
Presenting with Impact

Session Notes

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Establishing your purpose

Audiences often sit through presentations without really understanding the purpose of the talk. As a result, they remain disengaged, their minds tend to wander, and they leave with only a vague recollection of what the talk was about. The first step in preparing an effective presentation, therefore, is to work out exactly what you want to achieve by giving your talk.

STEP 1: Why are you presenting?

- ❑ *Create a 'hook':* early on in your presentation, try to demonstrate to the audience how your talk is relevant to them. Use an example, a story, a fact, statistics, an anecdote, a change in legislation, a quote or use interaction to explain any relevant background information that will help to set the scene. Creating a hook will immediately help the audience to recognise that the talk is going to be useful for them and is worthy of their attention.

STEP 2: What is your objective?

- ❑ *Make it about them:* once you have set the context, tell the audience what's in it for them. Explain how they will benefit from the talk or be clear in outlining what you want them to do as a result of the talk. Make sure that the focus is on them and not you e.g. 'my presentation will enable you to ...' rather than 'I want to tell you about...'.
- ❑ *Keep it active:* whilst outlining how the talk will affect them, use active language e.g. 'persuade', 'change', 'increase', 'reduce', or 'protect' rather than descriptive words like 'understand', 'explain' or 'know'. Passive language fails to make it clear why the audience need to listen to what you have to say.
- ❑ *Make it relevant:* now that you are clear about your purpose, make sure that you deliver it in a way that will appeal to your audience. Identify which tone, content, and style is most likely to connect with them.
- ❑ *Make it specific:* make the purpose as 'concrete' as possible e.g. 'by the end of this talk you will be able to use three simple techniques to'.
- ❑ *Focus on implications:* 'pitch' your purpose so that it connects with their needs / concerns. Focus on the positive implications of acting on your ideas, or the potential negative effects of ignoring your advice. And finally, ...
- ❑ *Make sure that it's easy to understand!*

STEP 3: How will your talk achieve your purpose?

Now that the audience is clear about the objective of your presentation, you need to explain how the talk will be delivered:

- ❑ Tell the audience how the talk will unfold - they need to know broadly how the presentation is going to be structured. It also allows them to realise, at any point during the talk, how far you are through the presentation.
- ❑ Limit the number of stages in your presentation to 3 or 4. Any more than that and the audience will find it hard to remember them.
- ❑ You could use a slide to outline the stages of your talk, but it may be easier just to explain it yourself. Either way, the most important thing is that you tell them.

Lastly, make sure that you rehearse this opening part of your presentation so that you can deliver it with confidence and energy. Use the start of your talk to demonstrate that it is going to be interesting, engaging and relevant to them.

Understanding the audience

Before preparing your content, gather as much information as possible about your audience to help tailor what you want to say to their needs. Find answers to as many of the questions below as you can and use your judgement to think about how they will react, before you plan the rest of your presentation.

Who are they? ☐ Are they internal, external or a mix? ☐ What are their roles / status? ☐ Do you know some / all of them? ☐ Will they know each other? ☐ How formal is the occasion? ☐ How many are attending? ☐ Will the press be there? ☐ Do any of your audience have any specific requirements?	How will they react? ☐ Why are they attending? ☐ What are their interests? ☐ What is likely to influence them? ☐ How friendly / hostile will they be? ☐ How do they feel about you / your team / organisation? ☐ How will they be seated? ☐ What mood will they be in? ☐ What local issues might be important? ☐ Is there any 'history'?
How much do they already know? ☐ What is their level of knowledge? ☐ Is it strategic or more practical? ☐ How similar is their level of knowledge? ☐ Are they familiar with your work?	Demographics ☐ What do they have in common? ☐ Are there any relevant factors e.g. age, sex, geographical location, language, interests, views, educational background?

You may not be able to find answers to all these questions, but you do need to try to find out as much as you can. There may be an organiser of the event who you could approach for more information. Alternatively, your colleagues may be able to guide you.

If all else fails, use your judgement to try to understand what might be of interest to the audience and how they are likely to react. Put yourself in their shoes and think about the best way to connect with them and gain their confidence.

Structuring the presentation

To ensure that your presentation is a success, it must be clearly structured and easy to follow. You need to deliver your presentation in a way that is interesting for the audience and makes it easy for them to remember afterwards. Pick what you need from the following suggestions to ensure you get your message across.

