

What is an 'effective' presentation?

An effective presentation makes the best use of the relationship between the presenter and the audience. It takes full consideration of the audience's needs in order to capture their interest, develop their understanding, inspire their confidence and achieve the presenter's objectives.

Careful planning is essential.

Seven stages in planning a presentation

1. Preparation Many factors affect the design of your presentation.

An effective presenter will acknowledge and address each of the following:

- objectives;
- audience;
- venue;
- remit.

Objectives

Why you are making your presentation? Bear in mind what you want to achieve and what you want your audience to take away with them. Once you have decided upon your objectives, you are in a much better position to make strategic decisions about the design and tone of your presentation. For example, a presentation to a seminar group might require a balanced argument, whereas a charity appeal might require a more creative approach.

Ask yourself:

- what do you want your audience to have understood?
- what action do you want your audience to take following your presentation?
- how can you best design your presentation to meet your objectives?

Audience

Your audience will have a variety of different experiences, interests and levels of knowledge. An effective presenter will need to acknowledge these and prepare for and respond to them accordingly. Ask yourself:

- how much will your audience already know about your topic?
- how can you link new material to things they might already understand?
- will you need to win them over to a particular point of view?

You may not be able to answer these questions for each member of your audience but you should have enough information to ensure that you have targeted your material at the right level for their needs. This might involve avoiding technical jargon or explaining abstract concepts with clear practical examples. If you fail to consider your audience's needs, you will fail to appeal to their interest and imagination.

Venue

Where will you be making your presentation? What will the room be like? What atmosphere will the physical conditions create? A large lecture theatre might create a formal atmosphere. Similarly, a seminar room might create a less formal tone. Ask yourself:

- what kind of atmosphere do you wish to create?
- how might the room arrangement affect your relationship with the audience?
- can you do anything to change the arrangement of the room to suit your objectives?
- what audio-visual aids can you use?

Remit You may well have been given a remit for your presentation; you will need to stick to this. For example, you may have been asked to present a paper at a conference in a certain style or meet certain assessment criteria on your course. Ask yourself:

- how much time have you been allocated?
- are you required to stick to a common format or style?
- have any guidelines been set regarding the content of your presentation (i.e. a predetermined title, or a fixed number of overhead transparencies)?

2. Choosing your main points.

Once you have thought about the design of your presentation, you can define your main points. Try presenting no more than three main points in a ten minute presentation. Always allow time for an adequate introduction and conclusion. It is difficult for an audience to follow a more complex argument without significant help from the presenter. An effective presentation delivers information in a logical, structured manner, building on the previous point and avoiding large jumps in sequence. Ask yourself:

- what are the main points you wish to make?
- are these points structured in a logical, coherent way?
- do these main points reflect your own objectives and take account of the needs of your audience?

3. Choosing your supporting information

The supporting information helps your audience understand, believe in and agree with your main points. This evidence might take the form of factual data, points of detail or an explanation of process. It might be presented in imaginative ways using diagrams, pictures or video segments. Think about:

- what will add clarity to your argument (explaining complex terms, reminding your audience of any supporting theories)?
- what will add authority to your argument (making connections with other people's work, quoting experts, offering evidence from your own research)?

- what will add colour to your argument (showing a video clip or a slide, using a practical example or a vibrant analogy)?

4. Establishing linking statements

The next stage is to develop the linear flow of your presentation. This can be achieved by using linking statements to show clearly how your main points fit together. Common linking statements include:

- “The next stage in our project was to...”;
- “Another important issue of consideration was...”;
- “By following this argument we can now see that...”.

Linking statements send signals to your audience, highlighting the next point in your argument, linking to earlier ideas or clarifying the stage you have reached in your argument overall. This may be of particular importance in a lengthy presentation where even the most effective presenter has to work hard to keep an audience involved.

