**How to prepare and deliver a presentation**

For your presentation to be effective, you must get your point across while also having a benefit to your audience for listening. To do this, you tailor the content, the structure and—most importantly—your delivery style to your audience.

**Prepare content, style and visuals to suit the audience**

**Know your audience**

The most important part of your presentation is your audience. You should consider them first.

Before you start compiling your presentation, think about why you are giving the talk and what you want to get out of it. At the same time, consider why the audience is there and what they want to get out of it. Use the following questions to help you better understand your audience.

1. Who will be there? - age, occupation, field, education, experiences, preconceptions, background
2. Why are they there and do they really want to be there - their motivations?
3. What are they expecting? What benefit will they get from listening to you?
4. What do they know already about your subject?
5. Are they likely to understand technical terms and expressions?
6. What has gone on before your presentation? (the fourth paper that morning?)
7. At what time of day is the presentation?
8. What questions are they likely to ask?
9. How many people will be in the audience?
10. What do **you** want to get from giving the presentation? (your objective)
11. What do **they** want to get from your presentation? (their benefit from attending)

Questions 10 and 11 are the most important. Both your objective in giving the presentation and the audience’s benefit from listening need to be clear in your introduction.

**Have a clear objective**

Why did you agree or decide to give this presentation? What key points do you want to get across to this audience? Examples of objectives:

- to present new information to research collaborators
- to inform landholders, farmers, advisers and consultants about your research, the results and implications, trials, and/or new farming practices
- to inform and help landholders, farmers, advisers and consultants to make decisions about new farming practices, land management and NRM
- to explore with policy advisers new policy options for natural resource management
- to update an advisory committee on the progress of your research before getting their feedback
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What's in it for them?
It is important to consider carefully why your audience members will decide to attend your presentation. What benefit are they hoping to get out of attending? Some may have been told by their supervisors that they should attend, but would rather be somewhere else. Consider how you can bring these people on board; how can you make your talk relevant to them?

Even at research conferences, it is important to consider what your audience may want to get out of attending your presentation. Will your peers attend because they want to learn about your work, find new information, check out the possibilities of collaborating with you, or for some other reason?

Tailoring content, style and visuals
Different audiences will respond to different approaches. A scientific audience may be more interested in the detail and appreciate graphs and diagrams. Business, management and policy audiences may want concise presentations that focus on the implications and the triple bottom line (economic, social and environmental costs/benefits). Industry audiences may prefer plenty of examples and opportunities to ask questions.

Decide in advance the content, style and visuals that will best connect with your audience.

Content
Effective messages focus on the audience. Think about your message.

- What do you want to get across to this audience? Your answer should link to your objective in giving the talk.
- What does this audience want to know about your topic? What is the benefit to them in listening?
- What could this audience get wrong unless you stress the correct information? This will help you to avoid misunderstanding.

Style
Your style—the way you deliver your presentation—is more important to the audience than the content or visual aids.

Audience research indicates that people will initially judge you on how you look—65%; on how you speak—30%; and on content—only about 5%.

This does not mean you have to be a model; it does mean you need to engage the audience with your style. It doesn’t mean content is not important—it is crucially important—but the audience is more likely to listen if you first engage them.

When preparing your talk, think about what style will be appropriate to your audience.

- What style of language will your audience relate best to? (for example, colloquial, technical, business)
- What degree of formality will connect you with your audience?
- Will your audience respond to a high level of interaction, or is the occasion best suited to limited or no interaction?
- What sort of humour will connect you with your audience without offending anyone?
- How should you dress? Consider what you’d like to convey about yourself.

Visual aids

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Use visual aids that add impact or help you to explain something. Consider visual aids other than PowerPoint slides, such as enlarged photos, objects, examples, equipment and demonstrations.

If you must use PowerPoint, it should be for the audience’s benefit, rather than acting as your speech notes. As a general rule, keep text to concise main points only. Some audiences, especially those with a different first language to you, may appreciate more extensive written slides.

Ask yourself the following three questions for each slide or visual aid:

1. Does it add impact with this audience?
2. Does it help to explain an idea?
3. Does it help an audience whose primary language is different to yours? (for example, where you are an English speaker talking to a largely Chinese audience)

If you answer ‘no’ to all three, consider omitting that visual aid from your presentation.

