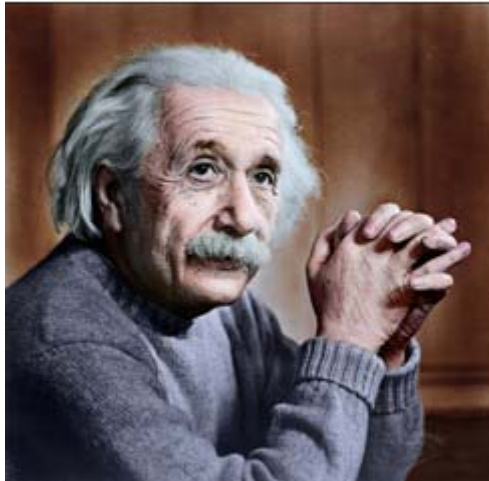


TIPS ON MAKING PRESENTATIONS

If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.

--Albert Einstein



As part of an extended interview/selection centre you may be asked to give a short presentation. Usually you choose the topic from a list which may include your hobbies, a recent holiday, a current affairs topic or one of your achievements, or sometimes you may be asked to make a presentation on a case study you have previously done as part of the extended interview. The purpose is not to test your subject knowledge, but to see how well you can speak in public. Typically you will be asked to talk for five minutes, and will be given 20 or 30 minutes beforehand to prepare.

BASIC TIPS

Dress smartly: don't let your appearance distract from what you are saying.

Smile. Don't hunch up and shuffle your feet. Have an upright posture. Try to appear confident and enthusiastic.

Say hello and smile when you greet the audience: your audience will probably look at you and smile back: an instinctive reaction.

Speak clearly, firmly and confidently as this makes you sound in control. Don't speak too quickly: you are likely to speed up and raise the pitch of your voice when nervous. Give the audience time to absorb each point. Don't talk in a monotone the whole time. Lift your head up and address your words to someone near the back of audience. If you think people at the back can't hear, ask them.

Use silence to emphasise points. Before you make a key point pause: this tells the audience that something important is coming. It's also the hallmark of a confident speaker as only these are happy with silences. Nervous speakers tend to gabble on trying to fill every little gap.

Keep within the allotted time for your talk.

A BBC presenter once sat next to Winston Churchill as he gave a speech in which he kept his audience hanging on every word. The presenter noticed that what appeared to be notes in his

hand was in fact just a laundry slip.

Later he mentioned this to Churchill. "Yes", said Churchill "It gave confidence to my audience."

Eye contact is crucial to holding the attention of your audience. Look at everyone in the audience from time to time, not just at your notes or at the PowerPoint slides. Try to involve everyone, not just those directly in front of you.

Walk around a little and gesture with your hands. Bad presenters keep their hands on the podium or in their pockets! Don't stand in one place glued to the spot hiding behind the podium! Good presenters will walk from side to side and look at different parts of the audience.

You could try to involve your audience by asking them a question.

Don't read out your talk, as this sounds boring and stilted, but refer to brief notes jotted down on small (postcard sized) pieces of card. Don't look at your notes too much as this suggests insecurity and will prevent you making eye contact with the audience.

It's OK to use humour, in moderation, but better to use anecdotes than to rattle off a string of jokes.

Take along a wristwatch to help you keep track of time – the assessor may cut you off as soon as you have used the time allocated, whether or not you have finished.

It can be very helpful to practise at home in front of a mirror. You can also record your presentation and play it back to yourself: don't judge yourself harshly when you replay this - we always notice our bad points and not the good when hearing or seeing a recording or ourselves! Time how long your talk takes. Run through the talk a few times with a friend.

It's normal to be a little nervous. This is a good thing as it will make you more energised. Many people have a fear of speaking in public. Practising will make sure that you are not too anxious. In your mind, visualise yourself giving a confident successful performance. Take a few deep slow breaths before your talk starts and make a conscious effort to speak slowly and clearly. Research by T Gilovich (Cornell University) found that people who feel embarrassed are convinced their mistakes are much more noticeable than they really are: we focus on our own behaviour more than other people do and so overestimate its impact. This is called the spotlight effect. If you make a mistake, don't apologise too much, just briefly acknowledge the mistake and continue on. For more details see "59 Seconds" by Prof. Richard Wiseman

Build variety into the talk and break it up into sections: apparently, the average person has a three minute attention span!

Presentation skills

HAVE A STRUCTURE

Tips from Kent students making presentations at interviews

Smile, make eye contact - the usual things. DON'T PANIC!

Take a hard copy of your presentation (printed-out) – they were impressed by this and it was a good idea as the laptop crashed anyway.

Before attending the assessment centre, details of a presentation which was to be delivered were sent to candidates. The subject of the presentation was very open-ended. Many chose to

use PowerPoint, others on OHP. The presentation was given to one assessor: not in front of other candidates.