5. Developing an opening

The introduction to your presentation is crucial. It is your first point of contact with your audience; you can either capture or lose your audience’s interest in a matter of seconds. Use your introduction to lay a clear foundation for the presentation to follow. Try using the following structure:

- introduce yourself;
- state what you will be talking about (a title or subject area);
- state how you will be talking about it (e.g. by comparing test results or reviewing the supporting literature);
- state what you intend to be the outcome of your presentation (an informed group, a lively discussion);
- state what you expect your audience to do (listen, take notes, read a handout, ask questions before/during/after).
- Always give your audience a moment to absorb this information before moving into your first main point.

6. Developing a conclusion

Your conclusion is another important stage in your presentation. You can use it to remind your audience of your main points, draw these points to a stimulating conclusion and leave your audience with a lasting impression of the quality of your presentation. The following structure provides an effective conclusion:

- a review of your title or subject area “In this presentation I wanted to explore the relationship between X and Y.”;
- a summary of your main points “We have discussed the following points...”;

- a summary of the process you have been through “By looking at X we have found that Y ...”;
- a conclusion clearly drawn from your main points (this must be supported by the detail of your presentation) “It is clear that there can be no substantive relationship between X and Y”;
- a parting statement to stimulate your audience’s thoughts (this might be a question or a bold comment).

7. Reviewing your presentation

Once you have written your presentation make sure that you review its content. Ask yourself:

- does the presentation meet your objectives?
- is it logically structured?
- have you targeted the material at the right level for your audience?
- is the presentation too long or too short?

Presentation as Performance

Making a presentation puts you on public display. An audience not only listens to your ideas, it also responds to the way you use your voice and your body. You need more than a well written presentation to make an impact. You will also need to deliver it in a lively, flexible and interesting way. In this leaflet we suggest many ideas for invoking energy in your presentation style.

To begin with, imagine that you are in the audience for your presentation. What might:

- grab your attention?
- stimulate your imagination?
- inspire your confidence?
- develop your understanding?

Now think about ways to encourage these things.

Six steps to becoming an effective presenter

1. Practise

The more familiar you are with your material the more you will be able to inspire your audience’s trust and confidence. Do more than practise reading through your material to yourself. If possible, stand up in a room and deliver your presentation to the walls. Get used to hearing your own voice filling a room. Familiarise yourself with the words and phrases in your presentation. Play around with different volumes and see how well you can hear your own voice. Above all, familiarise yourself with the main thrust of your argument and explore how the individual elements of your presentation piece together. This will help you to keep to your chosen objectives and avoid distractions when it comes to your actual delivery. To read or to learn? Should you read out your presentation from

detailed notes or present it completely from memory? Find a way to compromise between these two approaches. There are dangers in each.

Reading

Reading tends to focus your thoughts on your notes, thus losing contact with your audience. Reading can also reduce your voice to a monotone, removing energy and enthusiasm from your delivery. Directly addressing your audience is much more engaging.

Learning

Learning is fine until you lose your way; for example, a member of the audience asks a question or your overhead projector bulb blows. Always have some form of notes to keep you on the right track. Also, if you over learn your notes you might lose a sense of energy and enthusiasm. Always work for a sense of confident spontaneity.

Find a way of making notes to support your presentation style. The most common form of note making is to use index cards. These can be read at a glance. Use them as visual prompts to guide you through your presentation. Use one card for each main idea, including details of the supporting information for each point. Connect your cards together with a tag or a piece of string so that they can't get out of order.

2. Assert yourself

An effective presenter needs to be assertive, not aggressive. There are two important Ps. Posture It is important to appear confident at all times. Different postures create different moods. A very formal, upright and still posture will create a very different atmosphere from a relaxed and active one. Remember to match your physical behaviour to the objectives underpinning your presentation. If you want to be either formal or informal, make deliberate choices about your physical style and stick to these. Presence Have the confidence to fill your space in front of an audience. Avoid apologising for your presence by saying "sorry" (although you must be polite if circumstances so demand – e.g. the session is running over time, or the microphone has stopped working). Also, avoid physical apologies by hiding behind a desk or lectern. You must be confident that the audience wants to listen and that you have something interesting to tell them. Don't be afraid to wait for an audience to settle down before you start speaking or to ask for quiet if this does not happen.

