

# Techniques and Suggestions for Presenters

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*Abstract*—This paper covers the skills necessary to effectively communicate technical information. Practical advice on preparing for and delivering oral presentations is given. Included are selections on understanding yourself and your audience; stating the prerequisite and objective of the presentation; organizing your material; making your own charts; using the overhead projector and chalkboard; tackling preliminary arrangements; and delivering the presentation.

- Analyze your knowledge of the subject and experience as a speaker; find out when the presentation is to be given and if you have enough lead time; decide whether to accept or reject the speaking invitation.
- Picture yourself speaking on the subject; analyze your feelings on the subject.

## PROLOGUE

and what is the use of a book, thought Alice without pictures or conversations?



## PREPARATION

Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?  
That depends a good deal on where you want to get to, said the Cat.  
I don't much care where — said Alice.  
Then it doesn't matter which way you go, said the Cat.  
— so long as I get somewhere, Alice added as an explanation.  
Oh, you're sure to do that, said the Cat if you only walk long enough.



### Know Yourself

- Analyze your motives for giving this presentation; check whether someone else is more suitable to do it than you.

### Know Your Audience

- Find out precisely why the prospective audience is attending your presentation; understand their motivation.
- Find out who the prospective audience is; classify their background, experience, and interests.
- Analyze the prospective audience for their knowledge of the subject and their need to know the information.
- Analyze the prospective audience for their opinion of the subject; consider their mood and attitude.
- Analyze the prospective audience for their image of you as a speaker on this subject.

### State the Prerequisite

- Identify minimum background for attendance.
- Identify realistic qualifications (entry behavior) of potential audience.
- Write the prerequisite-statement in clear, explicit, and meaningful words.
- Write a separate statement for each prerequisite.

### State the Objective

- Make the intent and purpose of the presentation clear to yourself as well as to your audience.
- Identify performance (exit behavior) that is easily observable and measurable.
- Pin-point the essential performance (exit behavior) that can be accomplished in the time available with the background of the audience; make it realistic.
- Write the objective-statement in clear, explicit, and meaningful words; leave no room for misinterpretation; avoid generalities.
- Write a separate statement for each objective.

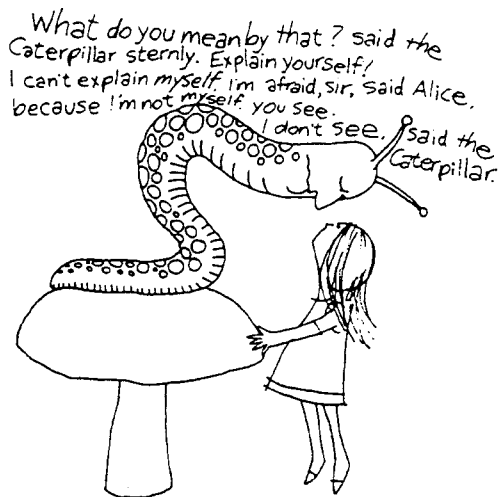
### Organize Your Material

- Research the subject exhaustively.
- Write the title (subject) and description (content) in snappy, easy-to-understand words.
- Outline the presentation; start with the body, then do the introduction and conclusion.

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- Make the introduction short, convincing, and interesting; state the purpose; sell the audience on listening to you.
- Keep sight of your objective; state the main ideas or concepts that the audience must get (usually no more than six); support or interpret those ideas in the body of the presentation.
- Know your time limits; indicate how much discussion can be handled; note the extent and kind of audience participation.
- Determine the presentation method you will use (lecture, discussion, demonstration, or directed activity).
- Determine what audiovisual aids you will need to support your presentation; make them attractive and attention-compelling.
- Make the conclusion memorable; review the purpose of the presentation; summarize the main ideas; appeal for action.
- Practice the presentation.

### AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS



#### Types

Chalkboard

Charts

Flip Charts

Overhead Transparencies (Foil)

Slides

#### Handouts

Copies of Charts

Manuals

Support Material

Textbooks

#### Objects

Exhibits

Models

Specimens

#### Recorders

Audio Tape Recorders

Motion Pictures

Record Players

Video Equipment

#### How to Use the Chalkboard

- Keep the chalkboard clean.
- Erase all unrelated material.
- Have erasers and extra chalk readily available.
- Break chalk in half if it squeaks.
- Check lighting; avoid glare.
- Present material simply, briefly, and concisely; limit writing to key phrases; think in terms of restraint, not excess.
- Write legibly and neatly (letters should usually be about three inches high).
- Leave sufficient space between lines.
- Use colored chalk for emphasis.
- Underline words for emphasis.
- Combine longhand and printing for emphasis.
- Predraw difficult diagrams with a pencil and trace with chalk during presentation.
- Use a pointer to direct audience attention to major points.
- Continue to talk while writing, if appropriate; maintain audience contact.
- Place the chalk on the tray when you have finished writing; avoid playing with the chalk.
- Allow time for the audience to read, study, and copy the developed material.
- Stand to the side of the material being presented; remove all obstructions.

