

Tips to Follow When Giving an Academic Presentation

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Let's assume you will soon give a presentation. Ask yourself:

- ✓ Will the audience will be composed of university students and faculty members?
- ✓ Will audience members vary in terms of familiarity with your presentation topic?
- ✓ Is the occasion an academic one (e.g., an oral report in class)?

If you answered "Yes" to any of those questions, follow the tips below:

1. Remember that basic protocols and rules of public speaking apply in your situation. These include:
 - Know your **purpose for giving the presentation!** What specifically do you want the audience to know or do as a result of listening to you? What does the audience already know about your topic? What *don't* they know? How will you get and keep their attention and interest?
 - Make **sincere and regular eye contact** with your audience. Scan the audience in a relaxed manner as you speak. Don't look at one person all the time—give equal visual attention to all.
 - Vary the speed at which you talk, the volume you use, and the pitch of your voice. Aim for making your **voice pleasant and interesting to hear**. Speak with energy and enthusiasm.
 - **Use physical movement** as much as you can: move, instead of standing rooted in one place; gesture, instead of stowing your hands in your pockets or inside your sleeves; favor **variety in facial expression**, instead of wearing a glazed look.
 - As much as possible, **chisel and simplify the comments** you wish to make. Remember: **a listener can't "reread"** what you said, so you must say it clearly and cogently if you say it.
 - **All visual aids must be clear, simple, and free of clutter**. Practice operating any equipment (e.g., overhead projector, video- or audio-playback devices, etc.) you wish to use.
2. Favor only the most important information. Choose **(no more than about) five points** to make. Listeners won't digest more than about three, especially if you're one of several presenters that day.
3. Express those five points to five concise **keyword notes**. Write the notes on a 3x5 notecard. Below each note, write one or two brief lines of extra information. **Rehearse your speech using only that notecard**, *not* pages of detailed script. You will soon train yourself to deliver the five points fluently and naturally.
4. Choose simple language that **appeals to the senses**. Favor **short, clear, complete sentences**.
5. When reporting statistics, frame them with **analogies** that will make the numbers understandable to listeners untrained in or uncomfortable with statistical analysis.
6. Include **stories to support your comments**. Construct each story so that it has a beginning, middle, and end, and a clear application and focus.
7. State **no more than three or four conclusions** or implications for your research. Frame each conclusion clearly and simply, and as often as possible in positive, declarative language.
8. Rehearse, then revise; rehearse, then revise; rehearse, then revise; rehearse, then revise

Remember: If you read your report aloud, listeners will dislike you and think you're boring.