



General Staff Conference 2016

Tips for Presenters

Compiled by Professional Development

Contents

The four Ps of presentations.....	3
How confident are you?.....	4
Characteristics of a good presenter.....	5
Planning for your session.....	6
Preparing your message.....	8
Preparing yourself.....	12
Presenting your message.....	15
A word about PowerPoint.....	17
Personal Pitfalls.....	18
Tips for question time.....	19
Presentation checklist.....	20
On the day.....	21
Notes:.....	22
Notes:.....	23

The objective of this booklet is to provide practical tips, tools and techniques that will

- increase your confidence
- assist with your preparation
- help with the design of your presentation
- help you feel more confident

The four Ps of presentations

As with any communication, your goal when presenting is to get your message across clearly and effectively. We have arranged the materials according to the following four key steps.

- ✓ **Planning your message**
This step involves thinking about your audience, your message and what you can use to connect the two.

- ✓ **Preparing your message**
This step includes thinking about your message in three sections: the opening, the body and the conclusion. Each of these is important and requires planning.

- ✓ **Preparing yourself**
Dealing with your anxieties and nerves.

- ✓ **Presenting your message**
Thinking and rehearsing your delivery of the message. Presentations have two components: the verbal transmission of the message and the non-verbal communication of your emotions around the message.

Presenting your message also looks at visual aids – how to get the best from them.

Tip:

Believe in your **subject**, and your ability to facilitate.

How confident are you?

This quick test helps you measure the effectiveness of your presentation skills. If you wished, you could give this to colleagues for feedback on your presentation.

Element	✓
I communicate in a way that is easy to understand.	
I speak clearly and confidently with a relaxed, natural voice.	
I vary my pitch, tone and pace to add variety.	
I maintain eye contact with the audience.	
I use appropriate visual aids.	
My presentation follows a logical sequence.	
I know how to manage my presentation nerves.	
I have identified the main purpose of my presentation.	
I familiarise myself with the physical environment.	
I practise the finished version several times.	
My presentation includes: a simple structure a catchy introduction the main body of information a memorable conclusion	
I have not put too much information on my visuals.	
My visuals and handouts are free from error.	
I am aware of my body language.	
I give the audience the opportunity to ask questions.	
I am enthusiastic about the topic of my presentation.	

Characteristics of a good presenter



The most important thing is the presenter's ability to relate to the group members in a way that makes individuals feel valued and interested.

Good presenters talk with the group, not to them.

Tip:

Smile as you walk into the room.

Planning for your session



You need to consider your **audience**. Important points to consider are: who needs the information; why do they need it; what do they already know; and what do they need to know. Think about language: would they understand any jargon.



Define your **objectives**. You should determine what knowledge or skill you wish to transfer to your audience. You are helping your group solve problems and reach decisions to meet these objectives.

Tip:

Only tell people the thing they **need** to know.



Your **message** needs to be structured. Start with a high level overview which tells the audience what the central message of your presentation is. A tip is to think about the “what” and the “why” of your message.



Think about what **visual aids** would assist the audience to understand your message or improve their experience. Examples might include a short piece of video, power points or whiteboard diagrams. If you are going to supply handouts, think about when you will give these out.



Ensure that you assess the **environment** prior to your session. This includes: your venue, for functionality; any technology you will be using, for usability; and whether you have sufficient resources.



Repeat performances require repeat **review**. Are your original objectives meeting the needs of your audience? Are your materials still up-to-date? Did your previous session's exercises help the group?

Tip:

Be **prepared** – don't panic!

Preparing your message

One of the most common mistakes people make when starting to create a presentation is to sit down at the computer and open PowerPoint. The truth is, this may work just fine for some people, but for many others it confuses the process.

One Approach – the power of post it notes

An alternative approach is to stay away from the computer until you are clear about the overall flow and the rough content of the presentation.

