

JALT April 2007 Presentation

Points on Giving Effective Presentations

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PREPARATION

Objectives

- Choose a topic that is of interest to you, something you're excited about.
- Then consider:
 - Why are you giving this talk?
 - Who will you be talking to?
 - How much do they know about the subject already?
 - What effect do you want your presentation to have?



- Decide what kind of presentation it's going to be:
 - workshop (hands-on)
 - formal presentation
 - informal presentation with audience interaction.
- (Generally, when submitting abstracts for conferences, one has to specify.)

Content

- **Narrow the topic** to fit the timeframe.
- Choose a title that accurately reflects the topic.
- When combining theoretical and concrete material, begin with the concrete.
- Prepare plenty of examples to demonstrate your points.

Visuals and “Realia”

- Decide on any visuals or *realia* that may enhance your presentation.
- Give yourself enough time to prepare them.
- Practice using the visuals or *realia*, keeping them well-organized so there's no fumbling.

Handouts

- Decide if a handout is necessary and how much information to include.
- Determine what language(s) the handout needs to be in.
- Consider having a handout as an outline on which participants can take notes.
- Decide when to give participants the handout – before, during, or after the presentation.
- Find out if it's possible to have the handout uploaded to a website.
- Save a tree!

Rehearsal

- Prepare and practice what you're going to say. Don't speak “off the cuff.”
- Check the length of the presentation and time each section.
- Match the volume of your voice to the size of the audience and room.
- Rehearse, but don't *over-rehearse*.

Physical Preparation

- Choose appropriate clothing to wear, comfortable but professional.
- Don't eat heavily beforehand. (Any food you may have to process during your presentation takes blood away from your brain to think clearly, so it's best to be a little hungry.)
- Quench thirst before presenting (such as with fruit) rather than drinking something while presenting.

LOGISTICS

Location

- Arrive early to allow yourself time to get comfortable in the space.
- Check the size of the room.
- Be familiar with the layout.
- Decide if there need to be any changes.

Equipment

- Make it clear to the facilitator what equipment will be needed.
- Be familiar with the equipment.
- Have a back-up system in case any equipment fails.

DELIVERY

Organization

Introduction

- Use an attention getter to "hook" the audience: anecdote, question, startling statement, etc.
- Give the audience an overview of what's going to be covered.
- Find out who your audience consists of, if you don't already know.

[Note from one website: Doing **audience polling** is a fantastic way to start out a presentation, raising their hands as you ask the question. This gets physical energy going from the get-go, as well as getting people involved right from the start. On the first question, raise the right hand. Then, on the next question, switch hands.]

Pacing or Time Management

- Pace the presentation so that participants can keep up – not too fast.
- Use sufficient repetition.
- Be prepared to cut material, if necessary.

Material

- Avoid information overload.
- Fit the contents to the time limits.
- Fit the contents to the level(s) of the participants.
- Don't make assumptions about the background of the participants.

Keywords

- Define vocabulary used.
- Don't assume participants are familiar with all acronyms or professional jargon.

Effective closing

- Give time for the participants to reflect on the contents of the presentation.
 - Leave people with a final thought.
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Use of Notes or Note Cards

- Use key words, phrases, and facts.
 - Make sure writing is large enough to read at a glance.
 - Have cards or pages in sequence (numbered).
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Presence

- **Speaking**
 - Speak naturally; don't read.
 - Don't speak "off the cuff."
- **Voice**
 - Speak slowly and clearly.
 - Speak loudly enough so everyone can hear.
 - Remember to breathe slowly and deeply.
- **Eye contact and facial expressions**
 - Look around at different areas of the audience.
 - Don't keep turning towards the screen if you're using an OHP or PowerPoint presentation. Face the audience!
 - Match your facial expression to your content.
 - Smile! It's not necessary to keep grinning throughout the presentation, but a pleasant expression makes the audience more comfortable.
- **Gestures**
 - Use appropriate gestures.
 - Avoid fiddling with hands, glasses, or pen.
 - Keep hands out of pockets and away from face.
- **Movement**
 - Move around, for example, when someone is asking a question or responding. [Minor point: Turn your face towards the questioner but your body away from the person and toward the rest of the room to include everyone. Also, don't move towards the questioner but *away* from the person.]
 - **Avoid pacing.**

According to one website (Whatley, 2007), "studies have shown that an audience bases their judgment of the quality of a speaker as follows:

Body Language: 55%

Vocal Qualities 38%

Words 7%

Over 93% of your perception as a speaker is from factors other than what you say!"

- **Breathing**
 - Breathe naturally and don't hold your breath.
 - Slow your breathing down in order to stay relaxed.
 - Take some deep breaths before the presentation:
 - Breathe in slowly and deeply, concentrating on filling stomach.
 - Breathe out slowly, getting rid of as much air as you can.
 - Repeat five times.
 - **Concentration**
 - Stay focused.
 - Don't be concerned about pauses because it gives people time to digest the material.
 - **HUMOR!** (A "biggy.")
 - Use humor to:
 - help you relax.
 - make your audience more relaxed.
 - make the presentation more enjoyable for all.
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Audience Participation

- Make a decision about how much to involve the participants.
- Have a balance between presentation of information and audience participation.

Solicited Ideas

- **Rephrase ideas** from the audience. This allows:
 - (a) people to know that they are being listened to,
 - (b) you to check you are understanding what they've said, and
 - (c) other participants to hear the questions/ideas more than once.
- USE the ideas solicited from the audience. Don't just ask for ideas and then drop them.
- Be prepared with positive intervention in the case of a hostile audience. (You may want to have a friend ready to lend support.)

Hands-on Workshops

- Make sure that the task is clear to everyone.
- Circulate as groups are working on the task to check that people are on task, to clarify, etc.

Q & A session

- Decide beforehand long will it be.
 - Decide whether there's going to be Q&A throughout or only at the end. If the latter, be firm!
 - Let audience know if questions are welcome during presentation or should be kept until afterwards.
 - **Repeat questions** from the audience.
 - **Consider the use of written questions or comments.**
 - Beware of "hijackers." Stay in control.
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Post-Presentation

Feedback

- Have a way of getting feedback from the audience.
- Determine specific areas in which you want feedback so that it's of use to you.
- Do the feedback as part of the presentation, at the end, in order to get responses.

Evaluation

- Reflect on the presentation as soon afterwards as possible.
 - Be realistic about feedback from the participants, but focus on the positive, not just the negative.
 - Make note of areas in which the presentation could have been improved or strengthened.
 - Make changes in your materials immediately if you plan to give the same presentation again.
 - *Learn from your mistakes!*
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Added note:

Steve Job's keynote speeches have been pointed out as exemplary.

A few sources:

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