

Communicating science toolkit: Checklist presentations

Here's a very useful list of points to help you prepare and reflect on your presentation.

Preparing the content of your talk

- Who is your audience?
- What are the objectives/aims of this talk?
- Find the sources, read, cut down and trim for talk
- Develop a 'line', 'argument', 'thread'
- Argue your thread tightly.
- Reference well (especially if academic talk)

The organisation of your talk

- Impose a structure: beginning, middle and end
- Explain structure and aims of talk to audience
- Use the 'beginning' to gain audience attention, but make sure it is pertinent to your argument
 - a quote
 - a startling fact/opinion
 - a question
 - a picture/video sequence/sound
- Make points within the 'middle' clear, well defined and neatly linked.
- The 'end' section is your 'take-home-message'. What do you want your audience to remember? What's your main message?

Delivering your talk

Be as natural as possible as this will relax you and allow you to be more spontaneous.

Pace

- When nervous you can speak too fast. Deep breathing should slow you down.
- Try speeding up if you have a tendency to speak very slowly.
- Don't read from a sheet: you will be monotonous, talk too fast and have little eye contact with the audience.
- Don't adlib, it could go wrong (unless you are very confident).
- Use prompts from: cards or visual aids to talk from (or large print in text to slow you down).
- Don't be afraid to stop and think for a few seconds.
- Build in questions to the audience (even if you just ask them to think) to slow pace.

Visual Aids

- Visual aids: OHP or computer aided delivery (e.g. PowerPoint)
- Visual prompts help you and show structure to audience.
- Computer aided delivery allows for multimedia presentations.
- Understand the equipment you will need (computer leads)
- Make sure you have the correct equipment (& it works).
- Check size of room, potential audience and select correct font size (use approx 35-40) for slides.
- Have clear uncluttered visual aids.
- Put graphs etc. on to a handout.
- Don't use too much colour, it is distracting.
- Give out handouts necessary for talk BEFORE, give out additional material AFTER.

Contact with audience

- Look at your audience when you come in.
- Avoid a hostile posture: hunched shoulders, arms across chest, standing on one leg!
- Develop a rapport through your opening and talk TO rather than AT your audience.
- Skim the whole audience, don't just look at the same section or people.
- Try and find some friendly faces at the back (in several areas) to give the appearance of looking at the whole group.
- Be relaxed and this will relax your audience.

Voice/language

- With nervousness the pitch of the voice rises. Deep breathing should control this.
- Vary your tone.
- Vary tone according to content:
 - louder to emphasise important points
 - use pause to indicate a change of direction, or 'pause for thought'
 - clear diction - don't allow sentences to tail off - keep volume till end of sentence.
 - Use language markers ("And now...", "The next point...") etc plus voice tone to indicate a change/new point.
 - Don't use clichés, empty worn out phrases.
 - Be careful if making any jokes...!



Handling questions

- Questions during your talk. Make sure you get back on track. Don't let such questions go on too long... use to clarify points rather discussion (unless talk designed that way).
- Questions after talk are more discursive... be prepared to talk on theme beyond your talk, e.g implications of things you said, other views, where to get more information.
- Be honest if you don't know an answer.
- Be polite if someone tries to put you down - don't enter into a row.
- Make sure questions are not controlled by one person.
- Stay in control of question time and know when to finish

Add your own tips here & things you need to work on.

(Extract from: Guide to giving a talk. University of Southampton)