

General Tips for Giving a Presentation

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1. MOST IMPORTANT: Practice giving your presentation ahead of time. Practice in front of a mirror. Practice in front of an audience of friends you can bribe with pizza or chocolate. Practice with a timer. Maybe even video record yourself during a practice run.
2. Exude confidence: smile, stand up straight, don't fidget, and don't apologize.
3. Turn off your cell phone.
4. Decide ahead of time what you'll do with your hands. (Jingling change or keys in your pocket is *not* an option.) Keep your hands neutrally at your side when not using them to gesture. Keep gestures at about chest level, and remember that your hands can be your punctuation—use them to make a point, count off your points, add a visual representation of the point you're making.
5. No one expects you to know everything about your subject. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" if someone asks you a question you can't answer.
6. Scan the room during your presentation and look at different members of the audience rather than burying your head in your notes. If you can't bear to look folks in the eye, look just over their heads. They'll never know you're gazing at the wall behind them rather than directly at them.
7. Speak loudly, clearly, and slowly. Even if you don't normally speak fast, that's the tendency you'll have to guard against when presenting.
8. Well ahead of time, visit the room where you'll be giving the presentation. That way you won't be searching for the room at the last minute, and you'll be able to answer questions such as these: Where will you stand? Is there a lectern? What's the lighting like? Where will you hook up your equipment? Will you need an extension cord?
9. Check out your equipment ahead of time, and be sure to have a back-up plan in case there's a malfunction. See how soon you can get into the room to hook up your equipment ahead of time.
10. If you have handouts, have someone else distribute them. (That's one less detail you have to worry about.)

11. Do not fear the silent pause. Feeling that you must fill every moment with your voice leads to “uh” and “um.”

12. Appearance:

- When in doubt, dress *up*. First impressions do count, especially when you’re presenting to an unfamiliar group.
- You want to be taken seriously, so dress accordingly. A jacket or blazer is a good idea, as you can keep it on to look especially dressed up or take it off if the venue appears to be less formal.
- A Note for Women: “Dressed up” should not translate into “dressed up for a night on the town.” That is, lean toward the conservative side. Avoid short skirts, form-fitting and/or low-cut tops, flashy jewelry, and bold makeup. The look you’re going for is professional, not frilly, sexy, sweet, or overly casual.
- Pay attention to details. Iron those slacks, clean those fingernails, polish those shoes.
- Speaking of shoes, be sure they are professional and comfortable. This is not the time to break out the spike heels.
- Dark colors typically lend a bit more credibility to the wearer. Wearing all one color for the top and bottom halves of your outfit gives you a tall, commanding appearance.
- While you do want to look professional, you also want to be comfortable, so choose clothes that you can move in easily. Also consider natural fabrics like cotton, silk, and wool: they *breathe*.