3. Make contact with your audience

One of the key challenges faced by the presenter is to establish links with her/his audience (a poor presenter appears to be speaking to an empty room). Making contact helps to maintain an audience's interest and encourages them to believe that you are genuinely interested in talking to them. You can make contact with your audience in a number of ways, including:

- eye contact;
- gestures;
- spoken contact;
- your use of language.

Eye contact

Eye contact is part of everyday communication and an audience can feel uncomfortable if they are denied it. Making eye contact with individuals gives them a sense of involvement in your presentation and helps to convey your objectives on a personal level. Make sure that you share eye contact with all members of a small audience and all areas of a large audience. Regularly shift your focus around the room, not so that you look nervous, but to help involve as many people as possible in your talk. A handy tip: if you can't make eye contact in a large group, don't look at the floor or ceiling (this looks like boredom or rudeness). Try looking at people's foreheads. The people sat around them will read this as eye contact even if the individual won't.

Gesture

People use their arms and hands in every day conversation to add emphasis or to help describe events. Presenters will therefore look rather awkward if they keep their hands in their pockets or rooted firmly at their sides. Use gestures to welcome your audience, to add emphasis to your main points or to indicate an ending. Try to use open gestures which move away from your body, extending them out to your audience. This helps to break any audience/presenter divisions. Make sure that all gestures are controlled and precise; too much movement will appear nervous and unfocussed. Always watch against distracting your audience from the content of your presentation. You should continually be trying to find ways to help them listen and understand.

Spoken contact

Acknowledge your audience by making verbal contact with them. At the beginning of your talk ask if they can see and hear you, or check that lighting and sound levels on audio-visual equipment are satisfactory. During your presentation, ask rhetorical questions that you can then answer (e.g. "How do we know this was true?" or "So, what does this prove?"). At the end of your talk give the audience an opportunity to ask questions or to clarify detail— this encourages them to take ownership of your material. The use of questions is an important tool. Questions involve your audience's mind in a more stimulating way than simply asking them to sit and listen to your talk. Draw an audience in with clear, focused questions.

Language

Your use of language is particularly important in developing and sustaining a relationship with your audience. Try using language that involves your audience. For example, asking questions such as "What can we learn from this?" or "How did we arrive at this conclusion?" involves your audience in an exploratory process or discussion. When looking at visual aids, introduce them by saying "If we look at this slide we can see that .." or "This slide shows us that...". Use language that is welcoming and involving throughout your presentation.

4. Use your voice

Your voice is a very flexible and effective tool. You can use it in many different ways by varying the:

- volume
- pace
- pitch.

Volume

Make sure that your voice is loud enough for your audience to hear clearly. Speaking too loudly or too quietly can make it difficult for your audience to follow your presentation. Listen to people speaking in normal conversation. They tend to raise or lower their volume for emphasis. For example, they may speak loudly when giving an instruction but softly when apologising. To add energy to your presentation, use these colourful changes to your best advantage: a conspiratorial whisper can draw an audience in; a loudly spoken exclamation can make them sit up and listen.

Pace

Make sure that the speed of your delivery is easy to follow. If you speak too quickly or too slowly your audience will have difficulty following your talk. To add life to your presentation, try changing the pace of your delivery. A slightly faster section might convey enthusiasm. A slightly slower one might add emphasis or caution.

Pitch

The pitch of your voice also varies in day to day conversation and it is important to play on this when making a presentation. For example, your pitch will raise when asking a question; it will lower when you wish to sound severe.

Play around with the volume, pace and pitch of your voice when practising your presentation. Find different ways of saying the same sentence. Explore different ways of adding emphasis to your main points. Always try to convey enthusiasm and energy through your use of your voice.

5. Breathe

Always remember to breath steadily and deeply. If you are anxious about making a presentation your breathing will become fast and shallow. This will affect the quality of your voice and your ability to speak clearly for extended periods of time. Try to take a few deep breaths before you make your presentation, making a conscious effort to slow your breathing down and taking in more air with each breath. During your presentation, use pauses after questions or at the end of sections to allow comfortable breathing patterns. Don't be afraid to slow down the pace of your presentation if your breathing becomes uncomfortable.

