How to Give a Great Presentation

VANCOUVER
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COLLEGE
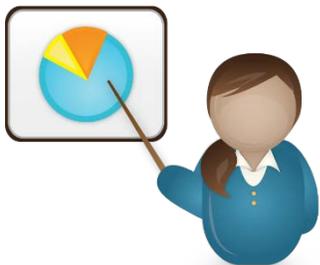
Giving an effective presentation is an important skill that you can use beyond the classroom. Being able to deliver a clear message, confidently, to a variety of audiences takes preparation and practice. To be a great presenter, you'll want to focus on your presentation structure, slide design, voice and body language.

1. **Presentation Structure**
   Having a well-structured presentation provides a logical flow to your talk and strengthens your message. *Consider the following questions in your planning:*
   - What is the purpose of your presentation? What main messages or points do you want your audience to leave with?
   - Who is your audience? What do they already know about your topic?
   - What assignment requirements do you need to follow?

   Organize Your Presentation. Similar to writing an essay, you'll need to research your topic and organize your information into a clear structure.
   i. Introduction: Include a hook (a statement, fact, question, or image that gets audience interested in your talk), outline of your talk, and let audience know when questions are okay.
   ii. Body: Provide 3-5 supporting points in a logical order. Provide enough detail and link to main topic/purpose.
   iii. Conclusion: Summarize main points and connect back to purpose of the talk. Thank audience and invite questions.

2. **Slide Design –** Great slides (or other visuals) enhance your presentation without distracting your audience from listening. Remember, more is less! When you design your slides:
   - Limit your text. Avoid full sentences. Try the 6x6 rule of 6 words per line, 6 lines per slide.
   - Use large font size (20 point or larger).
   - Choose visually appealing colours (generally light backgrounds, dark text).
     Text should clearly stand out from the background colour.
   - Use high quality images, charts, tables and graphs. Ideally one image per slide.
   - Pay attention to copyright. Use images that are creative commons licenced or license-free.

3. **Voice – tone, language and speed**
   - Speak clearly, with enough volume.
   - Show enthusiasm for your topic.
   - Vary your tone of voice (the opposite of monotone) to keep audience engaged.
   - Choose language your audience will understand.
   - Use signpost language (verbal cues) to guide audience.
   - Keep a reasonable talking speed. (Most people speed up because of nervousness.)
   - Include pauses, especially before and after important ideas.
   - Avoid saying "umm" multiple times. Take a breath instead.

4. **Body language and appearance**
   - Stand up straight.
   - Face the audience.
   - Make eye contact.
   - Smile and appear friendly.
   - Use hand gestures to emphasize points.
   - Avoid chewing gum, fidgeting and other nervous gestures like rocking or tapping.
   - Dress appropriately for your profession/audience. Pick clothes that you feel good in.

Practice, practice, practice. Practice will improve the timing of your talk, your familiarity and comfort level with the material and your confidence.

   - A good estimate is 1-2 minutes of talking per slide. You may need to reduce or increase your number of slides.
   - Practice your presentation 2-3 times before you have to give it.
   - Practice out loud, standing up. You can practice in front of a mirror or record yourself.
   - Use cue cards with a few bullet points if you're worried about forgetting your talk.
   - Know your technology and have a backup plan.
   - If you're presenting online, check your camera display, practice screen sharing, and consider how you will handle questions. Focus on looking directly into webcam rather than at notes.