During the introduction

- ❑ Explain your purpose for presenting: why are you presenting and how will the talk be structured?
- ❑ Introduce yourself, your role and your experience.
- ❑ Introduce your organisation / department.
- ❑ Thank the audience for attending / inviting you.
- ❑ Explain how long it will last.
- ❑ Outline any domestic arrangements.
- ❑ Let your audience know if you will provide handouts etc.
- ❑ Let your audience know when you will take questions.

During the main body of the presentation

- ❑ Limit the number of key themes to 3.
- ❑ Summarise regularly to ensure people understand your structure.
- ❑ Link all that you say to your purpose.
- ❑ Link all that you say to your specific audience.
- ❑ Ensure you provide enough context for your key points.
- ❑ Add necessary detail to support your main themes: facts, examples, anecdotes, and relevant sources of information.
- ❑ Focus on how what you are saying is relevant to the audience.

- ❑ Most importantly, use a recognised story-telling method to outline your ideas. Too many presentations rely heavily on description and endless bullet points that don't capture the attention of the audience. Adopting a problem / solution approach is the simplest and most influential way to present. Use the methods below (at either the 'problem' or 'solution' stage) to ensure that your talk is a success:

Chronology	Explaining your points as they happened over time.
Process	Outlining your points in a logical step-by-step process e.g. like following a recipe.
General to specific	Explaining your points from a global down to a local level.
Categories	Explaining your ideas by grouping them together e.g. regionally, by type, by size etc.
Pros and cons	Listing + and - features for varied options before making a recommendation.
Before / after	Explaining how something used to be and how it will be in the future.
Specific to general	Taking an example / case study and using it to illustrate a more general / wider point.
Reverse priority	Ranking your points in ascending order of strength / importance.
Problem / solution	Outlining a problem and how it can be resolved.

At the end of the presentation

- ❑ Thank the audience for listening.
- ❑ Explain how the audience can contact you / discover more.
- ❑ Remind the audience of the purpose of your presentation.
- ❑ Summarise your key messages.
- ❑ Explain what you want the audience to do next.

Being persuasive

As well as structuring your presentation, you may need to plan how your content can influence the audience. Use the following suggestions to make your presentation as persuasive as possible.

Plan to make a strong first impression

- ❑ An audience will assess your authority and credibility sub-consciously by considering your words, tone and body language.
- ❑ When deciding whether or not you are credible, body language has by far the greatest impact, followed by voice tone.

Emphasise your credibility

- ❑ Add personal information that will influence your audience.
- ❑ Consider describing your responsibilities, experience, knowledge or qualifications to increase your credibility.
- ❑ Demonstrate your personal belief in what you are saying.

Understand the needs of the audience

- ❑ Anticipate what is important to the audience.
- ❑ Always try to build rapport with your audience.
- ❑ Work even harder if your message is likely to be unpopular.
- ❑ Focus your talk on what they want / need rather than on what you could tell them.

Aim to keep it short and simple

- ❑ Use everyday language to connect with the audience.
- ❑ Simple, direct language will help the audience understand your points.
- ❑ Cut out words / sentences that add nothing to your overall message.
- ❑ Consider the impact that your language might have on an audience.
- ❑ Use words that suggest honesty and a positive outlook.
- ❑ Avoid words or examples that will turn an audience against you.

Use persuasive facts, evidence, examples and anecdotes

- ❑ Ensure all your examples, facts, visuals etc are arresting.
- ❑ Keep your anecdotes and examples local.
- ❑ Find data that is likely to connect with your audience.
- ❑ Make use of superlatives where possible e.g. highest, first, last, worst, biggest, furthest etc.

Sell benefits not features

- ❑ Features are purely descriptive, and factual, and tend not to influence or persuade.
- ❑ Explain how what you are talking about helps the audience i.e. promote the benefits.

Offer unpleasant alternatives

- ❑ If your message is potentially unpopular, identify the unpleasant implications of not doing what you suggest.

Highlight similar examples

- ❑ If you anticipate resistance, provide examples of other organisations / departments who have already successfully taken your advice.

Plan a strong ending

- ❑ Plan to end on a high note that is decisive and memorable.
- ❑ Stay positive even if you feel parts of the talk didn't go that well.

Using classical rhetoric

Rhetoric is the use of verbal techniques to present ideas in a striking and memorable way. The following techniques will allow you to deliver ideas in a way that has greater impact.

1. Guide the audience

- ❑ *Rhetorical questions:* these act like 'jolts' to the audience and help grab their attention e.g. "So what impact will this have on us?"
- ❑ *Transitions (Metabasis):* is a brief statement of what has just been said followed by a transitional summary (often using a rhetorical question) e.g. "So, we understand some of the problems we face – but what solutions can we offer?"
- ❑ *Epanalepsis:* involves starting and ending a phrase, sentence or the entire presentation in the same way (or using the same slide to start and open the talk).

