

How To Give An Oral Presentation

Audience and purpose

The type of audience and the purpose of a presentation go hand in hand. A standard conference presentation is typically more technical as the audience has the required expertise. An educational presentation to a student audience must be precisely tailored to the knowledge level of the students. A keynote presentation is similar to a conference presentation, but gives substantially more time to cover a given topic in depth. A plenary presentation is similar to a keynote presentation, but given to a larger and less expertly homogenous audience, typically, including people with different expertise within a broad, common ground.

Preparing the presentation

Before you begin to prepare your presentation, determine the type of audience and the purpose of what you're going to present. The level of abstraction of your presentation, for example, how detailed and technical it should be, is determined by the type of audience and purpose of your presentation. Determine the person of your presentation, I versus we, and the voice, passive versus active. Do not forget that the presentation is a form of narrative, it should be a story with a clear flow to the narration, and the first few slides should clearly portray the structure of the presentation.

Preparing the slides

When you start working on the slides, a good rule of thumb is one slide per two to three minutes of your presentation. Each slide should contain just a few points. You should be able to talk in more details about these points for two to three minutes. If a slide contains a more complicated entity, such as a table, formula, graph, or image, it should just be shown for illustrated purposes and made clear to the audience it is just an illustration. Otherwise, the slide must be left on for longer with a more detailed verbal explanation. You must get the audience enough time to read the slide in its entirety and enough information to understand everything on it. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms unless very common, technical, or appropriate for the audience. For example, it is okay to use LCP, which means the longest common prefix, if talking to experts in computer science, if it was any other discipline, it would not be appropriate. Stay away from buzzwords in giving a pitch, it may make your presentation seem less serious. And lastly, each slide you present should be numbered for easy reference in the discussion during and or after the presentation.

Delivering the presentation

The delivery of the presentation is very important. The basic information on the slides should be explained and elaborated on during the talk. The worst mistake is to read off the slides, they should never be read, it is an insult to the audience. The talk should be as close to natural speaking as possible, this includes looking at and to the audience. Sometimes it helps to focus on a few members in the audience and talk to them. Speak at a normal speed, to get too fast is highly counterproductive, and speaking slowly creates the impressions that you don't know what you're talking about.