bsas

british society of animal science

Guidelines for Presentation Skills

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Preparation

Why:
This is the purpose of your talk – your objective(s)
Are you selling something/imparting information/ entertaining?
Think about the overall message and outcomes you want to achieve

Who:
Know your audience!
• Do they have prior knowledge of your subject?
• What is their level of understanding?
• What are their needs and expectations?
• Is their first language English?

Where:
• Find out what facilities are available
• Room size and layout
• Access - can you get into the room prior to the presentation to prepare?

What:
This is basically what you want your audience to know after your presentation and can be broken down into three categories:
1. Essential – what they definitely need to know
2. Desirable – what they ideally need to know
3. Potential – what they could know if time allows

How:
Format – tell a story
• Opening – welcome, introduce yourself, your talk and how long you'll take
• Also let the audience know if they can ask you questions throughout the presentation or you'd prefer they left them until the end
• Introduction – set the scene. What's the background to the main topic of the talk? Why has the work been done? Why do you need to present this information?

• Main body of talk – contains all the information you want to impart. Remember, the 'essential' information has priority, followed by the 'ideal' and then the' could' if you have time.
• Conclusions and summaries
• Draw concise conclusions
• Very briefly, summarise the main points
• Clearly define 'take home' messages and calls to action

Avoid information overload!
• Large chunks of text and/or information
• Clutter on slides
• 7 x 7 – seven sentences x seven words
• Avoid Death by PowerPoint

Presenting data
• Pictures – if you can but keep them simple
• Figures – this includes graphs, Venn diagrams, pie charts etc. Usually more visually friendly than tables.
• Tables – minimise amount of data. Can easily lose the message but sometimes necessary in scientific presentations.

Simplicity
• Is the information crucial for your message? No? then remove it!
• Highlight key messages in the data – verbally and on the slide
• KISS - keep it simple, stupid

Colours, fonts and capitals
• Contrast is important – light vs. dark
• Use contrasting colours e.g. black and white, blue and yellow
• Avoid red and green together, especially if they are used to highlight differences
• Avoid reliance on only colour to communicate a message – symbols and labels are useful in conjunction with colours

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How
Make your message clear and relative to your audience

- Brevity – be concise and exact, no waffle!
- If what you've included doesn't contribute to your message, remove it
- Relate to the audience - why is it important for them to hear what you have to say?

Presentation notes and aids
- ∇ Notes are ok! – cards are best. Use as prompts, do not read verbatim. Presenters view in PowerPoint allows you to see any slide notes you have, without the audience seeing them
- ∇ Flipcharts, group exercises – only suitable with smaller audiences. Good for interaction.

The five Ps
'preparation prevents pretty poor performance'

- ∇ Practise!
- ∇ Run through your presentation to:
- ∇ Check timing
- ∇ One minute a slide rule of thumb
- ∇ Check content
- ∇ Gain confidence – it's your presentation, you are the expert!

If you have any questions please contact:

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Presentation

Presenting yourself
Posture – stand tall! Avoid crossing your legs over and over-gesticulating with your hands, though subtle gestures are useful to emphasise points.
Position - face your audience, not the screen! Some people move about more than others but avoid pacing up and down and don't obscure the screen.
Mics - be aware of the location of microphones. Lapel mics give you greater freedom to move but those fixed to a lectern, for example, means you have to stay put
Dress – match your audience. If in doubt, ask beforehand. If it is variable, smarter is always better
Speech – slow down. Generally, people talk faster when presenting. Vary the pitch and tone to get messages across and to keep people awake! Be aware that some people may not have English as a first language (see Preparation) so speaking clearly becomes even more important here. Give them time to absorb what you say.
Eye contact – look at your audience! You're there to talk to them, not a screen
Nerves – affect everyone! Preparation goes a long way to alleviating nervousness and is vital. They know more than me! – is a often a major worry. Some of your audience may know more than you but not about everything in your talk, they will still be interested to hear your findings/ information. Keep breathing!

Virtual presentations – increasingly, presentations are carried out using virtual formats, such as webinars and video conferencing. All the principles of preparation and presenting apply but there are additional considerations, such as:
Issues with internet connection or the technology platform – slides may be slower to change for your audience, audio may be intermittent and/or poor. Be prepared to have to adapt how you present at short notice.