

Tips on Giving a Talk to a Diverse Audience

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Tip #1: Research the norms in your field or in the place you will give your talk. Different fields may have different expectations about things such as whether to speak or read a paper, what content should be present, and whether to use software to project points. Follow those above anything mentioned here.

Tip #2: Prepare well in advance. Don't wait to prepare your talk until the last minute. Think carefully about your audience, what they know, and what will interest them. Write out the talk and think about what you want people to remember when they leave. Add good examples, relevant anecdotes, and significant details. Feel free to even add small jokes or pauses in your written text—but then don't be too tied to the written text. Be well enough prepared that you can allow yourself to be spontaneous.

Tip #3: Use visual software judiciously. These days, most good presentations make some use of visuals. The extent to which you should use visuals will vary a lot depending on your field. Nevertheless, there are a few basic things you should know if you will be using PowerPoint or another method of showing visuals.

- Don't use font smaller than 24 point. If you use smaller font, people will not be able to see your information and you will have too much information on the slide.
- Use images effectively. You should have as little text as possible on the slide. One way to accomplish this is to have images on each slide, accompanied by a small amount of text. Or use just an image in some instances.
- Use bullet points. PowerPoint slides do not need full sentences, and should never have a paragraph full of information. Every phrase on the slide should say something significant or support your big idea.
- Don't leave overly wide margins.
- Don't simply read from the slides!!!
- Talk to the audience, not to the projector image or the projector.
- Do not have too many slides. Definitely do not have more than one slide per minute of presentation.
- Finally before giving your talk check for consistency in the appearance of your overheads and slides.
- Have a backup plan in case the powerpoint fails, such as a handout and a written talk.

Tip #4: Academic presentations usually follow a certain formula. Once you have become an expert at giving fabulous presentations, you can deviate from the formula. However, if you are new to presentations, you need to follow the general outline. Again, this will vary by the field. In education, the format is:

- Introduction/Overview/Hook
- Theoretical Framework/Research Question
- Methodology