6. Drink

It is a good idea to have some liquid to hand to quench your thirst if you are speaking for a long time. However, be careful not to gulp ice-cold water before you go on as this constricts your throat and affects the quality of your voice. Drink a warm (not hot) cup of tea to relax your throat and ease your speaking voice. And finally ... a note about humour Only use humour if you know it will work. Humour needs to be relaxed and confident - if

used badly, it will only heighten senses of awkwardness and anxiety if these are already present. Use humour if you know you can and if you feel it is appropriate to do so.

KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

Successful presentations are designed to meet the needs and expectations of the audience. The information and delivery should be relevant and presented in a way so that the audience will listen and keep listening.

Many presenters get caught up in the details of the topic and what they want to say, and lose sight of the audience and what they need to gain. The emphasis should be on the listener, not the presenter.

STEP 1: Who is my audience?

STEP 2: What's in it for them?

STEP 3: How can I impact what they take away?

Analyzing your audience will help you decide what to include in the presentation and how to best present the information. You will have determined what information will appeal to them and this will increase your persuasiveness.

As you respond to each question, ask yourself how you are going to adapt your presentation content and delivery based on your answers.

DELIVERY SKILLS

There is no question about the importance of content. A presentation without good content will always fall flat. However there are many skills that must be applied to bring good content to life.

Even with solid research, subject expertise, good planning and excellent facilities, some presentations fail. If a presenter does not have a confident, enthusiastic delivery style, the audience quickly loses interest and becomes bored.

Research has shown that an audience's opinion of a presentation is based 7% from the presentation content, 38% from voice and 55% from facial expressions and gestures.

Presenters need to use their own personality while focusing on their delivery skills to project the professional and confident style needed to create a successful presentation.

Utilizing an interactive and lively presentation style uses nervous energy in a positive way instead of as an inhibitor.

Delivery skills are comprised of effective eye contact, volume, pacing, tone, body language, word choice, and appearance.

It's important to be aware of not only what you are saying, but also how you are saying it.

EYE CONTACT

In our culture, we expect good, direct eye contact. In many presentations, speakers look at the walls, floor, their notes, anywhere but at the audience members! We need to look at individuals. Eye contact opens the channel of communication between people.

DO:

- 👉 **Maintain direct eye contact.** Pick out individual people in the audience and maintain direct eye contact for a complete thought, approximately 5 seconds. Then, pick out someone else and say the next thought or sentence to them.
- 👉 **Focus on one person.** Not long enough to make that individual feel uncomfortable, but long enough to pull him or her into your presentation. Then move to another person. This limits the visual stimulus going to your brain from outside sources such as lighting, colors, etc., allowing you to think more clearly.

DON'T:

- 👎 **Let your eyes dart around the room.** This habit is problematic. You become over stimulated by the overabundance of images. You then become nervous which makes it hard to think. Additionally, when you scan, no one feels seen or drawn into the presentation.
- 👎 **Speak unless you're eye to eye.** While speaking, avoid looking at the floor, back wall, ceiling, or visual aid equipment.
- 👎 **Just look at your audience – see them.** *Most speakers look; few speakers see.* Looking at individuals helps relax you by connecting you with an audience member and creating the feeling of being in a one on one dialogue or discussion.

- 👎 **Try to look at every face in a large audience.** If the group is too large, make eye contact with individuals in different parts of the room. As the distance increases, a larger number of people feel your eye contact.

VOICE

The sound of your voice can be a major detractor from the content of your presentation, or it can be one of your most effective tools. The pitch, tone and volume of your voice is crucial for effective delivery.

DO:

- 👉 **Relax your vocal cords.** Uneasiness increases muscle tension which attacks your larynx, and changes the natural sound of your voice. Your audience reads this as a negative; therefore it detracts from your message. To bring back the natural

animation, you must relax and release tension. Upper and lower body movements as well as deep breathing are critical ways to accomplish this.