2. Use 'Threes'

- ❑ *Three words:* "We need to make a new, united and determined effort to ..."
- ❑ *Three phrases:* "... waiting times kept low, a focus on outcomes, and a rounded view of what good healthcare means."
- ❑ *Three sentences:*

"We want fair competition, not cherry picking.
Access to the best possible care in all cases, not just some.
And choice for patients, not competition for its own sake."
- ❑ *Longest point (of three) last:*

"We want people to get involved,
to have their voice heard,
and to work together to strengthen the institution we all love and hold dear."
- ❑ *Most important point (of three) last:*

"We're hearing too many stories about people being moved from pillar to post.

We're still behind many of our European neighbours on treating the big
killers like cancer and respiratory disease.

And we're still seeing damning reports which found the standard of care in
some hospitals was appalling, with elderly patients left unfed and unwashed."

- ❑ *Anaphora* - start each successive sentence with the same word(s):

*"We will not be selling off the NHS.
We will not be moving towards an insurance scheme.
 And we will not introduce an American-style private system."*

- ❑ *Germinatio* - keep the middle word, or words, the same:

*"...and the principle we all hold dear,
 and we all want to keep
 ...is free healthcare for all who need it."*

- ❑ *Antistrophe* - end each successive sentence with the same word(s):

*"To get value from money, we need to change,
 for the sake of our patients, we need to change,
 and to meet the challenges of the future, we need to change."*

3. Speak with conviction

- ❑ *Contrasts*: making a contrast between two things is a compelling form of rhetoric. Try using one of the following types of contrast to add impact:

- *Contradictions (not this, but that)*:

"We're not cutting the NHS in fact we're spending more on it."

- *Opposites: (using two contrasting words in one statement)*:

"We're desperate that clinical decision making, should replace bureaucratic decision making."

- ❑ *Analogy*: is a technique in which a comparison is made between two things to help the audience grasp a concept.
- ❑ *Metaphor*: a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to represent something else e.g. "an iron curtain has descended."
- ❑ *Simile*: a figure of speech that directly compares two things through the explicit use of connecting words such as 'like' or 'as' e.g. "it was like David v Goliath".
- ❑ *Sentential Adverbs*: single words, or brief phrases that emphasise the thought they precede. Examples include 'however', 'naturally', 'no doubt', 'of course', 'clearly'.

Using notes

Once you've worked out the purpose of your talk, analysed the audience and structured your content, you need to think about your notes. You could try to memorise your entire presentation, but this is a high-risk strategy with a strong chance of sounding muddled or missing bits out.

There may be times when it really is essential to read a script e.g. if presenting a contentious statement. However, in the vast majority of situations, a simpler approach to using notes needs to be adopted.

- ❑ Even if you initially write out your presentation, re-write it using simple notes.
- ❑ Use single words / numbers / 'triggers' to remind you what to say.
- ❑ Use bullets and sub-bullets and keep them orderly.
- ❑ Write big, and in capitals, so you can clearly see them.
- ❑ If possible, put them on a table to avoid holding them.
- ❑ Write them all on one page to avoid lots of page-turning.
- ❑ Use different colour to highlight different sections.
- ❑ Include instructions to yourself e.g. 'recap' or 'blank' the slide.
- ❑ Continue to use photos, graphs, maps etc on your slides as 'prompts'.
- ❑ Remember, it's fine to pause and glance down at your notes.
- ❑ Draw, and number, your slides on your notes as a guide to what comes next.
- ❑ Make sure that you rehearse using your notes to ensure they are workable.

Finally, using 'Presenter View' in PowerPoint is a simple way to view your speaker notes on your laptop, while your audience views the notes-free presentation on the larger screen. Simple step by step instructions to use Presenter View can be found at the following link or by searching for 'presenter view' on the web.

Managing the venue

Before you design any visuals, make sure that you know enough about the venue to avoid any problems on the day of your presentation. Ensure you know answers to the following questions before the event.

- ☐ What equipment is available at the venue?
- ☐ Do you need to provide any equipment?
- ☐ Are you confident to use all the technology?
- ☐ Do you have the name of the person who is organising the event?
- ☐ Is someone speaking before you or will you have time to set-up?
- ☐ What time can you access the venue?
- ☐ How will the room be arranged?
- ☐ Do you need to send through slides beforehand?
- ☐ If so, is there a standard template?
- ☐ Is your software compatible with that of the venue?
- ☐ Do you need back-up in case the technology falters on the day?