#### How to Make a Chart

- Rough-draft charts to ensure all points are covered (charts should be carefully made, not thrown together).
- Keep charts simple; limit to one idea per chart.
- Confine word charts to key words or phrases (usually no more than nine lines per chart, seven words per line); think in terms of restraint, not excess.
- Make only enough charts to support your ideas (usually no more than 32 charts per hour).
- Write legibly and neatly; use only large, clear, and uncrowded letters; remember that lettering can convey meaning (cues).
- Leave sufficient space between lines.
- Use color for emphasis, not decoration.
- Underline words for emphasis.
- Combine longhand and printing for emphasis.
- Avoid the use of legends, abbreviations, and acronyms.
- Make facts and figures stimulating and challenging to your audience.
- Use pictures, cartoons, graphs, symbols, flowcharts, diagrams, and maps instead of words when possible; avoid complex, detailed illustrations.

- Use charts to explain an abstract idea, show trends, direct thinking, surprise your audience, clarify a point, add humor, and summarize.

*How to Use the Overhead Projector*

- Check working condition of projector.
- Have extra bulb readily available.
- Focus the projector before presentation.
- Lower some of the roomlights if needed.
- Stand to the side of the projector; maintain eye contact; remove all obstructions.
- Allow time for the audience to read, study, and copy the presented material.
- Use a pointer (on screen) or a pencil (on foil) to direct audience attention to major points.
- Use a sheet of paper to cover undeveloped material on foil (this prevents the audience from being ahead of you).
- Use overlays to build complicated information.
- Continue to talk when you change foils, if appropriate.
- Remove foil immediately after discussion to prevent distraction; as you remove the foils, turn them over and lay them one on top of the other in order.
- Watch for curling or browning of foils (caused by a very hot projector or a foil left on the projector too long).
- Turn off the projector after you have finished with it.

PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS

*The horror of that moment, the King  
went on, I shall never, never forget  
You will though, the Queen said,  
if you don't make a memorandum of it.*



*Getting Your Act Together (A Few Days Before)*

- Check whether the audience has been notified of the presentation.
- Check sequence of talk before presentation (message should be logical and flow smoothly); maintain continuity.
- Check accuracy of audio-visuals before presentation; be sure no incorrect or misleading information is used.
- Check whether handout materials have been prepared and assembled in the proper order; decide whether the audience should receive handouts prior to the presentation.

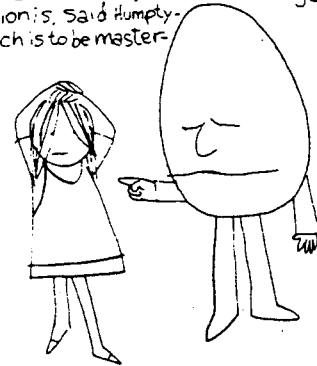
- Practice presentation in advance (if possible, practice in the presence of a critic at the location of the presentation).

*Getting the Facilities Ready (A Few Minutes Before)*

- Check room setup and seating arrangement.
- Put some extra chairs by the door for late arrivals and guests.
- Check lighting, heating, and ventilation; try to ensure the physical comfort of your audience.
- Separate smokers from nonsmokers; make sure ash trays are clean; ban smoking in rooms with poor ventilation.
- Check location of telephones, rest rooms, and vending machines.
- Check whether all required equipment and aids are in the proper place for use when needed.
- Check working condition of all required equipment and aids.

PERFORMANCE

*When I use a word Humpty-Dumpty said, in a  
rather scornful tone, it means just what I choose it to  
mean—neither more nor less.  
The question is, said Alice, whether you can  
make words mean so many different things.  
The question is, said Humpty-  
Dumpty, which is to be master—  
that's all.*



- Arrive early; start on time; stick closely to the allotted time.
- Approach the presentation with a positive attitude; avoid apologies; avoid belittling others; avoid being a braggart.
- Get off on the right foot; introduce yourself; explain why this presentation is important.
- Get the attention of your audience and keep it; motivate your audience to listen; offer them tangible rewards; arouse their curiosity; provide an emulatable example; appeal to their inner motives.
- Take the time to develop each point carefully; recognize the value of repetition for reinforcement.
- Avoid talking down to your audience.
- Give your audience a chance to understand you; allow for mental digestion.

- Get to know your audience; take a personal interest in each member; call each member by name; give out name cards if needed; show them you care; show no partiality; be cooperative.
- Get the audience involved; encourage questions and comments; be a good listener; note nonverbal communication.
- Be yourself, have fun, be enthusiastic, and be dynamic (happiness and enthusiasm are contagious).
- Salt the presentation with a bit of appropriate humor; be sure everyone knows you're jesting.
- Season with analogies, examples, and stories; relate new information to material the audience already knows.
- Avoid reading from a manuscript.
- Use a variety of visual aids when possible.
- Have one break (usually between six and ten minutes) every hour; when scheduling a break, make it at a natural dividing point in the material.
- Use only defined technical terms and acronyms.
- Establish and keep eye contact.
- Avoid playing with objects during your presentation (swordsmanship with the pointer is distracting).
- Speak in a friendly, conversational tone; speak up so that you can be heard.
- Use gestures; avoid distracting mannerisms.
- Stand erect and face your audience.
- Dress appropriately and comfortably.

## CONCLUSION

Begin at the beginning. the King  
said gravely, and go on till you  
come to the end: then stop.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The inspiration and captions for Ken White's illustrations are from Lewis Carroll's *Alice* stories.

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