You can use post-it notes to map out your talk, placing each idea on a note and then placing it within the overall structure of the talk. The great thing about this technique is that you can simply move the ideas around if you feel like something is misplaced. They also offer very limited space so you will not be able to dive too much into the detail until after you have the structure.

If you prefer to work at the computer, spend your time in a word processor or mind map program where you will focus only on the content and structure - not the look.

Calculating content to fill your time

If you have a tight time constraint for your presentation here are a couple of tricks to help keep you on track and on time. First of all consider the word count of what you want to communicate. On average you should speak at three words per second.



This calculation will let you know how long it will take without any major pauses. If you are planning pauses calculate those separately.

Opening your message

The opening of your presentation is often about 10 - 15% of the total time. As you are planning your opening you will want to keep some things in mind.

- ✓ Greet people warmly and connect to your audience. This can be as simple as making eye contact with members of the audience and smiling.
- ✓ Get their attention by starting with a question or short story which ties in to your topic for the day.
- ✓ Introduce yourself.
- ✓ If someone will introduce you make sure you know what they will say about you and adjust any introductory comments accordingly within your opening.
- ✓ Add details about your experience or qualifications if you feel that will add to your credibility.
- ✓ Set the participants expectations by indicating how the talk will proceed and what you hope they will gain from the presentation.
- ✓ Let people know if they should ask questions throughout or at the end.

Tip:

The **'power of three'** rule has been used in presentations for centuries. Think "friends, Romans, countrymen".

The body of your message

The body of your presentation should comprise approximately 60 - 70% of the total time. You have a number of options available to organise the main body of your presentation. Here are some of the more common themes:

- ✓ Anticipate the questions your audience will have and structure around answering those questions.
- ✓ Organise the information chronologically if your topic is suited to this approach.
- ✓ Introduce a problem and then introduce a possible solution and the benefits or pitfalls of that solution.
- ✓ This final one is sometimes referred to as a decision making approach. You start with an opinion or suggestion, then counter with an opposing opinion, but then you come back to give evidence to support your first opinion and restate the thought in a new way.

You can help your audience understand the topic faster and easier by splitting your topic into small pieces of information – also known as **chunks**. Your handouts should be chunked e.g. with bulleted lists, short subheadings, and short sentences and paragraphs.

A proper **sequence** of points during your session provides your group with a pattern.

As you interact with participants, be mindful of the impact your **language** choice has. Are you setting a positive tone? Does your language communicate that participants are in a safe place where they can ask questions. Be careful of humour – it's easy for members of your audience to misunderstand and be offended.

Your conclusion

Often this is the least thought out component of a presentation but it is one of the most important sections. It is often the message delivered in the final few minutes that will stay with the attendees the longest, so this is your chance to really drive home your major point.

As you are planning your conclusion you may want to:

- ✓ Plan to allow about 15 - 20% of your time for your conclusion.
- ✓ Summarise the main points of your talk.
- ✓ Let people know how to get more information on the topic.
- ✓ Be sure to have a strong closing sentence planned and rehearsed so people will know you are finished and the talk doesn't just fizzle out at the end.
- ✓ Thank the audience.

***Presentations should be concise,
clear and credible.***

Preparing yourself

For some reason, public speaking is a source of stress for most people. In fact, research into the things we fear shows it is our top fear. And this is above heights, terrorist acts or even death.

So what causes this level of anxiety?

The most common causes of the fear are:

- ✘ Being unprepared
- ✘ Feeling you are not a good presenter
- ✘ Fear that your subject won't be interesting
- ✘ Concern that you won't have enough time or will have too much time to cover your material

Just remember:

Feeling nervous is not the same as looking nervous. The audience often cannot tell.

Overcoming your fears

Being unprepared – To overcome this - know your material, know your audience and practice. Practice out loud and with your equipment. Ensure you arrive early so that you can get comfortable with the room and the layout. Being early also gives you time to prepare your notes and be completely ready before your audience arrives.

