

How to Write a Presentation

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Source

- <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/present/writing-your-presentation.html>

Preparing your presentation

- Preparation is the single most important part of making a successful presentation.
- You should know your material well and take time to consider what you want to say.
- Good preparation will ensure that you have thought carefully about the messages that you want (or need) to communicate in your presentation

Preparing your presentation

Aspects that you need to consider when preparing a presentation:

- the aim of the presentation,
- the subject matter,
- the audience,
- the venue or place,
- the time of day,
- and the length of the talk.

All these will affect what you say and how you say it, as well as the [visual aids](#) that you use to get your point across.

AD The Objective

- **Whenever you are asked to give a presentation or speak to a group of people, you need to start by asking the purpose of the presentation.**
- These outcomes will shape your presentation, because it must be designed to achieve the objective and deliver the desired outcomes.

AD The Subject

- The subject may be given to you by the organisation that has invited you (such as talking about pruning to the gardening club).
- You may be knowledgeable in a particular field (perhaps you have an interest in local history).
- The subject may be entirely your choice within certain limitations (you might, for example, be asked to give a presentation on a project which you feel has particularly developed your skills).

AD The audience

- The size of the group or audience expected.
- The age range - a talk aimed at retired people will be quite different from one aimed at teenagers.
- Gender - will the audience be predominantly male or female?
- Is it a captive audience or will they be there out of interest?
- Will you be speaking in their work or leisure time?
- Do they know something about your subject already or will it be totally new to them? Is the subject part of their work?
- Are you there to inform, teach, stimulate, or provoke?
- Can you use humour? What would be considered appropriate?

AD The place

- The size of the room;
- The seating arrangements (for example, theatre-style, with rows of seats; or round-table);
- The availability of equipment, e.g., microphone, laptop and projector, flip chart;
- The availability of power points and if an extension lead is required for any equipment you intend to use;
- If the room has curtains or blinds. This is relevant if you intend to use visual aids, and so that you can ensure the correct ambiance for your presentation;
- The position of the light switches. Check if you need someone to help if you are using audio/visual equipment and need to turn off the lights;
- The likelihood of outside distractions, e.g., noise from another room.

AD The time of day

Morning:

- The morning is the best time to speak because people are generally at their most alert. However, as it gets towards lunch time, people begin to feel hungry and lose concentration. This is particularly true if the event has not included a coffee break.

Afternoon:

- After lunch, people often feel sleepy and lethargic. If you are given a slot immediately after lunch, it is a good idea to get your audience involved. A discussion or getting your audience moving about will work a lot better than simply presenting a lot of slides. A flip chart may also be a more useful tool than a laptop and projector, especially if it means you can open blinds and use natural light.
- Towards the end of the afternoon, people again tend to lose concentration as they start to worry about getting home, the traffic or collecting children from school.

Evening or Weekend:

- Outside regular office hours, people are more likely to be present because they want to be rather than because they have to be there. There is a better chance of audience attention in the evening. However, if the presentation goes on for too long, people may have to leave before you have finished. People will also be less tolerant of a poor presentation because you are in their time, not their employer's.

AD Length of talk

- **Always find out how long you have to talk and check if this includes or excludes time for questions.**
- Find out if there are other speakers and, if so, where you are placed in the running order. Never elect to go last. Beware of over-running, as this could be disastrous if there are other speakers following you.
- It is important to remember that people find it difficult to maintain concentration for long periods of time. This is a good reason for making a presentation succinct, well-structured and interesting. Aim for 45 minutes as maximum, and preferably leave at least 10 or 15 minutes for questions. **Nobody minds finishing a session early.**

Organising the presentation material

- give a clear, well-structured delivery - you should know exactly what you want to say and the order in which you want to say it.

4 STEPS:

1. Blue Sky Thinking (the ideas)
2. Selecting the main points
3. Deciding whether to illustrate
4. Introduction and conclusion.

1. The ideas

- Keeping your objectives in mind, write down all the points you wish to make, irrespective of order.
- Clarity of ideas and good organisation should help result in a lively, logical and compelling message, delivered in a confident and professional way.

2. Select the main points

- Work on the main content first
- From your notes decide on the most important things that need to be said. If you have too much material, be selective.
- **As a guide:**
 - 3 key points are sufficient for a 10-15 minute presentation.
 - 6 key points are sufficient for a 30 minute presentation.
 - 8 key points are sufficient for a 45 minute presentation.

2. Select the main points

- Arrange the key points in logical order and expand them with supporting material - discussion, argument, analysis and appeal.
- If you are hoping to persuade people then it is advisable to address potential objections within the presentation so that you present a reasoned, well-balanced view.

Presentation structure

A useful structure would be the following:

- 1. Introduction:** Tell the audience in the introduction what your subject is and how you have organised the presentation (by stating the key elements).
- 2. Main content:** Then tell them the details of the key elements and/or messages (by expanding and qualifying the key points in more detail and providing supporting evidence).
- 3. Conclusion:** Then tell the audience what you have just told them (by summarising the key points, concluding with the main subject again).

3. Decide whether to illustrate

- Most talks benefit from personal anecdotes, real-life situations or hypothetical examples to bring them to life.
- Use an image such as a graph, chart, or photo when you can: people are far more likely to remember information presented with a graphic or photo. After three days, most listeners only retain about 10% of what they've heard. However, when a visual is added, the percentage of information retained increases dramatically—to 65%.
- If the presentation is short and informal it is probably not necessary to use any visual aids like whiteboards and interactive whiteboards, flip charts, handouts, videos.
- Illustrations of any type should be relevant and fully explained.
- Bear in mind that a talk will last longer if visual aids are used.

4. Introduction and conclusion

- **The introduction should give a preview of what you are going to say and should gain the attention of the listeners with a statement of purpose.** Make it clear whether you wish to accept questions as they arise during the presentation, thereby breaking your flow and risk being side-tracked, or will invite questions at the end.
- **The conclusion should repeat the main points but this time try to use different words and summarise the main point and argument.** End decisively, so that no-one is in any doubt that your presentation is finished. This is also the time to ask the audience whether they have any questions.

Editing your content

Once you have a first draft of your presentation, it is important to review and edit it. This will help to ensure that it really does get your message across in the most effective way.

You should consider:

- **The language.** Make sure that what you are saying will be clear to your audience. Remove any jargon and try to use plain English instead. If necessary, explain terms when you first use them.
- **Sentence structure.** Use short sentences and keep the structure simple. Remember that you will be talking through your ideas and that the audience will be listening rather than reading.
- **The flow.** Make sure that your presentation structure leads your audience through your ideas and helps them to draw your conclusion for themselves.

Editing your content

- **Use metaphors and stories** to aid understanding and retention.
- **‘Hooks’ to get and hold the audience’s attention.** Ensure that you have included several ‘hooks’ at various points in the presentation. This will help you to get and then keep the audience’s attention. These might be stories, or audience participation, or some alternative visual aids, such as a short video.
- **Check, and double check, for spelling and grammar.** Make sure that any presentation slides or illustrations, titles, captions, handouts or similar are free from spelling mistakes.
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Final slide

- If you are taking questions after your presentation, and you are using PowerPoint, you will probably have a slide up on the screen during questions. You could, of course, have a final slide that says something like “Thank you for listening, any questions?”, or gives your contact details.
- **However, you could also leave up a final slide that highlights your conclusions.**
- This will help to ensure that your key messages remain in the minds of your audience.