

Hints for Making Presentations

1. Practice ahead of time.
2. Get in and get out gracefully.
 - Make sure you have a good opening and closing line
 - Provide an orienting context, a reply or follow-up to what someone else has just said, an acknowledgement of the previous speaker, etc.
 - If you are part of a team, conclude with a good hand-off to the next speaker
3. Give a roadmap of your presentation: (1) tell them what you're going to tell them, (2) tell them, and (3) tell them what you told them. Organize your presentation in a format that makes them easy to absorb – e.g., 1, 2, 3, summary.
4. Unless it is entirely obvious, make sure to articulate the “so what” of your talk – that is, why anyone should care.
5. Use visual aids to orient and engage your audience. For the graphical presentation of data, consult Edward Tufte, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, 2nd Edition (Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 2001). If you plan to use the blackboard instead of PowerPoint, make sure to write out whatever you want ahead of time.
6. Where possible, invite questions and audience participation. If you think you might be pressed for time, however, make sure to wait until you have finished your presentation to take questions.
7. If you will be interrogated or cross-examined afterward (for example, if you are participating in a debate, presenting to an academic audience, or testifying before a legislative oversight body), anticipate the questions that you may be asked and come with prepared answers. If you do not like the question or cannot answer it, say why it's the wrong question, explain what the right question is, and answer that one. If you do not like the premise of the question, reject it explicitly.
8. Practice.
9. Practice again.
10. And finally, PRACTICE!

***** If you want to sound smart but are not slated to present on a given day, prepare a question on the materials to ask at the appropriate time. *****

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