- 👍 **Vary your pace.** The use of variety within your normal tempo range is a positive way to maintain audience interest. Deliver key words and concepts slowly. Less important material can be covered more quickly.
- 👍 **Examine the pitch of your voice.** Speaking at a natural pitch is helpful to inflection. Be loud enough to be heard well without shouting. Use a range from “enthusiastic” to more conversational tones.
- 👍 **Use inflection for emphasis.** Inflection, the rise and fall of pitch, is important in conveying the relative importance of words within a statement. Use an upward inflection to emphasize key words. Contrast is attention getting.
- 👍 **Use pauses effectively.** Pausing during a presentation can be an effective device to allow your important points to stick in. don't be afraid to allow periods of silence. The audience needs time to digest what you're saying, it's the first time they're hearing this information. Pausing also allows you to breathe, which ensures that your voice stays strong.
- 👍 **Articulate your words clearly.** Each word should be crisp and clear. Clear diction is especially important when speaking with people who might have hearing difficulties, or those who are unfamiliar with the language you will be speaking.

DON'T:

- 🚫 **Speak too fast.** When you are nervous, trying to show enthusiasm, or see your time is running out, you may begin to race through material. You know you are talking too fast when you trip over words. The audience may draw the conclusion that you don't know your material or that you're bored with your subject matter.
- 🚫 **Speak too slowly.** Long pauses and hesitations negatively broadcast to the audience that you're not prepared, you are avoiding a direct answer, or this isn't your field.
- 🚫 **Sound monotone.** Delivery without a variation in speed, pitch and volume creates the dreaded monotone, whose hypnotic effect will put your audience to sleep. Being monotone is one of the easiest ways to lose your audience.
- 🚫 **Speak lower than your natural pitch.** In business, sometimes a loud speaking voice is perceived as authoritative.
- 🚫 **Speak too softly.** When speaking softly you run the risk of not being heard. The audience will think you are unsure of yourself or you're boring. People will not strain to listen to you. No only should the audience be able to hear, but you want to make it easy for them to keep listening.

The way you say it can alter what the listener thinks you said.

BODY LANGUAGE

When you prepare for a presentation, you organize your thoughts and prepare your words. When the moment arrives to present, your adrenaline starts pumping and produces extra energy. How can you make this energy enhance your presentation rather than aggravate your nervousness?

Mastering key techniques allows you to channel your nervous energy in a way that brings life to your presentation. Using your body language properly will help your presentation become interesting and engaging.

DO:

- 👍 **Balance your stance.** Keep your weight balanced equally over both feet. Your feet should be approximately shoulder's width apart. Keep your posture erect, but relaxed.
- 👍 **Move with a purpose.** Standing in several spots around the room has benefits. Just be sure to move in silence and in-between statements, then stop your feet and resume your balanced stance before speaking again.
- 👍 **Keep your feet pointed toward the audience.** Stand facing the audience. If you need to see the visual behind you, twist at your waist and keep your feet facing the front. Above all, don't speak unless you have eye contact with the audience.
- 👍 **Keep arm gestures above waist.** Arm gestures should be above the waist and away from your body. It may feel awkward at first, however the gestures need to be seen by the entire audience and create a lasting visual impression.
- 👍 **Use meaningful gestures.** Gestures add visual emphasis to your words and help your listeners remember the content. When used in conjunction with inflection, your key points become memorable to your audience. For example, use gestures to illustrate or highlight:

Compare/Contrast	Audience/Self
Increase/Decrease	Bring together/Push apart
Negative/Positive Impact	Build up/Tear down
Match/Opposites	
- 👍 **Return hands to sides between gestures.** This neutral arm position does not distract an audience's attention and results in the gestures you use being remembered.

DON'T:

- 🚫 **Shift or pace.** Avoid shifting your weight from one hip to the other and back again, as well as pacing back and forth. The audience will be distracted by the pattern and focus more on this than on listening.
- 🚫 **Lean on equipment.** Tables, lecterns, and equipment are not meant to serve as a crutch for you. Leaning may come across as too casual and unprofessional.

