

Presentation Skills

The Three Ps;

- Preparation
- Planning
- Practice

Preparation

Who is your audience?

What is the purpose of your presentation? What is your message?

Think about structure – how long do you have to present to your audience?

Think about location – where will the presentation take place? Do you need to take a computer and screen - if you are using presentation software – or will one be provided? Will a flip-chart be provided? Find out. Plan to take pens etc.

If you are using presentation software;

- use a large (28 or 32 point), clear text
- no more than 6 lines to a slide
- ensure the slides uncluttered
- ensure the spelling/grammar is correct
- be consistent – use the same font, colour, text size etc on each slide
- use simple animation and avoid fancy graphics as these may be annoying to your audience
- remember to include references

For a presentation of around 10 minutes expect to produce no more than 8-10 slides.

Collect relevant information – remember to use visual aids (a picture is worth a thousand words.....). Research suggests that your audience will only remember three messages from your presentation – make sure they remember your key points.

Planning

Plan your presentation..

Structure your talk into essential points - remember the rule of three (if you want your message to be remembered put it in a list of three) so ensure the main points of your presentation are clear. There should be a beginning, middle and a brief but strong summary at the end.

i.e. → tell them what you are going to tell them. → tell them → tell them what you've told them

Expect to take questions from your audience – try to anticipate any questions they might ask about your topic and try to answer them in your presentation. Will you take questions throughout the presentation or at the end? Remember to let your audience know.

Think about handouts. Do you plan to give out handouts?

If so, will you give them out at the start – so that your audience can follow your presentation?

- If you do that, they may spend the first few minutes reading the notes rather than listening to you.
- However, it will give them the opportunity to make relevant notes on the handout as your speech progresses.

Or will you hand them out at the end so that your audience can focus on what you are saying?

- However, some may wish to take notes during your presentation, potentially missing some important details

Practice

Practice using the equipment

Practice the timing of your presentation

Practice in front of an ‘uncritical friend’

Learn your introduction by heart – it will boost your confidence

Think about your body language – don’t wave your hands about or keep your hands in your pocket. Also, try not to pace up and down – it can be extremely distracting for your audience.

Avoid reading your notes but write brief headings and prompt words onto postcards as an aide-memoire

- number the cards to ensure they are in the correct order
- or
- punch a hole into the top left corner of each card, you can thread it with string so that the cards remain in the right order in the unlikely event you drop your notes.

Start **positively** to gain their attention – you have less than 10 seconds to make a positive impression. Introduce yourself and outline your topic

Don’t forget to thank the audience at the end and ask if there are any questions.

Afterwards, reflect on how the presentation went. Did you keep to the time limit? Did you speak slowly enough? Did you answer the questions effectively? What would you do differently next time? Cottrell (2008) and Lloyd and Murphy (2008) have useful sections on presentation skills.

References

Cottrell, S. (2008), *The Study Skills Handbook*. 3rd ed. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan
Lloyd, M. and Murphy, P. (eds.). (2008), *Essential Study Skills for Health and Social Care*. Exeter: Reflect Press Ltd.

Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn y Gymraeg