Presentation Tips

Understand what you're talking about. Knowing is different than understanding. To know means you can recall information, facts, ideas, truths, or principles that you learned. Understanding means that you know the information so well that you can apply it in different contexts and explain it in different ways, often without notes. Understanding the central ideas in your presentation will allow you to focus on the delivery of the information rather than struggling to recall it.

Do not read your notes. One mistake many students make when giving a presentation is reading from a script. This often sounds dull and alienates the audience. Use note cards or small pieces of paper with bullet points and large font if you struggle with remembering the parts of your presentation. A more effective strategy is the use the actual presentation as your notecards. List the important points in your slides and use them as cues to help you remember.

Limit the amount of information in individual slides. Don't try to add too much information to your slides. Avoid paragraphs and lengthy sentences. Instead, limit your presentation to use 2-3 bullet points per slide. Make sure the information for each bullet point should not exceed a line.

Define key terms. If your presentation includes key words or terms, be sure to add them and their definition to a slide. This is especially important if your presentation relies mostly on one term. Pause on these slides to give your audience enough time to understand the term.

Do not use a font size that is smaller than 24. One mistake many students make is including too much information on a single slide and making the font type too small. Remember that less is more. You can avoid adding too much information and make your slides more readable.

Include visuals. Visuals are often included in a presentation to help illustrate a point or concept. Visuals can range from photos and illustrations to diagrams and mind maps. You should have some type of visual at least once every three slides. You can place a visual next to information on a slide or have an entire slide that consists of only on visual.

Move around. Don't stand in one place. Move around. And don't stand in front of the screen. Remember that the audience's attention should be on the visual presentation and your voice, not you. If you're nervous during presentations, moving around can help ease some of the tension by diverting the audience's attention from you the presentation.

Vary your speech. Try not to use the same volume and pace. Vary it. Add pauses after you say a key word or something important to give listeners time to think about what you've said.

Keep it 8-18 minutes. Keep your presentation concise. Depending on your topic, the expectations of the teacher and the age of your audience, the length of your presentation will vary. Effective presentations often do not exceed 18 minutes.

Conclude with a summary slide. List the key points that summarize your presentation on the last slide this helps solidify what you've discussed. You can even include a title on this slide called "In summary."

Ask for questions at the end. At the end, always ask for questions. Someone may have missed something or may not have understood a point you made during the presentation. This is where understanding pays off. Try answering the question by explaining it in a way that is slightly different from way you explained it in during the presentation.

Practice. Practice. Practice. The most successful presenters have practiced several times. In addition to practicing your ability to recall information and your timing, you might also consider practicing setting up your laptop in the room where you will give your presentation. The last thing you want to do is delay the start of your presentation due to some technical glitch that could've been avoided with proper preparation.