

10 Tips for Delivering Oral Presentations

1. Start preparing early

While it's possible to deliver a presentation impromptu, you're far more likely to make a good impression by preparing well in advance. Choosing a topic that interests you will help you maintain your enthusiasm throughout the planning and delivery stages.

2. Tailor your talk to your audience

While planning your presentation, you will need to find out who your audience is, why they are coming, what they want to know, and how much time you have. Be sure to avoid using jargon or material that would be completely unknown to your audience.

3. Define a clear purpose

Understanding the purpose of your presentation is crucial for determining what information you'll use to get your points across. For example, do you want to inform your audience or do you want to persuade them to adopt a particular point of view? Including a straightforward purpose statement in your introduction will help your audience know what to expect.

4. Simplify

To ensure that you cover all the basics, narrow your topic down to roughly five major points and elaborate on them fully. Rather than adding more information, work on creating a concise outline and develop smooth transitions from one point to another.

5. Write it the way you'll say it

Simply reading what's on your PowerPoint slides or overheads is a sure way to lose your audience's attention. If you are nervous about forgetting what you want to say during your presentation, try preparing cue cards or point-form note cards – you can use these as references throughout your presentation if you need to refresh your memory.

6. Grab and hold your audience's attention

Your introduction plays a large role in the reception of your presentation since it sets the tone. Do your best to establish a rapport with the audience. Although you can tell a

joke to break the ice, it's probably safer to use anecdotes, a good quotation, or an intriguing question to grab your audience's attention.

7. Rehearse in a comfortable setting

You can minimize your public-speaking fears by practicing in front of friends, classmates, or family members. Good presentations are rehearsed several times before they're delivered. Re-read your outline and focus on the sequence of ideas rather than on memorizing every word. Also, when practicing: (i) make note of the time it takes for you to complete your presentation, (ii) make frequent eye contact, and (iii) ask your practice audience to give you constructive feedback.

8. Don't give in to panic

Experiencing a little nervousness before you start your presentation will keep you on your toes, but anxiety can be debilitating. Place your hands on a podium if you find that they are shaking. Or if direct eye contact makes you uncomfortable, try looking at foreheads instead. Also, try to minimize your use of unwanted fillers like 'um' and 'uh' and slow down the speed of your delivery to show your audience that you're in control.

9. Supply visual aids

When properly used, visual aids such as handouts, overheads, or slides can reinforce what you're saying and can add to the professionalism of your presentation. If you decide to use multi-media, check the layout of the room beforehand and test any technology you'll be using. Check out 10 Tips for PowerPoint Presentations for more ideas.

10. Allow time for questions

Leave time at the end of your presentation for your audience to ask questions. If you're presenting to a smaller group, you may also want to consider encouraging questions during the presentation itself. Allowing for questions gives your audience the opportunity to personally engage with your topic. Remember, 'I honestly don't know' is a perfectly acceptable answer to any question that you don't have a response for.