Feeling you are not a good presenter – The only way to overcome this one is to gain experience. Being prepared is important but the truth is that the more you give presentations, the better you will become. Remember your audience wants you to succeed and will give you every chance.

Feeling that your subject won't be interesting – If this was true no one would show up to the talk. Your audience has made a special effort to attend because they are already interested in what you have to say.

Too little time or not enough time – This one can be overcome with lots of preparation and practice. If you practice giving your presentation several times beforehand you will have a good idea of the time required. If you find that your practice sessions are too long, cut some material or if they are too short, add in extra material.

The most important thing to remember about being nervous is that it is perfectly natural, we are all nervous at some time and fortunately most of the symptoms are not visible to your audience.

To help overcome nerves:

- ✓ **Keep breathing** – this sounds logical but taking a few deep breaths can help relax your body and your nerves.
- ✓ **Channel the nervous energy** – accept that you will be nervous and that your presentation may not be perfect as a result but let the energy come through in the way you speak.
- ✓ **Never call attention to your nerves** (or apologise for them) – remember your audience will not be able to see the symptoms anyway.
- ✓ **Pause for a few moments** – do this before starting to help gather your thoughts.
- ✓ **Know your material and your plan** – thorough preparation is the **BEST** defense against nerves.

Tip:

Welcome the question! It's a sign of interest.

Presenting your message

You have spent time planning the message, structure and content. You have spent more time developing the visual aids. Now you need to practice your presentation with some friendly faces who can give you feedback.

Things to think about include:

Be mindful of your voice. The voice is something that we tend to overlook when giving a presentation. However remember this is what carries the message to your audience. There are four main qualities to keep in mind:

- ✓ **Volume** – how loud you speak will depend upon the size of the venue and the number of people attending. The goal is to speak loudly enough so that it still sounds natural and you can be heard without shouting.
- ✓ **Emphasis** – More experienced speakers will often lower their voice slightly to gain the audience’s attention and then raise it back up to make the point. Another way of emphasising important points is to repeat them or to give practical examples that relate to the audience.
- ✓ **Pace** – It is a well accepted fact that we always speak a little bit faster than we think we actually do. As a result, when giving presentations it is important to try and speak deliberately slowly. Don’t worry that your audience will find it too slow, even if it sounds that way to you. Speaking slowly and pausing can also be used to emphasise important points.
- ✓ **Sound enthusiastic** – we can’t expect our audience to be interested in our presentation, if we don’t sound interested. Vary the tone and colour in your voice to keep the energy up.

Watch for your body language.

Body language is an important part of making your audience feel comfortable with you as a presenter. Some points to think about:

- ✓ Unless it is a very small group you should always stand whenever able.
- ✓ Smile - be enthusiastic.
- ✓ Face your audience - eye contact engages participants.
- ✓ Maintain attention levels - do something different every 10 minutes.
- ✓ Stand up straight and keep steady on your feet - minimize shuffling. This will convey confidence even if you don't feel it.
- ✓ If you do sit, lean forward slightly to help connect with the audience.
- ✓ Make eye contact with individuals if possible.
- ✓ If you are unsure what to do with your hands, you can easily cross them behind your back or fold your hands casually in front of yourself.
- ✓ If possible use your hands to communicate too. It is more visually interesting for the audience.
- ✓ Avoid holding things in your hands that you might fidget with.
- ✓ Use some of that nervous energy to convey enthusiasm for your topic.
- ✓ Wear comfortable clothing appropriate for the situation but avoid any jewellery that might be distracting or noisy.
- ✓ Remember to watch your audiences' body language - what are they telling you?
- ✓ If you are using visual aids - let people look at your visual for a few seconds before you start to speak about it. Finally, look out to the audience not back at the screen.

A word about PowerPoint

PowerPoint can be a very powerful presentation tool when used to your advantage with automated timings and animations. However it can also be a trap in that it is easy to be tempted into becoming too flashy.

