

Presentation Skills – hints and tips

Whether you're an 'old hand' speaker or first time presenter, here are some top tips to help you prepare for your presentation – guaranteed to take you from good to GREAT! Did you know the number one fear in the UK is speaking in public, closely followed by being seen naked in public and death! Even if you don't suffer with nerves, here are some top tips to help you prepare.

1. Get the stage fright out of the way

Everyone gets the jitters – it's the adrenaline you need to perform well and most professional presenters live to the rule 'If you're not a little bit nervous then something is wrong'.

2. What outcome do you want?

What do you want from the audience? Will you ask them to accept a point of view, change an opinion, or do things differently? Before organising the content, put yourself in the audience's shoes, picture their attitudes on arrival, and plan to persuade.

3. Focus on one key issue

All decisions about the content, visuals and question time turn on one initial decision: what is the single key issue you will address in this presentation?

4. Outline the talk

Outline a beginning, middle and end. What's the history? What problems are we seeing? What are the consequences of recent results? Arrange the background so the issue is obvious by the time you get to it. The middle is the **Issue** – why it's important to you, others, the audience. The end is the **Decision**. What you recommend, why, and what are the benefits of taking this decision.

5. How to Avoid panic

- Try to get to the room in advance of the meeting to set up and get yourself ready. This may also help avoid nerves, as you will start to panic if everyone is waiting for you to start and you are still sorting your technology out.
- If you use PowerPoint, ask someone else to work your visuals. Agree a signal that you will give when you want them to flick to the next slide
- Don't practice in the hour before you present

6. Keep it Conversational

Plan to be talking with people rather than to them. Think conversation, neighbours over the fence, buddies in the pub, coffee mornings, talk at the water cooler, or a good old political chin wag with anyone who happens to be nearby. And reveal your feelings; it often carries the day.

7. Spice with Variety

To support your points – and hold the audience – vary your examples, images and language. Invoke quotes, anecdotes, statistics, reports, surprise, and imagination, and more. Use similes, metaphors, comparisons and contrasts. Use adjectives and adverbs freely to create strong feeling, alter mood, and keep the audience on the edge of their collective seat.

8. Watch the Time

Fit the speech to the time available. Talking faster or adding fillers never works. Weave a web in the first ten seconds and don't try to cram too much in.

9. Taking Questions

Practice in front of the mirror looking thoughtful, interested and pleased because you'll need these poses when someone asks a question you don't like, you don't want to answer, or think is silly. So the rules: do look thoughtful, interested, and pleased; don't look puzzled, frightened, uneasy, disdainful, irritated or annoyed. Your investment in a good talk can go down the drain with one unwelcome facial expression.

10. Closing

- Thank the audience warmly for their time, attention and interesting questions.
- Let them know whether you will be taking further questions at the end of the session.
- Let them know whether they can contact you at a later date. If yes, say that you will be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to be in touch
- And here is your big chance: smile while saying goodbye.