

SOA Presentation Tips

The key to an effective oral presentation is conciseness. Remember that you are speaking to a knowledgeable audience with the same background as yours. Do *not* become bogged down with unimportant details.

Speaker Presence and Attitude

From the moment your audience lays eyes on you until you are gone, you are "The Speaker." Take charge and command audience attention as long as you are on stage, but do so with a cooperative, not a competitive, attitude. You have something *important* for them to hear, and you *want* them to understand your message.

Respect for Audience

Demonstrate respect for your audience. Remember that, however expert you may be, every man and woman there is more expert to you in some way and could teach you something.

Questions and Answers

Keep your discussion on track by concentrating only on the portions of questions that directly relate to your agenda. Let listeners know why you are responding selectively to their questions or comments and assure them that you are available for more in-depth discussion after the presentation.

Concentrate on what people ask you and don't be afraid to ask a questioner a question. (You gain a minute to think about your answer and you might even get a clarification.) *Take notes when possible!*

Consider jotting down notes while audience members are asking questions and then refer back to these comments to facilitate discussion. Your listeners will respond better to you because they will feel that they have been heard.

Feedback

The audience's expressions, restlessness, smiles, and the like are a mirror telling you how your message is being received. *Watch for feedback and adjust to audience needs!*

Timing

You should never take more of your audience's time than is necessary to do your speaking job properly. The value and interest should be as high as possible in the time they give to you.

The object is *not* how much you say but how much they hear!

Human voices possess an immense range of volume, tone, pace, attack. Your voice is a tool that can go fast or slow, loud or soft. *Speak clearly, loudly, and, generally, slow down.* Work out beforehand how you can give variety and the appropriate vocal values to each part of your talk. Think in terms of main headlines and paragraphs and make sure that each new idea comes to the audience with a change in vocal approach. Particularly when introducing a fresh point, give your voice a lift. Watch sentence length; use few crisp short ones between a series of protracted sentences. Watch the ends of sentences: a rising pitch holds more interest than a dying fall. Many novice speakers try to present too much information too rapidly. It is better to proceed slowly and to repeat major ideas several times throughout the presentation.

4 RULES FOR SPEAKING WITH CONFIDENCE (EVEN WHEN YOU ARE FEELING ANXIOUS)

Rule 1: If you are talking, don't walk; and if you are walking, don't talk.

Rule 2: If you are not gesturing purposefully, let your hands rest.

Rule 3: Make your voice be heard.

Rule 4: Talk to individuals, not to the group.

4 RULES FOR EFFECTIVELY USING VISUALS IN YOUR PRESENTATION

Rule 1: Create a powerful message first.

Rule 2: Select only visuals that amplify your message.

Rule 3: Keep visuals simple.

Rule 4: Show the visual only long enough to make your point.

3 SUGGESTIONS FOR REFINING YOUR DELIVERY

Suggestion 1: Do not read your presentation.

Suggestion 2: Use pauses.

Suggestion 3: Use Q&As throughout, not just at the end.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICING AND ASSESSING YOUR PRESENTATION

Recommendation 1: First practice portions of your speech, then practice it all.

Recommendation 2: Always practice with visuals.

Recommendation 3: Assess. Assess. Assess.

Recommendation 4: Conduct a dry run in front of an audience.