

10 Tips for Being a Great Presenter

1. Familiarize yourself with the venue

Check out the room: the configuration, speaker location, microphones, seating

2. Know your audience

Who's in the audience? What is their knowledge level of your subject? Will there be competitors in the room?

3. Know the context

When will you speak? How long? Who else is speaking? How will Q&A be handled?

4. Establish rapport

You don't have to start with a joke, but it's helpful to have a brief icebreaker at the beginning to show your humanity. Example: "I'm really glad to be speaking to you today and I'm honored to be on the same panel as the distinguished Dr. Smith."

5. Look at individuals in the audience

Don't stare into space, don't watch your own slides, or look down at your shoes. Look into the faces of the people listening, one at a time. Speak to one, then casually turn your attention to another.

6. Simplify your presentation

No matter how technical your audience is, they aren't as versed in your subject matter as you. Simplify difficult concepts, explain jargon, give examples, use anecdotes.

7. Start by giving the audience a roadmap to follow

Different than simply stating your "agenda" – the roadmap tells them the 3 or 4 key concepts you want them to take away.

8. Flag the concepts you want to make sure they don't miss

Flags direct the audience's attention to the most important material and bring wandering minds back to your presentation. Examples of flags: "Here's the most important point..." "Here's what I really want to get across..."

9. Repeat your points at the end

Don't assume the audience was following your presentation to the letter. Include a brief summary slide that re-emphasizes your key points.

10. Relax

It's not as stressful a situation as you think. The audience is rooting for you to do a good job and will happily forgive small gaffes or lapses. Give yourself permission to make small mistakes – everyone does. Don't panic if you make a more serious mistake – stay calm, take your time and resolve the problem carefully.