On the day:

- ☐ Arrive in plenty of time to organise everything.
- ☐ Re-arrange the room to your requirements.
- ☐ Set-up the equipment and check that it works.
- ☐ Ensure that you are confident using all the technology.
- ☐ Know how the lighting, heating, curtains and air-con work.
- ☐ Ensure you have all your notes in order.
- ☐ Get familiar with fire exits, toilets, catering arrangements, etc.

Using slides effectively

Slides can add emphasis and impact to your presentation. Used clumsily, however, it can bore an audience and cause them to switch off. Before you start creating visuals, consider:

1. Less is more

- ❑ Do you really need to use slides at all - could you just speak?
- ❑ Do you need to use slides throughout all the presentation? When in 'Slide Show', hit 'B' to blank the screen.
- ❑ If you do use slides, remove everything that isn't essential.

2. Be cautious with text

- ❑ Make sure your slides are not simply your notes.
- ❑ Make sure your slides are not your hand-outs.
- ❑ Avoid lists / bullet points in the main part of your talk (although they can be effective when summing up).
- ❑ Avoid showing large amounts of text which allow the audience to read ahead.
- ❑ Present information first and then reveal it on the slide.
- ❑ Replace words with graphics whenever you can.
- ❑ Focus on 'content' (essential information) and remove all 'narrative' (script)
- ❑ Use text in more creative ways than lists e.g. quotes, headlines, facts / stats.
- ❑ Avoid boring, dry or drawn out titles.
- ❑ Try mixing and matching a limited range of fonts on a slide to add interest.
- ❑ Check your spelling and grammar.
- ❑ Use your corporate template for consistency and professionalism.

3. Design Matters

- ❑ Graphics are much more effective than words.
- ❑ Ensure that there is only 1 message per slide.
- ❑ Try and vary the type / style of the slide to add variety.
- ❑ Ensure consistency of style throughout all the slides.
- ❑ Supersize all your graphics and fill the entire screen.

- ❑ Whenever possible, display everything symmetrically.
- ❑ Keep photography simple and high quality.
- ❑ Each image should be thought provoking whether literal or abstract.
- ❑ Ensure you have full copyright to use any graphics (google images, tools, usage rights, creative commons).
- ❑ **Apart from Google Images, the following sites are useful for high impact presentations:**
- ❑ **For photography, try pixabay.com, pexels.com, flickr.com (creative commons), wikimedia commons, unsplash.com, freeimages.com, freedigitalphotos.net, all-free-download.com**
- ❑ **For icons and infographics try: flaticon.com and <https://smart.servier.com> for 3000 free medical images.**
- ❑ **You can also access icons by clicking on 'insert' in PowerPoint and selecting 'icons'.**
- ❑ Use colours that work well together – use strong contrasts.
- ❑ Ensure there is enough contrast on the slides e.g., black screen / white text.
- ❑ Try to introduce your slide before it appears on the screen.
- ❑ Allow complex slides to 'build' bit by bit.
- ❑ Consider starting and finishing on the same / similar slide.

Creating accessible slides

There is a growing expectation that your slides should be accessible to people with visual disabilities. This section focuses on designing slides for people with Colour Vision Deficiency (CVD) commonly referred to as colour blindness, and dyslexia, although these points will make your slides more accessible to all audiences.

Colour Vision Deficiency makes it difficult to distinguish between different colours. Complete colour blindness is rare, but approximately 1 in 12 men and 1 in 200 women are affected by one of the three main types: Red/Green, Blue/Yellow, and Monochromacy (complete colour blindness). CVD is more common among Caucasians and up to 3% of the population could be affected because of age-related colour blindness. People with CVD can, however, distinguish light and dark colours and there are some simple steps to make your slides more visually accessible.

- ❑ Use high-contrast colour combinations when selecting text and background colour e.g. colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel.
- ❑ Use simple colour combinations that rely on 2 or 3 colours (one primary colour with two supporting colours works well).
- ❑ White and black schemes make it easier to distinguish text and shapes.
- ❑ Tone is as important as colour for visibility. To test the clarity of your slides, put them into 'Grayscale' - in PowerPoint, select 'View' and choose 'Grayscale'.
- ❑ Incorporate symbols / icons within blocks of colours to make your message clearer.
- ❑ Use a 'pattern' in bar charts to make them more distinct.
- ❑ Integrate the legend into a pie chart to make it simpler to process.
- ❑ Use Microsoft's Accessibility Checker for extra tips on accessibility. In PowerPoint, select 'Review' and choose 'Check Accessibility'.