Tips for effective use of PowerPoint include:

- ✓ Using consistent colours and effect throughout the presentation.
- ✓ Keep the font size above 30 points at all times. If your information won't fit at that size you are putting too much information on one page.
- ✓ Keep it simple.



Things to avoid:

- ✗ Being too flashy and distracting your audience from the message.
- ✗ Using PowerPoint as a way of giving yourself something to do.
- ✗ Overdoing the animation or the sound effects.

Tip:

Never read a slide word for word.

Personal Pitfalls

✘ **Poor organisation and being unprepared**

With a properly designed session plan, extra supplies on hand and a complete checklist, you can present professionally, keep on track and better handle the unexpected.

✘ **Making the topic too broad or too narrow**

With just the right amount of material, you can deliver a clear message and effect desired learning.

✘ **Improper pacing**

Maintain appropriate flow to begin and end on time. Participants will feel energised and respond positively when information is presented in a variety of ways with smooth pacing.

✘ **Poorly designed handouts**

A well-designed handout contains just the right amount of information.

✘ **Failing to establish rapport, early on**

First impressions count. Your introduction and the tone you set at the start of the session will either engage participants or have them tune out.

✘ **Caught in tangents, getting off track, losing the focus**

If you get caught up in questions and concerns of the participants and don't bring the session back to focus, you will lose credibility.

Tip:

Stay **present** and practise presence.

Tips for question time

Questions are an opportunity to ensure your message has been understood rather than something to be feared.

Tips for handling question time include:

- ✓ Always allow sufficient time for at least three questions to be asked.
- ✓ Ensure you address your answer to the person asking the question and the wider group as often others will be interested in the answer.
- ✓ If someone asks a question which requires a long and involved answer that probably does not relate to others in the audience, ask them to come and see you afterwards to discuss it one-on-one.
- ✓ If an audience member argues with your answer, say “I don’t want to focus too much on that, perhaps we can discuss it afterwards”.
- ✓ If one person is dominating the question time, ask “does anyone else have any questions”.

Presentation checklist

Check	✓
Have you identified the aim of your presentation?	
Have you thought about the audience?	
Do you know how much time you have?	
Is your presentation set out in a logical manner?	
Have you rehearsed your presentation?	
Have you anticipated and prepared for questions?	
Are any aids clear and legible?	
Have you checked for spelling and grammar?	
Are your handouts clear and legible?	
Do you have enough copies of the handouts?	
Are you using technology?	
If you are using technology, have you arranged to visit the room?	
Do you have a contingency plan if the technology breaks down?	
Have you built in time to warm up and calm your nerves?	
Have you arranged for time notification?	

“People trust you to give them the information they need. Enjoy the opportunity to build knowledge together.”

On the day

On the day, make sure you arrive at the venue well **in advance** to check out the equipment, visuals, any props, seating arrangements, the use of technicians, etc.

- ✓ Make sure you are comfortable with your position for the presentation, and **familiarise yourself with your surroundings**.
- ✓ Have a glass of water available within easy reach.
- ✓ **Arrange your notes** in such a way that it will be easy to see and use them.

Always remember to **welcome your audience** at the start of the presentation and **thank them** for their attention at the end.

Concentrate on **projecting your voice** and pace yourself. Pausing briefly between each sentence will help you ensure that you don't run away with your speech.

Remember, only you know the content of your presentation. If you forget part of it, continue and, if possible, try to subtly add the missing part later on. The audience is only likely to notice that something has been missed if you tell them so!

Keep an eye on the time. Be prepared to be flexible and concentrate on the priorities if you are running out of time.

If you have prepared a finale, deliver it as you planned to get the reaction you want.

Don't forget to **give out handouts** if you planned to do so. Decide when you will distribute them, depending on what you wish to achieve with the presentation; either at the start so that everyone can follow along and take notes, or at the end to ensure that all attention is focused on you during the presentation.

