the number of people. The people at the back should be able to hear you clearly, without the closest people feeling that you are shouting. If possible practise in the room before the presentation.
- Don't rush. People tend to speed up their speech when anxious, and this can lead to tripping over words or speaking indistinctly. Change the pace of your voice to add interest and reinforce key points.
- Vary your tone, place emphasis on the key words in the presentation. Try this quick exercise. Say the following sentence several times – placing the emphasis on a different word each time.

"I didn't say you broke the vase"

- Pause after making a key point. This will emphasise importance of the point you have just made.

When you are about to speak remember three T's.

Think about your opening statement

Take a deep breath

Talk

Continued on next page

The 3 V's of Presenting, Continued

VOCAL

- Always practise your presentation out loud. Sometimes what appears to be fine in the written form turns out to be a tongue twister when you have to say it.
 - Look out for words that you have difficulty in pronouncing. It is better to replace them than stumble over them in your presentation.
 - Avoid the 'ums' and ahhs'. Be aware if these creep into your presentation. Equally annoying to the audience are repeated words and phrases such as 'right' or 'you know'
-



Tip

Record your presentation, or have a friend or colleague listen to you practise,

This can help to highlight any annoying visual mannerisms or and annoying vocal habits that you may not be aware of.

Continued on next page

The 3 V's of Presenting, Continued



ACTIVITY

At the next presentation you attend at work, consider the style, techniques and language the presenter uses and identify the impact these had on you as the listener

For example

Style/Techniques/Language	Impact
Used visual aids to support key points	Helped audience stay on track
Tone, pace and volume of voice did not vary very much during presentation	Interest levels decreased in the middle of the presentation and some key points were missed
Some jargon used that was not known to audience	Distracted and confused audience

Your observations

Style/Techniques/Language	Impact

Dealing with Nerves

Anxiety is a natural state that exists any time we are placed under stress, and as mentioned at the start of this workbook for many people making presentations is considered as their number one fear.

Don't worry, almost everyone experiences some stress before a presentation, even if it is just a simple task like presenting at a meeting. The trick is to make your excess energy work for you.

When you learn to make the stress work for you, it can be the fuel for an enthusiastic and dynamic presentation.

"The trick is to get the butterflies in your stomach to fly in one direction"



Tips for Dealing with Nerves

- Be organised. What you learn from this workbook will allow you to have a properly organised presentation. This will give you the confidence to focus your energy into your presentation.
 - Practice your presentation. Not just mentally or lip-reading but out loud as if there were an audience in front of you, using your visual aids if you have them. This will give you familiarity with the presentation and with familiarity comes confidence.
 - Visualise yourself delivering your presentation with great success. Visualise this in detail and it will help you focus on what you need to do to be successful.
 - Other tips to help you relax are:
 - Relax and remember to breathe deeply. Stress causes shallow breathing.
 - Use simple meditation techniques. A simple method is to tell yourself "I am" as you inhale and "relaxed" as you exhale.
 - Relax your body using this simple exercise. Tighten your body then release all your tension as you exhale. Do this several times and you will feel your body relax.
-

Answering Questions

Most presentations include time for questions from the audience. It is a good idea to check the comprehension of your audience by taking questions. It is up to you when the question time is. You can tell your audience that you will take questions at the end or as you go.

Prepare for questions

When preparing your presentation, you should be able to anticipate the likely questions you will receive and practice answers for these anticipated questions.

Asking for questions

If you ask for questions passively you will in all probability not receive a response. To seek questions actively raise your own hand and ask "Does anyone have questions for me?" Raising your hand will convey two things. Firstly it is a visual sign for questions and secondly it indicates that anyone who has a question should raise their hand instead of shouting out their question. Allow a pause after you ask for questions to allow time for them to think.

Listen to the whole question

Listen to the whole question before responding, maintaining eye contact with the person asking the question.

Clarify and amplify

If the person asking the question does so in a complicated way you should restate the question in a simple format. This will ensure that you are answering the right question as well as clarifying it for the rest of the audience. Similarly if the question is asked softly you should repeat it so that the rest of the audience know what question you are answering

Be honest

If you don't know the answer say so, and tell the person that you will find out and get back to them, or perhaps somebody else in the group may know the answer

Involve the whole group

Direct 25% of your eye contact to the person who asked the question and 75% to the rest of the group

Environment

If you are presenting at a meeting then it is unlikely that you will have any control over such things as the seating arrangements, lighting and heating.