I was asked in advance to prepare a presentation entitled 'How can your degree contribute to the future prosperity of Thames Water?'. This was then presented to a panel of 6. They also asked several questions at the end of the presentation.

I practised the presentation a lot. I read aloud with slides as I would present it, until I was happy with it. After each "dress rehearsal" I would normally find something I needed to change. I ran through the whole presentation several times. When practising, use your notes and change slides as you would when you really present it. Make sure you practise your presentation as you will give it; Stand up, speak to the "room", change slide etc.

I bought 3 "clip files", one to hold my notes, and I printed out the slides for the selectors and put these in their own files. One selector used his copy to make notes during the presentation. I printed out a copy of my CV and my online application, to take with me (I read them when I was waiting in car and reception), I'm glad I did this as the selector had copies and referred to them when he asked questions

The selector said presentation was "good"; I must have done a lot of research and asked where I got all my information (company website, Wikipedia and Google).

Prepare thoroughly and ask the Careers Service to help you out because they are very helpful.

Have a beginning, middle and an end. Use short sentences.

Consider:

Who are the audience?

What points do I want to get across?

How much time have I got?

What visual aids are available? Powerpoint projector? flip chart? Don't necessarily use these.

Sometimes the best presentations are the most informal.

Introduction

Welcome the audience.

Say what your presentation will be about: the aims and objectives.

The introduction should catch the attention. Perhaps a provocative statement or a humorous anecdote:

"Genetically-modified crops could save millions of people from starvation"

"The first day of my vacation job went with a bang, but it wasn't my fault that the microwave exploded.

The Middle should outline your argument or develop your story

In five minutes you will only have time for two or three main points and allow everything else to support these. List your main headings and any key phrases you will use.

Don't try to say pack too much content in or you will talk non- stop trying to get all your

content and the audience will switch off with information overload long before the end.

Use graphics or anecdotes to add variety.

Conclusion

Briefly summarise your main points.

Answer any questions.

Thank the audience for listening. Look at the audience again, smile and slow down.

The end should be on a strong or positive note – not tailing away to “..well that's all I've got to say so thank you very much for listening ladies and gentlemen”. You could try something along these lines:

“Hang-gliding is brilliant, so try it – you'll believe a man can fly!”

“The danger is increasing – if we don't all act soon it could be too late!

The above has been neatly summarised as "Tell them what you will tell them (introduction), tell them (development), tell them what you told them (conclusion)"

In preparing your talk, first jot down any interesting points you want to include in your talk, put these in a logical sequence, then try to find an interesting title, and a good introduction and ending.

For a 15 minute presentation on "Why you are the right person for the company's graduate recruitment programme" the following might work:

1 minute introduction - what you are going to tell them

2 minutes on the challenges facing the organisation in the current market: economic downturn, competitors, potential areas for growth.

4 minutes on "What skills the organisation requires in their graduate recruits" - see www.kent.ac.uk/careers/computersci.htm - skills tab

6 minutes on evidence showing that you have these skills

1 minute summary of your key points.

1 minute asking for and answering questions.

See also our video on making a presentation at an assessment centre (you need a Kent login to view this)

Presentations employers have asked Kent students to make at selection centres

10 min presentation: two topics to choose from: "Why would you be a good choice for our grad scheme?" and "Describe an interesting hobby/pass time". An hour to prepare for it and after the presentation there were questions and an interview (Cable and Wireless)

Had to prepare a 15 minute presentation in advance on "How to create business value through IT" (AXA)

20 minutes to prepare a 5 minute presentation on a group project you have worked on at

some point, preferably where you had a choice of topic. (ATOS Origin)

The ten most common mistakes in public speaking

According to Terry Gault the most common mistakes are:

- Using small scale movements and gestures
- Speaking with low energy
- Playing it safe
- Not preparing enough
- Not practicing enough
 - Preparing too much material
- Rushing
- Data centric presentations
- Avoiding vulnerability
- Taking themselves way too seriously

For more about this see 10 Most Common Rookie Mistakes in Public Speaking

USING POWERPOINT, OVERHEAD PROJECTOR OR FLIP CHART

--Death by PowerPoint

You may be allowed to use an overhead projector(OHP), data projector, or flip chart as part of your talk, If you think that you might like to use one, then it's wise to try to practice on one beforehand so you know what you are doing!

Before you start check the computer and the lighting: make sure no bright lights are illuminating the screen.

Stand to one side of the projector/flip chart, so the audience can see the material.

Face and speak to your audience, not the screen. Inexperienced PowerPoint presenters have their backs to the audience most of the time!

All too often the slides are just a security blanket for the speaker, not visual aids for the audience.

