



Presentation Tips

I85 Presentation

- Maximum length: 6 minutes.
- Pay attention to two minute and one minute warnings.
- Followed by a 2 minute question and answer session.

“A Technical Subject”

- A little vague, isn't it?
- Basically, describe a process.
- If you're not sure if your topic is technical enough, ask.

Past Topics

- Constructing Germanium Nanowires
- How to detect and prevent cheating in online games
- Path planning for multiple robots moving in formation
- Eyeglass lens manufacture
- How to build the frame of a house
- Establishing a wireless network in a rural setting using Satellite DSL
- The physics of automotive drift
- Rendering realistic 3D landscapes
- Artificial intelligence routines for Texas Hold 'Em
- Quality Assurance Testing.
- Collision detection in real-time multiplayer games
- Plotting graphs using Microsoft Excel
- How does BitTorrent work?
- Using Maya animation software

Restricted topic: Games

- Presentations on games are typically terrible.
- The few good game presentations tend to be very limited in scope.
 - Example: the 6-pool rush strategy in Starcraft II.
- Compromise: To give a game presentation, you will have to come talk to me in Office Hours at least a week before you present.

Basic Presentation Skills

- Voice
- Body Language
- Appearance

Voice

- Volume
 - Speak loudly enough for the back end of the room.
 - Don't shout or whisper.
- Speed
 - Speak naturally.
 - Don't rush, or speak too slowly.

Breathe.

- Practice deep breathing.
- Breathe slowly and deliberately.
- Practice delivering a single musical note for as long as possible.
- Extra credit: Study meditation techniques.

- Pronounce words clearly
 - Enunciate consonants
 - D-T
 - G-K
 - L-R
 - B-P
 - He stood on the balcony, inexplicably mimicking him hiccuping, while amicably welcoming him in.

Body Language

- Face the audience.
 - If you must turn away, do so briefly.
 - Don't hide behind the podium.
 - Keep your body open to the audience.

- Body language always says *something*.
 - Whether you mean it to or not.
 - You can look formal, or casual.
 - Or stiff, or sloppy.
 - Always look aware and awake.

Hand Gestures

- Keep hand gestures clear.
 - Point distinctly.
 - Use clean hand gestures.
 - Try not to wave your hands needlessly.

Appearance

- Dress for the occasion.
 - What are others wearing?
 - What do you feel comfortable in?
 - What you wear can affect your attitude.
 - When in doubt, err on the side of over-dressing.

Preparation

- Outline the main objectives of the presentation.
- Always know your opening line.
- Follow your outline, don't read from a script.

- Rehearse in front of a mirror.
- Rehearse in front of your peers.
- Rehearse in front of anyone who'll watch.
 - Use feedback constructively.

PowerPoint/Slide Presentations

- Useful, but frequently troublesome.
- Use slides to prompt points of discussion, not as your script.
- Don't cram too much onto one page.
 - Two or three bullet points per page is usually enough.

- Use clear graphics.
 - Will they make sense to a non-expert?
 - Are they large enough?
 - Will they still be clear when projected on a screen?
 - Do they contain more information than you can cover?

Presentation Structure

- Greet the audience.
- Introduce yourself.
 - Keep your introduction short.
 - Tell the audience what they need to know about you.
- Introduce your subject.
 - Tell the audience what you're going to talk about.
 - Then talk about it.

- Be prepared for questions.
 - Answer what you can.
 - Be honest about what you can't answer.
 - Ask friends and colleagues in the audience to help you out.
 - When in the audience yourself, help out your friends and colleagues.

- Troublesome questions
 - If an answer requires a lengthy response, offer to talk after the presentation.
 - Be prepared for hostile questions.
 - Maintain your composure.
 - Sometimes the Q&A session turns into an opportunity for commentary.
 - Be respectful of dissenting views.
 - You are the moderator. Control the room.

Content

- Frame your message.
 - Especially if it is legally or socially controversial.
 - Don't directly advocate unethical actions.
 - Be aware of your audience.
 - But don't assume too much.
 - Expect unexpected reactions from your audience.

- Selling your idea or product?
 - Address the merits and limitations of your subject.
 - Don't underestimate your audience.

Live Demonstrations

- Are you demonstrating how to use a program? A tool? A process?
- This is, for practical purposes, a **performance**.
 - Rehearse each step.
 - If possible, rehearse each step on the same equipment, in the same space as your presentation.
 - Leave as little as possible to chance.
 - Be prepared for malfunctions – have something to say throughout.
 - Keep it simple. It's a demonstration, not a lesson.
- Class rule: Nothing dangerous or foul-smelling, please.

Humor

- Can be useful to deliver a point.
 - But can backfire if the joke isn't funny.
- Choose appropriate material.
- Let the audience laugh - don't cut them off.
 - What one group finds funny, the next may not.

Remember:

- Your audience is not a group of professional speakers.
 - They don't expect you to be perfect.
 - They can sympathize with any nervousness.
 - You can correct any minor mistakes as you go along.
- Check out the space beforehand.
 - Examine the size, the seating.
 - Look at the technical equipment.
 - If possible, test it out beforehand.

- Practice.
- Practice.
- Practice.
- Beyond all else, convey your message.