

Presentation Strategies

Researchers need to be able to present their work in an accessible and engaging way, to expert and non-expert audiences. Use these tips to make your presentation compelling and memorable.

Structuring Your Presentation

Listening to a presentation is much different than reading a paper, so you need to guide your audience through your talk:

1. Create an Entry Point

Hook your audience.

Research shows that audiences are more engaged if your entry point is relatable, appeals to emotion, or uses attention-grabbing statistics.¹ Adapt this hook to your audience.

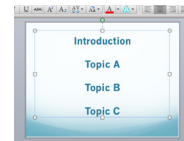
After hooking an audience, establish context by explaining the PROBLEM or gap your work is addressing. See the *Novelty Moves Handout*.

“Peptic ulcer disease, which affects over 40% of the population, is characterized by painful and frequent recurrences. Recent work has proposed pain management techniques, but currently, no cure exists for this disease.”

2. Provide a Road-Map

Give your audience a “road-map” of your presentation to prepare them to understand where you are going and how you will get there. This road-map can be delivered as an outline slide, or verbally:

“My presentation today will start by X. I will then discuss Y and Z.”

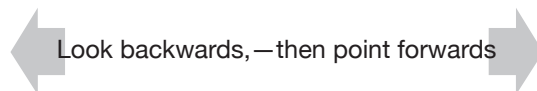


3. Offer Sign-Posting

Throughout your presentation, use “sign-posting” to remind your audience what you’ve just discussed, and to inform them about what you are about to cover.

“Now that we have covered X,—I want to talk about Y.”

“After discussing X,—let’s turn to Y.”



This will help to quickly and smoothly reorient any audience members who may have temporarily become distracted!

4. Use Effective Redundancy

Audiences can—and will—become distracted or confused for a sentence or two; effective redundancy will enable them to easily re-enter your presentation.

“In other words”

“My point is”

“To put it more simply”

Re-emphasizing a distilled assertion of your message will help audiences remember your content (people remember the big picture).

¹ Maryellen Meny Overbaugh and Michael Alley. “Effect of Student Model Presentations from a Speaking Contest on the Development of Engineering Students as Speakers.” 21st ASEE Conference and Exposition. Indianapolis, IN. June 15-18 2014.

Presentation Tone and Style

Research shows that the perceived confidence of a presenter strongly influences how an audience reacts to the presenter's message (sometimes more than the information itself!)²

In fact, a TED coach has said, "Vocal delivery and body language do make up **the majority** of a message's impact."²

So how can we appear confident (even when we're not)?

1. Have a conversation with every person in the room

People do not like to be read to; they like to be spoken to. When presenting, imagine that you are conversing with friendly acquaintances (in a slightly louder and more formal way).

When you have a natural conversation with someone, you:

- Use intonation to punctuate key words
- Make eye contact with your listeners
- Speak at an authentic, normal rate (not excessively slow)

Being conversational will engage your audience and encourage them to trust your message. It may seem simple, but actively being conversational takes practice!

2. Pause

Pausing is an amazingly effective tool. Use pauses to:

- Reduce "filler" words (um, uh, so), often caused by nerves. Adding pauses is much easier than trying to focusing on reducing noises.
- Add emphasis and build suspense in your narrative
- Make yourself seem self-assured (try surveying the audience as you pause)
- Give audiences time to process your information

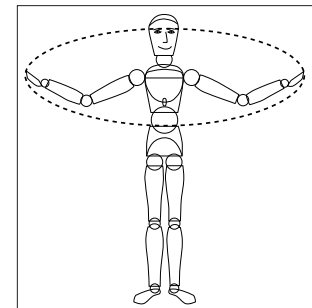
The pauses might seem awkward to you, but are generally not noticeable to an audience.

3. Use "powerful" gestures

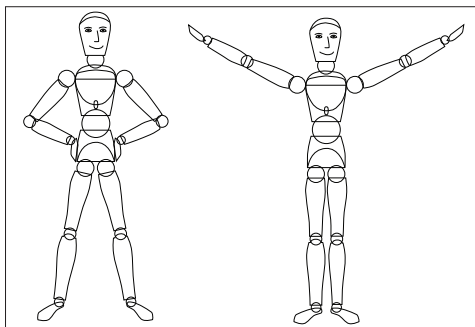
Nonverbal cues truly change how we think feel about ourselves, and how audiences perceive us.

Keep gestures within your "power sphere" to increase audience's confidence in your message.

Try to use these gestures at key moments to emphasize important information—but keep them natural.



Your Power Sphere



Power Poses

Or, to increase your confidence in yourself, try a "power pose." Open up and take up space. Making yourself bigger, taller and prouder has been shown to increase testosterone and reduce cortisol.³

The best way to improve your presentation is to practice, by yourself, in front of others, and in front of the video camera.

Make a GCC appointment today to practice your presentation.

² Gallo, Carmine. Talk Like Ted. Saint Martin's Press, 2014. 88 Print

³ Overbaugh and Alley.

⁴ Cuddy, Amy. "Amy Cuddy: Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are." TED. June 2012. Lecture.