Don't use too many slides: three or four should be sufficient for a short presentation. For a 15 minute session 8 would be the absolute maximum and probably less. Don't have too much text on each slide - no more than about 40 words. Each slide should last for at least 2 minutes. The more slides and the more words on each slide, the less the audience will listen- whereas the less and simpler slides you have, the better you will communicate. Plan your presentation carefully and only use slides where they will clarify points.

Don't try to write too much on each slide: 30 to 40 words in a large font size is ample for one transparency. Use note form and bullets rather than full sentences. It is very hard for a member of the audience to read slides and listen simultaneously - they are unlikely to do either well. The best slides contain just one word.

Slides can contain prompts to remind you of what you will say next.

Press w to blank the screen or b to black it out (pressing any key restores the slides) when talking about a point which does not require a slide thus reducing the distraction for the audience.

Dark blue on white or cream gives a good contrast,

whereas red text on a green background is harder to read

Use a large (about 24 point) SANS font such as Verdana or Lucida Sans. DON'T PUT EVERYTHING IN UPPER CASE AS THIS LOOKS CRUDE. Check that the slides are easy to read from a distance.

Use colour and bold for emphasis but don't use too much colour. Have a good contrast e.g. dark blue text on a cream background.

Pictures, especially tables, diagrams and charts are good. Powerpoint is excellent for the delivery of pictures and diagrams and they will help to break up and add variety to the long streams of text seen in many (bad!) presentations.

The average PowerPoint slide contains 40 words

A little humour can grab the attention of the audience. For example some performing crocodiles?

Don't get carried away with flashy PowerPoint transition effects as these may distract attention from the content.

If using PowerPoint use the Format|Apply design template command. Gives you a wide range of nicely preformatted slide designs to choose from and saves you a lot of time.

Write down your main points on a postcard sized piece of card as a prompt and also as a backup in case the technology fails! Too many bullets can turn your presentation into a machine gun!

Too many bullets can machine gun your audience to sleep! Good presentations will have a variety of slides: some with bullets, some without and many with images and charts. Twenty slides with 5 bullets on each means you are trying to get across one hundred points, whereas the average person will absorb at most 5 points from a presentation.

Less is more!

The best speakers grip an audience by telling a story and showing some slides to support that.

Meinold Thielsch

I'm going to make a long speech because I've not had time to prepare a short one.

Winston Churchill

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending and to have the two as close together as possible.

As my confidence as a presenter has grown over the years, I've also found I rely less on props. My early presentations were jammed full of slides as I was afraid that I would run out of content, and invariably I talked far too quickly to get through all the slides. I was talking AT my audiences, not

TO them. Now I've learned to have as few slides as possible, to slow down, to question the audience and involve them in discussion: to treat them as individuals rather than objects to be afraid of. Surprisingly, the most successful presentations I have made have been when the technology has failed. If for some reason the projector hasn't worked, you are thrown back to basics and forced to communicate directly with the audience, to interact with them and set up a dialogue without the barrier of PowerPoint. It takes more courage, but is ultimately more successful.

PRESENTATION WORKSHOP -OBSERVERS NOTES

This has been used by the Careers and Employability Service in Presentation Skills Workshops. It may give you some idea on the areas assessors may be marking you on in an assessed presentation.

When giving feedback, try to be constructive and specific e.g. don't say "That wasn't a very good presentation", say "I think you need to raise your voice next time as I couldn't hear you very well". Be tactful and encouraging: remember that this might be the person's first attempt at speaking in public!

NON-VERBAL SIGNALS

Use of hands - too much/too little?

Smiling?

Eye contact with audience none/some of audience/everyone?

Standing still/ moving around/ standing up straight or slouching?

Position in relation to audience?

Mannerisms - shrugs etc?

Did they appear confident? Make a positive impact?

VOICE

Quiet/Loud/Clear/Muffled?

Slow or fast speech?

Monotonous or varying voice?

Use of humour?

CONTENT

Well structured and following a logical sequence?

Did it have an introduction and conclusion?

Was it well prepared?

Did they finish within time limit?

Was the talk too simple or too complex and jargon-filled?

- Was it interesting?
- Was the speaker enthusiastic, serious, confident?
- Were notes used? Were they read out, or just used for key points?
- Were questions asked or invited? If so were they handled well?
- Did they interact with and involve the audience?

VISUAL AIDS

- Was a flip chart, PowerPoint or other props used?
- Were they used well? Did they add to the talk?

Advanced Presentation Tips: the art of Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the skill of using language to communicate effectively and persuasively.

Tricolon: the use of three part sentences.

This technique allows you to hammer home your points in a memorable way. Here are some famous examples.

"Veni, Vidi, Vici" - "I came, I saw, I conquered."

Julius Caesar

"Friends, Romans, countrymen"

Shakespeare's Ceasar

"Never was so much, owed by so many, to so few."

Churchill

"Education, education, education"

Tony Blair

"If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer."