Dyslexia affects 1 in 10 adults and can make spelling, organisation and verbal memory more difficult. Symptoms vary but using the following steps will make your slides easier to interpret.

- ❑ Avoid large blocks of text. Minimise text and use more graphics instead.
- ❑ Use simple, sans serif fonts e.g. Calibri, Franklin Gothic Book, Lucida Sans and Segoe UI.
- ❑ Keep font size to a minimum of 18.
- ❑ Avoid italics, underlining and block capitals. Bold text works well.
- ❑ Use speaker notes (within PowerPoint) to provide more information for your audience if you are distributing your slides as handouts.
- ❑ Number processes / steps in flowcharts etc to make it easier to navigate.
- ❑ Left-hand justify your text.
- ❑ Use 1.5 line spacing.
- ❑ Provide plenty of blank space on your slides.
- ❑ Use a cream background – white can appear too dazzling. Alternatively, a dark background with white text works well.

Screen Readers: If you are asked to design slides for someone with a more serious visual impairment, they may use slide-reading software where any text on your screen is 'read' to them. A useful and practical guide can be found here:

www.gov.wales/how-to-create-accessible-powerpoint-presentations

Establishing authority

Even if you feel nervous, you can appear confident to your audience by using the suggestions below. Establishing authority will enhance your credibility and help you persuade an audience to do what you want them to do.

- ❑ Make sure you are well prepared and have rehearsed out loud.
- ❑ Ensure you know how to use the technology / equipment.
- ❑ Dressing smartly will enhance your authority.
- ❑ Walk confidently to the presentation area.
- ❑ Ensure your notes are organised.
- ❑ Pause, establish eye contact and smile before you start.
- ❑ Consider being introduced by the event organiser / a colleague.
- ❑ Outline your personal experience / qualifications if appropriate.
- ❑ Speak loudly.
- ❑ Speak clearly.
- ❑ Make a high impact start that relates to the interests of the audience.
- ❑ Maintain a strong, upright posture.
- ❑ Maintain eye contact.
- ❑ Sustain your energy level throughout.
- ❑ Use movement and gestures to demonstrate confidence.
- ❑ React calmly to interruptions, equipment faults, etc.
- ❑ Direct your audience to what you want them to do.
- ❑ End with a strong and concise summary.
- ❑ Avoid rushing off the presentation stage at the end.

Handling nerves

If you get nervous at the thought of delivering a presentation, select any ideas from the list below that might help you overcome any anxiety. You may not be able to eradicate nerves altogether, but you may be able to manage them so that they don't affect your delivery.

Before the day of your presentation...

- ❑ Keep it in perspective: it's only a talk and they're only people.
- ❑ Most people dislike giving talks – if you do too, you're not alone.
- ❑ Avoid negative 'self-talk' e.g., "they're bound to hate it" or "I bet they'll be bored with my subject".
- ❑ Do everything you can to feel happy with your presentation e.g., quality of slides, choice of examples / facts etc.
- ❑ Make sure you know what to expect e.g., audience size, type, formality etc.
- ❑ Make sure you know how to use the equipment.
- ❑ Always rehearse – out loud, with your slides and as many times as possible.

On the day of your presentation...

- ❑ Dress more smartly if it makes you feel more confident.
- ❑ Arrive early, get organised, allow time to sit quietly and breathe.
- ❑ Go for it at the start – even if you are nervous, be loud and energetic.
- ❑ Avoid holding anything when you present – e.g., to avoid clicking a pen, or letting your notes shake.
- ❑ Ask for feedback each time you present to constantly improve – the better you get, the more confident you will feel.
- ❑ It will get easier the more you do it.

Delivering your presentation

Follow the simple steps below to ensure you deliver the presentation as well as you can. You may need to rehearse so that you can focus on how you are delivering the talk, rather than being focused on remembering what you want to say.