If possible you should try to practice in the same place in the room where you will be giving your presentation using the equipment that you will be actually using. This will highlight any issues with the environment in time for you to correct them.

There are other things that you will be able think about before your presentation to ensure that it runs smoothly.

Computer and Projector

Check the computer and projector before the presentation. Have a back-up plan ready (for example copy of slides)

Flip Chart

Is there enough paper? Do you have a supply of marking pens and have you checked to make sure they haven't dried out?

Handouts

Are they easily accessible and in order, so they can be distributed with minimum disruption? Have you considered asking someone to assist you with distribution?

Instant Presentations

Sometimes, when you are least expecting it, someone will ask you to say a few words about something you are involved in, a promotion, event or a project. This may be at a meeting or a less formal location, for example in your workplace.

When this occurs many people manage to stumble through a few words and spend the rest of the day thinking about what they really should have said.

If something like this happens to you, **do not panic!**

You now know the fundamentals of organising your thoughts, and you know your job. With these two resources you can successfully respond by doing the following:

- Create an organised pattern for your reply (remembering our rule of three) for example:
 - Past, present and future (or any time-oriented combination)
 - Idea 1, 2, 3 (e.g. sales, budget, stock position)
 - Action steps (1st step, 2nd step, 3rd step)
- Start by explaining what you are about to tell them, for example, "I would like take you through our sales results to date, where we are against budget and our current stock position".
- Then talk through each of the points.
- Review the main points
- Conclude by having an end point, for example, "So briefly that is how we currently stand in sales, against budget and our stock position".

Having an organised pattern will help you know where you are going and take some of the stress out of the situation. It will keep you to the points you wish to make, prevent you from sounding lost or confused and it will give you a clear point at which to stop.

Final preparation

Now you are almost ready to present, you have prepared your material, your visual aids and you have considered how you will deliver your presentation.

Before the actual presentation itself, you should plan to rehearse in front of a colleague who will be able to give you constructive feedback. This will enable you to gain the perspective of the audience, gain feedback on your delivery style and make amendments if required to enhance your presentation. This will in turn improve your confidence.

To assist with this, it may be helpful to use the attached checklist to ensure they provide valuable information based on the key areas you have prepared.

In addition you may like to provide the checklist in advance to your manager or a colleague who will be attending the actual presentation itself. This will enable you to receive feedback from the actual presentation.

The checklist can also be used as a self-assessment tool for you to reflect on how well the presentation went.

Don't limit yourself to asking for feedback only on one occasion, use this frequently to perfect your skills and continue to improve.

Presentation Skills Checklist

Yes No

Introduction

Was the purpose/objective of presentation clear?

Were the benefits to the audience explained?

Was interest created?

Was the structure of the presentation explained?

Comments

Yes No

Body

Were the key points presented in a logical order?

Was an appropriate amount of detail included?

Comments

Close

Yes No

Was an appropriate close used to bring all points together?

Did the presentation end on a positive note?

Comments

Visual Aids**Yes No**

Were visual aids used at relevant times to emphasise key points?

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Were visual aids prepared professionally and used effectively?

--	--

Comments

Did the presenter**Yes No**

Make eye contact?

--	--

Use gestures to compliment their presentation rather than distract from it?

--	--

Speak clearly and at an appropriate speed?

--	--

Vary their tone and emphasis key words/phrases?

--	--

Use appropriate language?

--	--

Appear organised and prepared?

--	--

Answer questions confidently?

--	--

Comments

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt?

As well as being aware of how to prepare for and deliver a presentation you need to know and use all of the activities and techniques until they become your normal way of doing things.

For your next presentation, notice the ways you have changed what you do because of the learning activities you have completed in this Reference Guide.

To assist you in your reviewing your learning, compare your performance against the key elements that have been covered in this guide:

- plan the content of your presentation;
- organise the structure to ensure it is easy to listen to;
- start your presentation so that you gain the interest of your audience;
- prepare and use visual aids to support your message;
- end your presentation confidently;
- handle questions effectively;
- use your voice, posture and gestures to compliment your message;
- keep nerves under control.

So, should we wish you good luck with future presentations? As you now know, luck has little to do with it. All you need to be an effective presenter is good planning, careful preparation, enthusiastic delivery..... and plenty of practice!

CONGRATULATIONS on preparing for making a successful presentation!