Election Victory Speech of Barack Obama

"Government of the people, by the people, for the people"

The "Top Ten" Skills shortages among graduates

	% of employers surveyed	
1	Commercial Awareness	67%
2	Communication Skills	64%
3	Leadership	33%
4	Ability to work in a team	33%
5	Problem solving	32%
6	Conceptual ability	21%
7	Subject Knowledge & competence	19%
8	Foreign languages	19%
9	Numeracy	19%

10 Good general education 15%

Source: Association of Graduate Recruiters "Skills for Graduates in the 21st Century"
www.agr.org.uk

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

"Where the strong are just, and the weak secure and the peace preserved"

John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever."

The Lord's Prayer

"The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly"

"Where there are love and generosity, there is joy.

Where there are sincerity and sacrifice, there is friendship.

Where there are harmony and simplicity, there is beauty.

Where there are prayer and forgiveness, there is peace.

Where there are moderation and patience, there is wisdom.

Where there are conflicts and crises, there is opportunity.

Larry Reed

Use of Contrast

The contrast between the positive and the negative emphasises and reinforces your point.
This can sometimes involve the use of antimetabole: the repetition of words in successive clauses,
but in changed order:

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

"Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

John F. Kennedy

Or it can be a more basic use of contrast

"Those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the
spirit of a people: Yes We Can."

Barack Obama's Victory Speech

"You turn if you want to, this lady's not for turning."

Margaret Thatcher

A time to kill, and a time to heal; A time to tear down, and a time to build up.

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance.

A time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, and a time to shun
embracing.

A time to search, and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep, and a time to throw away.

A time to tear apart, and a time to sew together; A time to be silent, and a time to speak.

A time to love, and a time to hate; A time for war, and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Combined use of tricolon and contrast

The final item is contrasted with those before it

"Not because the communists are doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right"

John F. Kennedy

Short phrases can make for more effective delivery

"We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead.

We cannot turn back."

Martin Luther King

Anecdotes

A short and amusing story that the audience can relate to can help to release tension and help both you and the audience to relax. It's best if these either are true stories or have more than a grain of truth in them

A graduate called Joe had just finished his degree and was looking for a job. After some time without success he finally landed a job as an assistant at the local zoo.

One day the bear at the zoo died. The zoo was facing a financial crisis and could not afford to buy another bear, so they asked Joe to dress up in a bear costume and pretend that he was a bear.

Well the money they offered was a small increase and so he took the job. He was put into a cage and in time became very good at imitating a bear, but he had one worry: the bars between his cage and the next were loose and in the next cage was a very ferocious looking lion.

One day his worst fears were realized and a bar broke. The lion jumped through the gap and raced up to Joe.

Extending his paw, the lion said, "Hi, I'm Phil, a drama graduate from Brum!"

Use of Imagery can add descriptive power to your presentation

"Let us not wallow in the valley of despair"

Martin Luther King

"I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight."

Martin Luther King

"A beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion"

John F Kennedy

Similes and metaphors are the main vehicles for the use of imagery

A simile is when you say something is similar to something.

"The ship went down like a lead brick"

"She grew on him like she was a colony of E.Coli, and he was room-temperature beef"

"She had a deep, throaty, genuine laugh, like that sound a dog makes just before it throws up."

A metaphor is when you say something is something.

"It is raining cats and dogs"

He has the heart of a lion"

Alliteration

To see how many of these devices can be combined together see Max Atinson's excellent analysis of John F Kennedy's Inaugural Speech at www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-12215248

Alliteration involves the use of the same sound at the beginning of a series of words

Let us go forth to lead the land we love

John F. Kennedy

They have served tour after tour of duty in distant, different, and difficult places

Barak Obama

Let it be our cause to give that child a happy home, a healthy family, and a hopeful future.

Bill Clinton

Quotations

An appropriate quote can give a strong start to a presentation, and make a point for discussion:

"The human brain is a wonderful organism. It works from the day we are born until the moment we stand up to speak in public." (Financial Times)

"Never put off till tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow." Mark Twain

"Work is the curse of the drinking classes" Oscar Wilde

They say hard work never hurt a man, but I figure 'Why take the chance'" Ronald Regan

Tone of voice

Lowering the tone of your voice at the end of statements makes you sound more authoritative and in control (Churchill did this in his speeches, whereas if your pitch goes up at the end of sentences it makes you sound as if you are unsure of yourself.

If you are representing a group use WE instead of I.

It will carry more weight.

And finally: using the unexpected!

A candidate at an Army Selection Board gave a presentation on artificial resuscitation. Half way through he demonstrated the kiss of life on a (young and pretty) member of the audience - to

dramatic effect!

Links

For the ultimate in presentation skills see Garr Reynolds presentation tips he is the author of Presentation Zen