- ☛ **Stand behind the lectern.** This creates a barrier between you and the audience. Instead, move to the side or in front of the lectern to get closer to the audience. Lecterns also inhibit gestures and often lead speakers to read from their notes.
- ☛ **Use repetitive gestures.** By using gestures constantly, your meaningful gestures get lost.
- ☛ **Use confidence-robbing gestures.** The following gestures broadcast to the audience that you are nervous or uncomfortable and detract from your message:

WORD CHOICE

Word choice itself can portray confidence and openness, as well as uncertainty or intolerance. When preparing your presentation, keep the following points in mind:

DO:

- 👍 **Communicate on a personal level.** Use words that you know your audience understands.
- 👍 **Slow down when using technical words.** Be sure to clearly pronounce words that are difficult or technical. State the meaning of acronyms the first time they are used in the presentation.
- 👍 **Choose confident words and phrases.** Use phrases such as the following:

I'll find out and get back to you

I can explain that

We can solve that

Let me see what I can do

Here's what I can do

I will be glad to help you

We want to work with you

We are here to support your needs

DON'T:

- ☛ **Use non-words.** Avoid the use of repetitive words or phrases such as “ok”, “now”, “like”, and “you know”. Try to break bad habits such as unconscious long pauses between sentences and using “um” and “uh” while pausing.
- ☛ **Choose inflammatory or skeptical phrases.** Do not use phrases such as:

You'll have to

I'll try

You must

Hopefully

It's against our policy

Would you mind

You don't understand

If I get a chance

You should

We never

APPEARANCE

Your appearance affects the audience's perception of you. Any distraction it creates can detract from your message.

Many questions about appropriateness can only be answered by you. Much depends on the company culture, the formality of the event, and any preconceptions the audience has of you.

When possible, check your physical appearance in a full-length mirror prior to your presentation. Do you see any visual distractions?

Things to look for:

- Poorly fitting jacket
- Inappropriate or excessive accessories
- Distracting colors or clothing designs
- Jacket buttoned or unbuttoned

What else can you think of?

ADDING VISUAL AIDS

People depend on what they see visually as their primary source of information.

Adding visual aids to your presentation has a dramatic impact on how much your audience takes away. In one study, a presentation that only delivered information verbally achieved a 7% comprehension rate; the addition of visuals raised comprehension to 87%. This shows that information *seen and heard* has a much better chance of being remembered than information just *heard*.

Good visuals help support and organize a presentation. They focus the audience's attention and clarify and augment ideas. Visuals enable you to get more content across in a shorter period of time, simplify complex information, and eliminate misunderstanding.

MONITOR YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Showing signs of nervousness when you're answering questions can diminish the credibility and authority you worked hard to build over the course of your presentation. To prevent this, concentrate on the following key elements of your body language:

Maintain eye contact.

As you formulate an answer and then respond to the question, look into the eyes of audience members. If you respond while looking at the floor or ceiling, the audience perceives that you are unsure of your answer or making it up as you go along.

Eliminate non-words.

Often times when we are formulating our thoughts and are unsure of what we are going to say next, non-words (such as “umm” or “uhh”) creep in. This broadcasts to the audience that you are ill-prepared and unsure of yourself.

Keep volume up.

Keep your voice at a strong, confident volume level. Now is not the time to sound timid or lack authority.

Maintain a solid stance.

Stand squarely on both feet, facing the audience. Don't shuffle, pace or lean on one hip. Step toward the audience, showing them that you are inviting questions.

Beware of confidence-robbing gestures.

Be sure not to subconsciously use gestures that show that you are nervous or uncomfortable (i.e. crossed arms, fiddling with objects, wringing hands.)

HANDLING QUESTIONS

Whenever you have delivered technical information, or complicated ideas, it is a good idea to check an audience's understanding by asking for questions. Sometimes you may be introducing a new concept or procedure that may have some resistance. Asking questions helps to surface and defuse issues that could be barriers to gaining acceptance.