- ❑ *Slow it down:* don't race through your presentation without pausing. Speak slowly and clearly in a loud voice without shouting. Add volume or lower your pitch to increase authority. Dramatically increase or decrease volume to gain attention. Vary the speed of your delivery and avoid letting your sentences tail off.
- ❑ *Add emphasis:* don't place equal emphasis on every word in a sentence. A dull and monotonous voice soon loses attention. During every sentence, select the word, or words, that are most important and add impact to the way that you say that word.
- ❑ *Speak conversationally:* deliver your message fluently. Use rhetorical questions and maintain eye contact with your audience. Choose specific words rather than general ones and select short, punchy phrases and sentences. Use 'sign-posting' to indicate progress through your presentation and avoid jargon and technical language. Say it simply and replace non-words (ums and errs) with pauses.
- ❑ *Keep it lively:* speak with emotion and feeling. Express yourself in a way that will make people want to listen. Believe in what you have to say and add conviction to your points. Talk to the audience as if you were speaking to one person. Add personal interest to build rapport – smile where appropriate – and if you use humour, do it boldly and wholeheartedly.
- ❑ *Pause:* punctuate your talk with more frequent and longer silences than is normal in conversation. Without pauses, your material is likely to hit the audience at such a speed that they won't have time to digest it before you've moved on to whatever comes next.
- ❑ *Stick to time:* rehearse your presentation so you know how long it takes. Ensure you have a watch, or can see a clock, and note the time by which you need to finish. Keep an eye on it and don't over-run!

Presenting complex information

You may need to explain potentially complex or technical information but that is no excuse to baffle or confuse your audience. Do all that you can to explain things logically and clearly. Use the ideas below when planning your presentation.

When preparing your presentation:

- ❑ Leave out excessive detail if it is not critical to the presentation.
- ❑ Limit the number of key points.
- ❑ Use a clear and logical structure.
- ❑ Break complex subjects into 'bite-sized' chunks.
- ❑ Use examples, analogies & anecdotes that are familiar to the audience.
- ❑ Focus on outcomes rather than methodology.
- ❑ Support your ideas with photos, images and diagrams.
- ❑ If possible, rehearse in front of a non-technical colleague / friend.

When delivering your presentation:

- ❑ Provide relevant context / background information.
- ❑ Use everyday / simple language.
- ❑ Use acronyms sparingly / carefully.
- ❑ Use a flip chart to build-up complex subjects visually.
- ❑ Use terms of reference that are appropriate to the audience.
- ❑ Recap regularly.
- ❑ 'Read' the audience to see if they are confused or inattentive.
- ❑ Adapt your style if you feel people are struggling to understand.

Effective body language

As well as listening to what you have to say, the audience will gauge how credible and persuasive you are by 'reading' your non-verbal communication. Use the points below to project a positive, confident impression to your audience.

Eye Contact	Posture
Briefly survey all the audience before you start presenting. Maintain eye contact throughout. Don't exclude the people on the fringes. 5 seconds eye contact per person is comfortable. Move eye contact at the end of a sentence or at a natural break. Avoid concentrating on the friendlier faces.	Balance on two feet to avoid slouching. Identify the centre point from which you are presenting and 'own' it. Make clear deliberate steps rather than shuffling around. Get accustomed to good posture by standing against a wall so that your heels, lower back, shoulders and head, touch the wall.
Gestures	Appearance
Identify any nervous habits to avoid them. Smiling is the simplest gesture. Use open body language to build rapport. Use the whole of your body to add impact with gestures. Make your gestures as large as possible. Hand gestures above the waist (and shoulders) are more effective. Use iconic gestures i.e., ones that match your words.	An audience will make an immediate emotional judgement on your credibility based on how you look. Therefore... Make sure that you dress appropriately for the event. If in doubt, dress smartly. Wear something comfortable. Nobody will tell you how you look – unless you ask. Before presenting, take a last-minute check in the mirror.

Maintaining interest

Everyone has a limit to their attention span and your job as a presenter is to maintain your audience's interest for as long as possible. By keeping their attention, they are more likely to remember what you say, and more likely to do what you want.

Using interaction

- ✓ Rhetorical questions
- ✓ Refer to specific members of audience
- ✓ Refer to previous speakers
- ✓ Visualisation techniques
- ✓ Send props around room
- ✓ Show of hands / vote
- ✓ 'Guessing games'
- ✓ Brainstorm
- ✓ Allow questions during the talk
- ✓ Test / self-check / quiz
- ✓ Use volunteers
- ✓ Exercises e.g. pairs, groups etc.
- ✓ Open questions

Visuals

- ✓ Great title
- ✓ Limit number of slides
- ✓ Use more than one visual
- ✓ Vary the type of slide
- ✓ Use powerful images
- ✓ Limit content on slides
- ✓ Build up illustrations on flip chart

Content

- ✓ Prepare thoroughly
- ✓ Use a powerful opener and a powerful close
- ✓ Draw on examples / anecdotes that are relevant to the audience
- ✓ Identify great facts / stats
- ✓ Start with a story or a quote
- ✓ Include current issues / local examples
- ✓ Bring in ideas and concepts from other subjects
- ✓ Use new / up to date ideas and research
- ✓ Limit number of key points
- ✓ Keep it as short as possible

