

Canberra, Tuesday, August 4, 2009

## ⇒ Hints for a good presentation

Start here: <https://academicskills.anu.edu.au/resource.php?action=view&id=144>

The recommendations given by the Academic Skills and Learning Centre are an excellent starting point for your presentation design.

The following is an loosely ordered list of common hints, which are in no way complete but meant to support your presentation design process.

- **Design your talk with the goal in mind.** What do you want to achieve? Which reaction to you want to trigger with your audience? There are many different motives for a talk. For example you might want the audience to “get their wallets out”, “acknowledge your achievements”, “be impressed“, “be inspired“, “be curious to learn more”, “give you a good mark”, “employ you”. Sometimes it is also the case the audience is multi- faceted and you need to trigger different reaction with different parts of your audience.
- **Beginnings:** “Pick up” your audience right at the beginning of your talk. Do not waste valuable high attention time with unnecessary formalities. Everybody will listen carefully to your first two sentences: do not waste them – maybe you want to learn them by heart.
- **Endings:** Plan to end your talk exactly on the note you want it to end. Don’t let it ‘fade out’ - your last statement is important.
- Think how you want to present your material, and then **choose a set of tools** which allows you to get close to this form of presentation and learn how to operate the tool so that you achieve the desired result. If your presentation looks like 10 slides of dot-point lists, you obviously let the tool design your slides for you. If you design your visual support think of it as what it actually is: a two dimensional surface which allows for many forms of graphical, topological, relational, textual, dynamical, etc. visualisations.
- Think carefully **where you want the attention** of your audience in which part of your talk. If you are a good speaker then the graphical support from visual media might be more distracting than helpful. If you want to communicate essential items, consider switching the projectors to black. There are predictable patterns of directed attention in different visual situations. For instance you cannot focus the full audience attention on yourself and your words while a video is playing or after you just switched to a complex slide.
- **Consider the language** which is appropriate. The tone of your talk needs to comply with the topic, with the audience, and importantly: also with yourself. Enthusiasm: it is usually clearly noticeable if the presenter is actually enthusiastic and convinced about the substance of the topic. Most of the time you cannot change your views on the subject at the time when you design your talk, but you can access yourself and become explicitly aware of your relation with the topic. This will help the choice of wording which you will use in order to give a sound and believable presentation.

- **Do not oversell, but do not undersell either.** A good guideline is honesty: what is actually there?, what might likely be there?, what might be there eventually? Your wording must reflect your honest enumeration of fact, and estimates of possibilities. Considering this beforehand might save you from using phrases in the heat of the battle, which you might regret later.
- Good talks are based on the **persona of the presenter.** Your good presentations are comfortable for you and driven by your timing, your way of talking, your temperament. Finding your own presentation style requires experience. Do not blindly imitate a good presenter. Rather experiment with the presentation forms which sound reasonable for you.