



# 12 Tips to Making Effective Presentations

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Have you ever been put into a PowerPoint coma by a speaker who presents their ideas on slides more as paragraphs than bullets? Or spent the first five minutes of a presentation trying to figure out the context of the speaker's message?

Being an effective speaker is not merely standing up and talking about what you know. Yet it doesn't have to be hard either. Like any skill, good speaking can be learned and developed.

Be someone that people want to listen to and learn from. Follow these twelve principles to keep your audience engaged and deliver a high-impact presentation:

- 1. Start with the end in mind.** What is the audience's expectation? What do you want to accomplish? What do you want your audience to get out of the presentation? Do you want them to take some action or be informed? Buy something or set a goal? Change their viewpoint or attitude? Make a list of the outcomes you expect as a result of your presentation.
- 2. Determine the format.** Determine the format of the presentation you will be making. Is it a monolog or dialog? Should it be entertaining, humorous, or is the topic to be serious? Do you plan to employ others in your presentation and if so, how? Will you have break-out discussions or other activities during your presentation? Make a list of the attributes you plan to incorporate into your presentation.
- 3. Create the outline.** Outline your presentation in bullets before you start writing it or getting into the details. Start with an introduction that includes relevant background information, the objective, the "why" behind the objective, and the agenda. Outline the body of the presentation with the key points and the supporting sub-points beneath them. Outline the closing of the presentation with a summary of the main points, closing remarks, and key take-aways.
- 4. Develop the introduction.** Create an engaging introduction that sets the proper tone. You want to quickly engage your audience through a story, vision, scenario, game, question, joke, attention grabbing statistic, challenge, or provocative point of view. Set the context for your presentation early so people are not spending their mental energy trying to figure out where you are going.
- 5. Employ aids.** Consider how you might incorporate audio, visual, or other aids. What props, skits, pictures, people, photographs, video clips, exercises, breaks, or other aids might you employ to break-up your presentation? What might you do to engage people? How might you engage their sense of sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste? How can you incorporate humor?
- 6. Bring your key points to life.** Consider what additional stories, demonstrations, images, symbols, metaphors, facts, figures, quotations, graphs, or frameworks you might employ to bring your key points to life. They will leave a more lasting imprint on your audience than bullets of text ... or worse, bullets with sentences. Keep it simple. Create an overarching theme or phrase that captures your key point(s).
- 7. Consider other characteristics.** Reflect on other areas that might deserve special consideration. If the audience speaks English as a second language, you'll need to slow down and use less content. Consider their age, culture, level of existing knowledge, and general personality type. These and other characteristics may require adjustments to your content and/or delivery method.



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8. **Create your presentation.** Create the notes or text that adds detail to your outline. Write down the supporting material for each of your presentation points. Create the PowerPoint charts, workbook, handouts, or other documents you will be using. I create two documents for every presentation. One is a handout or slideshow for the audience which is brief and similar to my outline. The other is my presenter's version which has my notes on it and only for my reference.
9. **If using PowerPoint ...** Limit the text on your charts to a few short bullets. Don't make your slides eye exams. Create a handout or webpage with supporting material if you want to leave behind more information than that imparted through short bullets. Use pictures and frameworks to convey any complex points rather than text. If you want your audience to read something, there are better delivery methods than PowerPoint. Buy them a book, make them a handout, or write a white-paper.
10. **Check out the venue.** Ensure you have the proper equipment. Check out the seating arrangement. Consider what space you need for the presentation format you have chosen. Where do you want to be positioned on the stage, or relative to the door? Where will you stand relative to the screen, flip charts, or other presentation aids? Will a lavalier microphone be available? Is there video/audio recording available or needed?
11. **Prepare for your presentation.** Preparation varies by your style and comfort level with the material. If you know the material well, preparation might only require a few minutes of reviewing your notes. If you are not as comfortable with your material, you might need to rehearse several times in front of a "friendly audience" of your closest co-workers or friends. You might need to memorize parts of your presentation, particularly the first 2-5 minutes to get you through the introduction.
12. **Deliver your presentation.** Exude confidence in your delivery. Let your experience and knowledge speak for itself without self-promotion. Be genuine. Show sincerity. Be yourself. Possess a positive attitude. Be enthusiastic. Encourage and exhort your audience if applicable. Give reason for hope. Promote optimism and opportunity.

Follow these twelve principles and you'll deliver a fantastic presentation.

If you are in the 7 out of 10 people who are anxious about public speaking, there are many books, coaches, and online resources that will help you overcome speaking anxiety. Most anxieties are learned behaviors that can be unlearned. With a little extra effort, you too will become a great speaker. In fact, the best speakers are those who have had to overcome their anxiety. They prepare more, take speaking more seriously, don't talk just to hear themselves, and over time they develop a higher level of speaking proficiency. Consider that you have something valuable to present and developing your speaking skill is worth the effort.

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