

## Presentation Skills

Speaking is fundamentally different from writing because listening is fundamentally different from reading. It is storytelling, and you are the storyteller.

- A reader chooses when and where to focus attention; a speaker must focus a listener's attention on what he or she is saying at this moment.
- A reader controls how fast he or she will move through a text; a speaker controls how fast listeners will move through an oral presentation.
- Readers have the option of going back and re-reading; listeners must grasp material as the speaker presents it.
- Readers have lots of graphic cues about order and importance of points and about the relationship among ideas; listeners rely on the speaker to be their guide and interpreter.<sup>1</sup>

### Appeal to emotion

- Tell a story. Audiences respond better and will be more convinced with stories than data.
- Use examples. These can be especially powerful if they are personal stories.
- Use surprises. This could be using a video when the audience thinks they are only getting slides. Or it could be using dissonance.
- People need to feel safe. Follow your outline and use surprises in a way to make the audience enjoy themselves. Never do anything to single out a person. You will make that person and everyone else feel unsafe.<sup>2</sup>

### What do you need to say?

The information for your presentation usually comes from your paper—case study, analysis, essay, or report. Choose only the key points from your paper. Go back to the question you were asked when you originally wrote your paper.

### Design is key

Plan what your presentation will look like before you begin. Use only the important points from your paper to plan for sections of your presentation. These points then become the focus. Just like a paper, your presentation needs an introduction, body, and conclusion.

For each major section of your presentation, follow the “**4 S Structure**”<sup>1</sup>:

- **Signpost** the point (“First I’m going to point out the problem with...” “My second argument is that...” “Now let me explain my methodology.”)
- **State** the point clearly and succinctly.
- **Support** the point with data, cases, description, relevant studies, etc.
- **Summarize** the point<sup>3</sup>

It is from these that you then design your slides and choose corresponding images and text.

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### 10/20/30 rule

This rule states that a Power Point presentation should have no more than 10 slides, be 20 minutes long, and use no less than 30-point font.<sup>4</sup> This rule will keep your presentation on track so that you keep to time, as well as having a presentation that moves at a good pace and that is readable.

### Do you need it?

- Use PowerPoint only if it will enhance audience attention, understanding, or retention.
- Be selective about what you put on slides. Don't put the entire presentation on slides.
- Use visual and audio effects only if they serve your purpose and do not call attention to themselves. Make the technology serve the presentation. Don't let it dominate.<sup>5</sup>
- These are tools to help you tell your story. Don't let the tools become the story.

### Make notes

A good presentation is one where the presenter makes eye contact with his or her audience over the entire presentation. This mean *not reading your paper*; your eyes are down, and the tendency to the rush—plus, you lose your audience. The help with this, make good notes, use cue cards, or put all your notes on one sheet of paper. You can then glance at your notes for prompts. Better yet, memorize the material for your presentation, practice, and then use the images and text in your visual presentation as cues.

### Tone and pacing

Avoid monotony and becoming monotone. Use variations in speed, inflections, and force to enhance your meaning and hold audience attention. Practice pronouncing words that with which you are unfamiliar.

### Some further points

Often times a presenter does not realize voice and body habits, which can be distracting when presenting. Remember, presenting is visual and oral story telling. With this in mind, understanding how a presentation looks and sounds is important. Keep these elements in mind:

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### Distracting Mannerisms

#### Voice

- “um,” “uh,” “okay”
- everything sounding like a question (raising voice at the end of sentences)
- nervous laugh at the end of sentences
- clearing the throat a lot
- reading too quickly

#### Body language

- flipping hair back
- playing with pen/pointer/chalk, etc.
- rolling and unrolling paper (notes)
- pushing sleeves up and down
- playing with keys or coins in pockets
- stepping back and forth/tapping foot
- rocking body
- touching face/adjusting glasses
- turning rings on hand
- waving hands around
- tugging at shirt

#### Visual aids

- flipping overheads/slides too fast
- talking to the screen

### Ways to Reduce Anxiety

Even the most experienced presenter becomes anxious. It is normal and should be expected. Here are some ways to reduce anxiety.

- Practice—this will give you confidence
- Watch others—see what works for them and what doesn't. Watch videos of great speakers (Ted Talks).
- Just before going up, breathe deeply—it can reduce your heart rate
- Think about your nervousness—by focusing on *how* you are nervous it can help you forget about it and/or calm down
- Consider being the first person to present (if you have the option)—this can help you avoid the anxiety of thinking that everyone before you was better
- Put up an overhead or visual at the beginning—the audience will look at the visual instead of you, allowing you to start without everyone staring at you
- Even if you know what you're going to say, have an outline in front of you in case you freeze up—this can reduce worry that you will forget what you have to say
- Some nervousness is good, as this energy can be used to heighten your alertness and make you more animated.
- Smile during your presentation—the audience will feel the positive mood

## Presentation Skills

### Adapted from

Weinschenk, S. (2013). 100 things every presenter needs to know about people. Berekley: New Riders

The 10/20/30 Rule of PowerPoint (Guy Kawasaki)

[https://guykawasaki.com/the\\_102030\\_rule/](https://guykawasaki.com/the_102030_rule/)

Oral Communication Center

<http://www.hamilton.edu/oralcommunication/basic-principles-of-oral-presentation>

18 Tips for Killer Presentations

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/18-tips-for-killer-presentations.html>

### Other resources

Presentation Zen

<http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/>

Ted Talks

<http://blog.ted.com/2011/06/27/the-20-most-watched-tedtalks-so-far/>

Zooming presentation tool, free to students

Prezi.com

Presentation Prezi

[shorturl.at/npVW2](http://shorturl.at/npVW2)

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<sup>1</sup> Oral Communication Center, <http://www.hamilton.edu/oralcommunication/basic-principles-of-oral-presentation>

<sup>2</sup> Weinschenk, S. (2013). 100 things every presenter needs to know about people. Berekley: New Riders

<sup>3</sup> Oral Communication Center

<http://www.hamilton.edu/oralcommunication/basic-structure-for-a-research-presentation>

<sup>4</sup> The 10/20/30 Rule of PowerPoint (Guy Kawasaki)

[http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2005/12/the\\_102030\\_rule.html](http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2005/12/the_102030_rule.html)

<sup>5</sup> Oral Communication Center

<http://www.hamilton.edu/oralcommunication/using-powerpoint-effectively-in-an-oral-presentation>