Formal Presentation

Presenting ideas effectively to individuals or groups when given time to prepare; delivering presentations suited to the characteristics and needs of the audience.

Key Actions

- **Defines clear goals**—Establishes an objective that clearly reflects the needs of the audience.

- **Follows a logical sequence**—Presents main ideas that support the objective of the presentation, and presents facts, evidence, and details that support the main ideas; delivers information in a logical order to aid understanding.

- **Uses nonverbal communication**—Uses body language (e.g., eye contact and gestures) that is consistent with verbal communication and aids understanding.

- **Uses learning aids**—Uses audio and visual aids to enhance the audience's understanding of content.

- **Listens and responds to questions and objections**—Involves the audience by soliciting questions and input; clarifies as needed to help achieve the goals of the session.

- **Summarizes the presentation**—Summarizes the main ideas; calls the audience to take action or make decisions, where appropriate.

- **Maintains audience attention**—Keeps the audience engaged through use of techniques such as analogies, illustrations, humor, an appealing style, body language, and voice inflection.

Quick Tips

- Find out what your audience expects from you before preparing your presentation.

- Practice your presentation ahead of time.

- Prepare responses to questions or objections that might arise during the presentation.

- Practice using presentation equipment in advance.

- Have an alternative approach in the event your presentation equipment doesn't work.

- Start and end on time.
Developmental Activities

Self-Directed

- Consider using more than one method to present your information (e.g., verbally, slides, diagrams, flowcharts, videos, handouts, etc.).

- Instead of reading the entire text from a paper, write key words and phrases of your presentation on index cards.

- When preparing your presentation, include ways to involve the audience (e.g., asking them for ideas or questions, having them relate to similar situations, etc.).

- Outline what you want to say in your presentation, with a planned opening and closing you can practice.

- Provide an opportunity for questions and discussion.

- Practice your presentation in front of a mirror, camcorder, or tape recorder. Then ask, "Is this how I want to present myself?" As you practice, note particularly effective and ineffective behaviors.

- Practice using gestures while you are speaking to dramatize important points.

- Research your audience to determine how to present your information so that it addresses their needs, goals, interests, and level of understanding.

- Observe experienced presenters on television (e.g., politicians, newscasters). Note specific behaviors that are effective and those that detract from the impact of the presentation.

- Repeat a presentation in an informal setting after incorporating coaching suggestions. Reassess your performance.

- Prepare a number of standard, general techniques to use when you sense the audience is losing interest. Include questions, stories, jokes, and activities.

- Use analogies and anecdotes during your presentations to emphasize major points and to make the message more interesting.

Partnerships

- Obtain help from other departments (audiovisual, training, design, marketing, etc.) to maximize the impact of your presentations.

- Observe skilled presenters in action. Note their specific, effective behaviors. Afterward, ask the presenters what worked well and what they might do differently in the future, and why.

- Ask a skilled presenter to coach you in preparing for a presentation. Then ask that person to observe your presentation and provide feedback and coaching.
• Designate someone in your audience as a note-taker/coach. Have the person provide you with feedback after your presentation.

• Practice using different types of questions at the end of presentations (open-ended, closed-ended, clarifying, rhetorical, etc.). Have someone watch your presentation and note how many of each you use during the "question–answer" period, as well as how successful you were in getting the audience to respond.

Targeted Assignments
• Join an organization (such as Toastmasters International) that encourages the development of speaking abilities.

• Take on assignments where you will have to make presentations to different groups or individuals.

• Take a speech class at a local college.

• Volunteer to speak to a low risk audience about a topic that you feel very confident with (e.g., community organization, children's activity, young adult group, local school, or community college).

Workshops
Look for a workshop that addresses the following:
• Preparing for, structuring, and targeting the presentation.

• Handling questions and objections effectively.

• Getting the audience appropriately involved in the presentation.

• Opening and closing the presentation.

• Using audiovisual materials and equipment for maximum impact.

• Handling difficult audience members.

• Providing opportunities for practicing skills and receiving feedback on your presentation skills.

Readings
Books

This complete guide to all types of business presentations features step-by-step instructions for planning, preparing, and delivering presentations. The author also offers creative ideas for using and presenting data, grabbing attention, and establishing credibility.

In this updated third edition, the author dispenses easy-to-read, practical information on improving (or simply developing new) presentation skills. It is a very good guide for beginning presenters.


Various media are addressed in this guide to oral communication. The author, a linguistics expert, gives tips on different types of public “speaking”—from making formal presentations to using voice-mail and email effectively. She also demonstrates how to ensure that the audience receives the speaker’s message as intended.


Written for those who lead teams, classes, workshops, meetings, or group presentations, this book of communication tips is designed to enhance an individual’s speaking style. It provides simple tips—for example, effective use of pauses—and delves into more complex issues such as conversation patterns. Although it seems to be aimed at formal presentation, the book also addresses other communication skills such as gaining group rapport and maximizing learning situations.


This book offers tips on audience-centered communication—both for personal conversations or formal presentations. Covering more than basic presentation skills, this book examines the underlying principles of interaction. The author uses examples from a broad array of speakers to illustrate these principles.

**Articles**


This article discusses the importance of providing vision through powerful and effective presentations.


This article offers insights on the effect that speaking style has on listeners. Following a concise analysis of the speaking traits exhibited by those in power and those who lack power, the author provides suggestions for becoming a better, more commanding speaker.

This article shows how research on human motivation can be applied to sales and how to use this knowledge when making a presentation. It also includes a five-point exercise to help readers become comfortable in front of an audience.


Five master presenters, all of whom are considered experts in their respective specialties, discuss their proven presentation strategies. The presenters include Chip Bell, senior partner at Performance Research Associates, Inc.; Carolyn Balling, manager of internal training for Collagen Corp.; Nancy Austin, writer, speaker, and president of Nancy K. Austin, Inc.; Hal Gordon, speechwriter for Colin Powell; and Kathy Reardon, professor of management at the University of Southern California's School of Business.