What does your audience want?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peers (scientists)</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Visuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New information</td>
<td>Formal in a conference; less so in a smaller meeting</td>
<td>Some visuals e.g. graphs with error bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance to their work</td>
<td>Some jargon ok, but avoid specialist jargon</td>
<td>Diagrams, pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for collaboration/linkages</td>
<td>Rhetorical questions work well</td>
<td>Some text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it fits the ‘big picture’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior managers/business executives</strong></td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Visuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bottom line</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Graphs showing trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you want them to do</td>
<td>Succinct</td>
<td>Clearly presented numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The decision you want them to make</td>
<td>Jargon-free</td>
<td>Few or no text slides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits, costs</td>
<td>Get the most important information out first</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit with strategic directions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific examples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmers/fishers</strong></td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Visuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits, especially in $$$ terms</td>
<td>Casual, but professional</td>
<td>Actual objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options</td>
<td>Colloquial language</td>
<td>Pictures, diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local relevance</td>
<td>Jargon-free</td>
<td>Limited text slides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details of what they need to do</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>Handouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local examples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim to build trust</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clearly presented numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community group/general public</strong></td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Visuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big picture</td>
<td>Casual, but professional</td>
<td>Pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local relevance</td>
<td>Appropriate humour</td>
<td>Objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting facts/quirky details</td>
<td>Colloquial language</td>
<td>Limited text slides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal stories</td>
<td>Jargon-free</td>
<td>Clearly presented numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Interactive, where possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hostile/controversial audience</strong></td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Visuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set your context in the issue</td>
<td>Avoid being defensive</td>
<td>Clear facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge their concerns as valid</td>
<td>Be firm</td>
<td>Diagrams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledge divergent views</th>
<th>Plan the meeting carefully</th>
<th>Clearly presented numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare key points</td>
<td>Stay calm, relaxed and polite</td>
<td>Handouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipate the questions they are likely to raise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Structuring your presentation**

The following structure is useful for organising your thoughts. Many speakers battle with clarity versus detail versus time. Often clarity or time loses out. Be strict with yourself; cut down on detail. Using the 5-box talk is a good way to do this.

**The 5-box talk**

**Introduction**
- ‘Shake hands’ with your audience— use an anecdote, quote, strong statement or question.
- Tell your audience why they will benefit from listening.
- Give an outline of your presentation.

Use a linking phrase e.g. ‘Let me turn to my first point...’

**Body section 1 heading**
Organise your information within the 3 boxes of the body of your talk to
- make a **Point**
- give a **Reason** for making that point
- back this up with an **Example**

Then, restate the point (which could become part of your linking phrase).

Use a linking phrase.

Remember to do something different here— pause, turn off visual aids, move to another part of the room etc.

**Body section 2 heading**
Use snappy headings for each section of your talk e.g. past, present, future; problem, research, solution.

Use a linking phrase.

**Body section 3 heading**
Use a linking phrase.

**Conclusion**
- Summarise your talk.
- Remind your audience of the relevance of the talk to them.
- Use a strong exit line.

**Research shows that**
- most people will forget 90% of what you say within 24 hours
- we speak at about 150 words a minute but think at 600-700 words a minute (if we were to translate our thoughts into words)
- people rarely remember more than five things from a presentation, and are more likely to remember only three

This means you need to distil your content to key points you want to get across. Be disciplined and cut the details out; people can always refer later to something you’ve written.
Delivering with style and confidence

10 tips for delivering technical information

1. The best presenters are always enthusiastic about their topic.
2. The most important element of your presentation is your audience—consider them first.
3. Your style (the way you deliver your presentation) is more important to the audience than the content or visual aids—think about how you will engage the audience.
4. To win the battle between clarity, detail and time, cut back on the detail and build in time for pauses.
5. ‘Super-prepare’ your introduction to give you a confident start.
6. Prepare a strong exit line for your conclusion.
7. Signpost your presentation so your audience knows where you’re taking them.
8. Use visual aids that add impact or help you to explain something.
9. Rehearse and time your presentation. Make sure you’re comfortable with the venue—do you know how to use the equipment?
10. Check again that your information will meet the likely expectations and needs of your audience. What benefit will they get from listening to you?

Tips for managing nerves

- Take deep breaths before getting up to speak; breathe from your abdomen.
- Breathe throughout your talk; take pauses; have a sip of water.
- Talk to someone out loud before getting up to speak; otherwise your voice might break or sound thin and reedy.
- Do some simple exercises beforehand to shake out any excess energy.
- Prepare—especially the first minute of your talk.
- Look at the audience—they are there to hear what you will say.
- Use an anecdote or something humorous to start your talk; once you have the audience and yourself smiling, you can all relax.
- Have a single page of dot point notes or a series of palm cards to hand.
- Memorise your opening and closing sentences.
- If you lose your way, pause, look at your notes, find a place to restart your talk (it doesn’t matter if you miss a bit or repeat a bit), look at the audience and start again.
- Check out the venue in advance, and check your visual aids on the venue’s equipment.
- Rehearse your talk.
- You can’t know everything. If you are asked a question that you don’t know how to answer, that’s fine. Respond that you don’t have the answer to hand right now, but could look into it and let them know.
- Focus on the audience and the benefit to them from listening—it is all about them!