

# PRESENTATION SKILLS

Hugh Shanahan

Put your contact details in here !

## ▷ Summary ◁

- Why present?
- Preparation
- Giving the presentation
- Methods and Tricks :- a last summary

▷ Why present ? ◁

What does the audience get from a presentation that would not have been better offered in notes/handouts/exercises?

▷ **High reasons : Information** ◁

1. You can interact with the audience.
2. They can ask questions.
3. You can make the subject more alive.
  - point out the important parts.
  - Use body language.
  - Point at drawings and figures.
  - etc..
4. You can watch the audience, to see if you should speed up or slow down.
5. And many more things....

▷ **Low reasons** ◁

It is the best way to demonstrate what you know amongst your peers.

- Good talks at a conference are enormously helpful in ones career.
- Good talks within a commerical environment will encourage more customers.

## ▷ Preparation ◁

- Preparation is the key.
- Before giving any talk ask
  - What is the audience ?
  - How much time do I have ?
  - How big is the audience ?

▷ **The audience :- What should you think about ?** ◁

*Remember :- it is a privilege for you to give the talk to the audience, not the other way around.*

- Who is it for?
  - How much detail should you go into?
  - If you do not meet the audience's expectations, you will lose them.
  
- What do they want/need to know?
  - Is the material chosen for your audience - rather than for yourself.
  
- How large is the audience ?

## ▷ Presentation length ◁

- **Never ever over-run. People will remember you running over and will forget what you said.**
- Rule of thumb :- the shorter the presentation, the greater the level of preparation.
- 15 minute presentation - practice practice practice,
- 1 hour - you can pace yourself.
- Budget about 2-5 minutes per slide.
- Practice to get the timing right.
- **Do not cram stuff in**



## ▷ Different types of presentations ◁

Style and length format will vary according to size and audience.

- 2-3 people - very informal, low-tech, handouts
- 4-50 people - well prepared, a certain flexibility, laptop, overheads etc.
- 50 and up - rigidly prepared, more like a performance, technology must be used very effectively

What are the key elements of these (or any) presentations?

▷ **Fear** ◁

- Everybody is scared before a talk.
- Practice, practice, practice.
- Feel free to use notes, but don't get robotic about it.
- Do dry runs, get friends in.
- Start with a small audience and work up.

▷ **On the day of your talk** ◁

- Have a look at the room you will giving the presentation.
- Familiarise yourself with the audiovisual equipment.

## ▷ Giving your talk ◁

Some Basics:

- Talk slowly.
- Talk to your audience (face them).
- Not too much on one slide.
- Tell them what they want to hear!
- Do they want all the details ?
- Do they want the history of the problem ?
- Do they want time to digest some new definition ?

## ▷ Common mistakes ◁

- Going into too much detail.
- British mistake : dismissive or apologetic about own work !
- Not judging the length of the talk properly.
- Poorly designed display materials.

## ▷ Body Language ◁

- Is it important?
- Does the audience affect this?
- How about the type of presentation?
- Think about which kind of body language you like in a speaker.

## ▷ Visual style ◁

- Words are important, but it's not necessary to write everything down.
- Keep the number of words limited per slide.
- Figures :- make extensive use of them.
- Have a light background, with dark foreground (I like cream/blue).
- Colour blindness red-green / yellow-blue.

## ▷ Technology ◁

- You don't have to use a laptop - but it's pretty much the standard now.
- seminar and beamer are great for Mathematical talks.
- Avoid 95% of the tricks in Powerpoint.
- Animations are nice, but don't get carried away.
- Use Colour, but do so conservatively.
- Overhead transparencies are fine too, but have them prepared....
- Only annotate your slides with chalk or pens.



## ▷ Sound and pointing ◁

- Pro-ject !
- Do not move your head about if you have a microphone !
- Use a pointer, even if it is a pen - not your finger.

▷ **Depressing fact** ◁

Most of your audience will walk out the door with only a fraction of what you talked about. Furthermore, people's attention span rises and falls during a talk (particularly at the end of a long day).

So, make sure what your main points are and reiterate them, at the beginning, middle and end.

## ▷ Questions ◁

- Remember :- lots of questions means the talk is a success.
- Repeat questions, it's polite and it gives you time to think.
- For now ask if the questions can be left at the end of the talk.
- That said a question asked in the middle of a talk means people are interested.
- Well over 90% of questions will be fairly trivial for you to answer.
- Arseholes :- keep your cool. Everybody in the room will know them for what they are.

▷ **Recap** ◁

- Practice your talk!
- Involve your audience.
- Repeat questions.
- Body language tricks.
- Use pictures (it applicable).
- Not too much text per slide!
- Look at other peoples talks.