Answering questions can be difficult because this part of the presentation is less structured. You have less control over the flow of conversation. While there will be some questions you have anticipated, there will be others that may catch you by surprise. This creates pressure on you to stay calm and maintain control; otherwise, you run the risk of damaging your credibility.

As a general rule, respond to the audience's questions at the end of the presentation. Often times their question will be answered as the presentation progresses. It is also less disruptive. It is a good idea to mention in the beginning of the presentation that you will be taking all questions at the end.

At times, questions during your presentation are unavoidable, such as a confusing visual or when the question is coming from an important member of your audience. During informal presentation, you may prefer questions throughout the talk to create an atmosphere that encourages discussion.

A structured question and answer process that encourages open communication in a controlled and fair manner can double the impact of your talk.

Step 1: Raise your hand and ask “What questions do you have?”

- This signals to the audience that they, too, should raise their hand to be recognized.
- If the audience doesn't have questions, be prepared to raise “common questions from past sessions”, then answer them.

Step 2: Select questioner with an open palm.

- This shows that you are in charge and people will know to go one at a time.
- Don't point. It could elicit a defensive reaction.

Step 3: Listen and clarify.

- Many speakers race ahead and begin thinking of an answer before the question is completed. This may result in a misunderstanding and a wrong answer.
- Concentrate your eye contact on the person asking the question.
- Listen for the main point of each question.
- If you don't understand the question, ask the person to repeat it or clarify it to enhance your understanding before answering.

Step 4: Involve the audience.

- Before answering, break eye contact with the questioner and look at another member of the audience.
- This includes everyone in the question and answer interaction. With everyone's attention focused, you will reduce repeat questions.

Step 5: Repeat or paraphrase the question

- Repeat the question so all members of the audience can hear it.
- Paraphrase long questions to simplify them and get to the main point.
- Paraphrase hostile questions using neutral words to change the tone of the discussion.
- This step helps give you “think” time and allows you to then flow smoothly into an answer.
- Avoid repetitively saying “the questions...” or “good question”, start with the first word of the actual question.

Step 6: Answer

- Be straightforward, clear and concise. If necessary, follow-up with additional explanations and examples.
- Don't ramble. If they want more information, they will ask for it.
- Focus your eye contact on all of your listeners during the answer.
- If possible, tie the answer back to the main point of your presentation.
- Keep eye contact with the questioner for at least part of the answer.
- If the question is too complex to answer simply, irrelevant to your presentation, or if you don't know the answer, defer it until afterwards.

Step 7: Raise you hand.

- Ask “Next question” or say “I have time for _____ more questions.”
- Repeat steps 2 through 7 until you have answered your last question.

Finally, Conclude with Impact!

After you answer the last question, thank the audience and offer to stay afterwards to answer additional questions. Lastly, reiterate the main point of your presentation by restating your conclusion. Provide your name and where you can be reached. Be sure your voice, gestures, and posture are strong and confident!

Tips for Overcoming Nervousness

Everyone experiences nervousness before presentations. The trick is to make your excess energy work for you by fueling it into your presentation.

Prepare. Research has shown that 50% of nervousness is caused by lack of preparation. Knowing your topic and that your presentation is well organized gives you confidence. (Section 5 provides a guide for organizing your presentation.)

Practice. Stand up and practice your presentation. Ask a few friends or family members to serve as your audience. Practice answers to questions you anticipate from the audience. Videotape yourself if possible or stand in front of a full-length mirror while practicing.

Visualize. Think positively. Mentally rehearse the entire presentation in vivid detail. See yourself as a dynamic, knowledgeable speaker, it will also help you focus on what you need to do to be successful.

Eat and drink right. Eat a light meal beforehand. Drink fluids the previous day. Stay away from sugar, dairy, caffeine, and alcohol.

Breathe. Breathing from your abdomen releases stress-producing toxins. The first thing to do is sit up, erect but relaxed, and inhale deeply a number of times.

Stretch. To relax, you need to release tension by allowing your muscles to flex.