Vocal delivery

- ✓ Use direct punchy language
- ✓ Speak clearly
- ✓ Vary volume
- ✓ Vary tone
- ✓ Vary pace
- ✓ Talk with them, not at them (i.e. inclusive language)
- ✓ Pause regularly
- ✓ Deliver fluently and naturally

Personal style

- ✓ Introduce humour
- ✓ Move to add interest
- ✓ Dress to match what you are saying
- ✓ Smile and look relaxed
- ✓ Maintain eye contact and gauge your audience's reactions
- ✓ Maintain good posture
- ✓ Look enthusiastic / interested
- ✓ Use gestures

Retention of information

- ✓ Use handouts and worksheets
- ✓ Show / distribute props if it supports your point
- ✓ Include analogies
- ✓ Use 'builds' to explain complex data
- ✓ Relate complex ideas to everyday examples
- ✓ Use a 'mnemonic' e.g. AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action)
- ✓ Let the audience know how far they are through the presentation
- ✓ Use metaphors and similes
- ✓ Summarise / re-cap regularly
- ✓ End on your key points
- ✓ Rehearse

Delivering a short presentation

The trend for short presentations is on the increase. Pitching to funding panels has always demanded a fast, high impact style where messages must be delivered in a convincing style. A similar approach is becoming more popular – many audiences are no longer willing to sit through long, drawn-out lectures that don't engage. In many ways, a short talk can be more difficult to construct than a typical conference presentation and you'll have to be ruthless about what you can, and can't, include.

Focus on the essential elements of your research and accept that you can only deliver a high-level explanation of your work. As with all presentations, pitch the content based on how much the audience already know about your subject. Speaking faster and cramming even more information on to your slides is a waste of time. Recognise the limitations of a short talk and adapt so that you, and the audience, can enjoy it.

STEP 1: Context

The basic questions that you could address at the start of a short talk are:

- ❑ What is the problem being addressed? And
- ❑ Why is this research important?

Highlight any background information or context that explains why your research is important. Use an example, facts, statistics, an anecdote, a change in legislation etc to set the scene. Creating a 'hook' will immediately help the audience to understand the problem, or the gap in our knowledge, that you are trying to address.

Where possible, demonstrate the scale of the issue, its significance, and its implications. This could relate to the number of people affected, costs, impact on public health or crime rates etc . Alternatively, if the implications are less tangible, you'll need to demonstrate how any knowledge gaps in your field will be addressed by your research and why that's important.

STEP 2: Aim

Once you've explained the context you need to articulate:

- ❑ What is your research aim?

Be clear and make it as simple as possible. What precisely are you hoping to achieve? Work hard to deliver this in one sentence that is precise and memorable.

STEP 3: Methods

Once you've clarified the 'Context' and 'Aim', you need to address the following question:

- How will you do it?

Your methodology is probably long and detailed and it is difficult to condense this into a 5-minute talk, but you will need to scale this down to the bare bones.

You're likely to have under one minute to explain your project plan and demonstrate that it's robust. The most important thing is to make it understandable so that your audience can ask detailed questions in the Q&A.

STEP 4: Impact

Once you've clarified the 'Context', 'Aim', and 'Methods' you may need to explain the impact that you think your research will have.

Clearly state the outputs of your project plan. What precisely will you have achieved at the end of the project and what impact are those findings likely to have?

Highlight anything that is novel or interesting about your research. As well as demonstrating the impact of the research on your career, focus on the impact that the research may have more widely e.g. within your field, on other researchers, for policy or decision makers, on stakeholders, end users, patients, commerce or the public. Try to balance academic impact with wider impact if you can.

In a short talk, try to eliminate the 'niceties' of a standard talk e.g. thanking the audience for inviting you, showing acknowledgements, including an long personal introduction. You don't have time. Make every sentence count and focus on your research.

Even though the talk is short, however, you should still try to sum-up - just make sure you can do it in under 20 seconds.

Handling questions after a presentation

The question and answer session is an important part of your presentation and provides another opportunity to influence your audience. Don't spend all your preparation time focused solely on the presentation - consider how you will manage the question and answer session in a confident and professional way.

Before the event....

- ❑ Anticipate and prepare succinct answers to questions.
- ❑ Set expectations in your introduction of your level of expertise.
- ❑ Decide when you will take questions: do you want to take them throughout; at intervals during your talk; or at the end?
- ❑ Agree with the chair how questions will be managed.

Before you answer...

- ❑ Stay alert. The presentation may be over, but your job isn't.
- ❑ Listen carefully to each question and do not interrupt.
- ❑ Thank people for their questions.
- ❑ Be aware of multiple questions to ensure you answer them all.
- ❑ Clarify the meaning of a question if you are unsure.
- ❑ Repeat the question if you feel others may have missed it.
- ❑ Don't re-phrase difficult or negative questions.
- ❑ Avoid letting the same person ask consecutive questions.
- ❑ If the same person keeps asking, offer to see them after the event.
- ❑ Stay calm and positive even if the question is aggressive.
- ❑ On no account become aggressive, dismissive or rattled.
- ❑ Pause to think before you answer.

When you answer...

- ❑ Make sure you answer the question!
- ❑ Use the following system to handle more detailed questions: answer it quickly; elaborate a little; provide an example; and summarise your answer.
- ❑ Be brief – don't start presenting all over again.
- ❑ Be direct, clear and honest.
- ❑ Challenge factual inaccuracies.
- ❑ Counteract negative questions with positives.
- ❑ Avoid talking solely to the person who asked the question.
- ❑ Return to the questioner (via eye contact) at the end of your answer.
- ❑ Remain upbeat and confident.
- ❑ Offer compensating factors i.e. if you can't do something, say so, but tell them what you can do.
- ❑ Close off issues if 'piggy-backing' is likely.
- ❑ Don't make fun of your audience or use sarcasm / flippant remarks.
- ❑ Admit calmly if you don't know – offer to find out if it is appropriate.
- ❑ Re-present the summary from your presentation at the end of the last question.

Handling questions during an interview

In addition to the points in the previous section, use these points specifically in an interview situation for a grant or a new role.

- ❑ Research the organisation / faculty / specific role to tailor your answers. Become familiar with their mission and values, their products / services / research goals; the requirements of the role; and any recent news or future plans alert. The presentation may be over, but your job isn't.
- ❑ Clarify before you answer If a question is unclear. Ask for clarification e.g. "Could you clarify if you're asking about leadership in my current role or in this new position?"
- ❑ Take a moment to think. Don't be afraid to pause and think. It's better to pause and make your answer fluent
- ❑ Recognise the type of question you are being asked
 - Behavioural (past experiences)
 - Technical (skills, coding, problem-solving)
 - Problem-based (problem-solving in real time)
- ❑ Use the STAR Method for Behavioural Questions e.g. give me an example of a time you had to manage conflict?
 - S – Situation "At my last job....
 - T – Task ... we had a deadline but a teammate said he was too busy to help
 - A – Action I negotiated support from another team so he could help me
 - R – Result As a result, we met the deadline without any damage to morale"
- ❑ Stay On topic & be concise
- ❑ Stick to what the question is asking and answer with a clear takeaway.
- ❑ Ask smart questions at the end e.g.
 - "How do you review performance in this role?"
 - "How would you describe the research culture here?"

Negotiating for a salary increase during an interview

Use these points when you want to negotiate your benefits.

- ❑ **Prepare your case:** track your achievements, quantify your impact (e.g., revenue generated, costs saved, deadlines met, client satisfaction, papers published, grants received); Highlight how you've gone above your job description; Gather data on your role's average salary. For example, "Over the past 6 months, I've increased client retention by 25% and improved our reporting system, saving time for the whole team."
- ❑ **Choose the right time:** request a meeting after a major success or during performance review season. Avoid busy or stressful periods unless unavoidable.
- ❑ **Start the conversation professionally:** Request a private meeting with your manager. Use neutral language. For example, "I'd like to set up a time to talk about my role and future potential within the team."
- ❑ **Practise your pitch:** rehearse your key points. Keep your tone professional, assertive, and respectful—not entitled. For example, "I've consistently delivered strong results, and I'd like to discuss better aligning my salary to my contributions."
- ❑ **Make a specific ask:** know your target number or range based on research. Express flexibility, but confidence. For example: "Given my current performance, I believe a salary in the range of X-Y would reflect the value I bring."
- ❑ **Prepare for common responses** such as "We don't have the budget right now" or "You're already being paid competitively". For example, "I understand. Can we revisit this in three months? What would you need to see from me to make this possible?" Or "I've looked at similar roles in our industry, and it appears that the market range is higher. Can we explore a path to bring my salary closer to that?"
- ❑ **Consider alternatives:** If a raise isn't possible now, ask for something else. For example a performance related bonus, a title upgrade, a change in responsibilities, greater flexibility, more annual leave, time off, or better development opportunities e.g. formal training, qualifications, job-shadowing, placements, mentoring
- ❑ **Follow up in writing:** Summarise the decision in an email to document the agreement or expectations for next steps.

Notes

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