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# How to Do Public Speaking and Presentations

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## Guidelines for Public Speaking and Presentations

Leaders make presentations to a wide variety of audiences, for example, Board members, employees, community leaders and groups of customers. Usually there is a lot that can be quickly gained or quickly lost from a presentation. A little bit of guidance goes a long way toward making a highly effective presentation.

Note that meeting management skills are often helpful in designing an effective presentation. Also note that the following guidelines are intended for general presentations, not for training sessions where your presentation is to help learners to gain specific knowledge, skills or attitudes in order to

improve their performance on a task or job.

## Basic Guidelines For Designing Your Presentation

1. List and prioritize the top three goals that you want to accomplish with your audience. It's not enough just to talk at them. You may think you know what you want to accomplish in your presentation, but if you're not clear with yourself and others, it is very easy - too easy - for your audience to completely miss the point of your presentation. For example, your goals may be for them to appreciate the accomplishments of your organization, learn how to use your services, etc. Again, the goals should be in terms of what you want to accomplish with your audience.
2. Be really clear about who your audience is and about why is it important for them to be in the meeting. Members of your audience will want to know right away why they were the ones chosen to be in your presentation. Be sure that your presentation makes this clear to them right away. This will help you clarify your invitation list and design your invitation to them.
3. List the major points of information that you want to convey to your audience. When you're done making that list, then ask yourself, "If everyone in the audience understands all of those points, then will I have achieved the goal that I set for this meeting?"
4. Be clear about the tone that you want to set for your presentation, for example, hopefulness, celebration, warning, teamwork, etc. Consciously identifying the tone to yourself can help you cultivate that mood to your audience.
5. Design a brief opening (about 5-10% of your total time presentation time) that:
  - a. Presents your goals for the presentation.
  - b. Clarifies the benefits of the presentation to the audience.
  - c. Explains the overall layout of your presentation.
6. Prepare the body of your presentation (about 70-80% of your presentation time).
7. Design a brief closing (about 5-10% of your presentation time) that summarizes the key points from your presentation.
8. Design time for questions and answers (about 10% of the time of your presentation).

## Basic Guidelines About Presentation Materials

You might be handing out supplemental materials, for example, articles, reports, etc. along with making your presentation. You might also be handing out copies of your presentation, for example, handing out copies of your slides that you will be referencing during your presentation. You might be using transparency slides or showing slides from a personal computer onto a project screen.

1. If you plan to project your slides from a computer onto a projection screen, then be sure to check out the computer system before people come into the meeting room, if at all possible.
2. Use a consistent layout, or organization of colors and images, on

- your materials.
3. If you use transparencies on an overhead projector, then allocate one slide for every 3-5 minutes of your presentation. Include 5-8 lines of bulleted phrases on each slide.
  4. If you provide the supplemental information during your presentation, then your audience will very likely read that information during your presentation, rather than listening to you. Therefore, hand out this information after you have completed your presentation. Or, hand it out at the beginning of your presentation and ask them not to read it until you have completed your presentation.
  5. If you hand out copies of your slides, be sure that the text on the slides is large enough that your audience can read the text on the table in front of them without having to hold the handouts up to their faces. Be sure to leave space on the handouts for the audience to make notes on them.

## Basic Guidelines About Your Delivery

1. If you're speaking to a small group (for example, 2-15 people), then try to accomplish eye contact with each person for a few seconds throughout your delivery.
2. Look up from your materials, or notes, every 5-10 seconds, to look into the audience.
3. Speak a little bit louder and a little bit slower than you normally would do with a friend. A good way to practice these guidelines is to speak along with a news anchor when you're watching television.
4. Vary the volume and rate of your speech. A monotone voice is absolutely toxic to keeping the attention of an audience.
5. Stand with your feet at shoulder-length apart.
6. Keep your hands relatively still.

## Five Things You Must Do in the First Five Minutes

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Recently I attended a speech given by a brilliant but soft-spoken philosopher and author. Even though he had a gentle, thoughtful way of speaking, and a serious topic, he managed to connect well with the audience, and got some great chuckles with his stories and his subtle humor. It started me thinking again about how important the first few minutes of every presentation is, and what you can do to make a good connection with your audience early on.

Check your next presentation to see how many of these you are doing.

### **Tell a short human-interest story.**

This speaker made a reference to boy scouts, comparing how they were years ago, to how they are today. It illustrated a point he was making in a highly visual, personal and memorable way. And it took less than one

highly visual, personal and memorable way. And it took less than one minute.

### **Refer to the audience and their worlds.**

More important than telling them all about you, let them know you understand who they are, what their concerns are, and how you plan to address them. The old adage is true: they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

### **Engage them in some way.**

Get them to do something besides just sitting. Ask a question, ask for a show of hands, ask them to greet their neighbors, ask them to write down their questions, ask them to gather in the four corners of the room according to...well, you get the idea. Unless you are mesmerizing, you really should get them engaged and involved, and do it sooner rather than later.

### **Start without slides.**

It sends a whole different energy into the room than starting with your slides on and ready to go. In fact, this speaker used no more than 10 slides in two hours, and he turned them on when needed and off when not needed. And another thing; they were all images, not bullets! Maybe you need to use slides. If so, then make them as clean and simple as possible, and start (and end) without them.

### **Find the humor.**

It could be in your story, in the audience, in a misfire or mistake, in a cartoon you show, or in something you heard or read recently. Look for humor that is comfortable and natural for you; don't try to be a comedian. It doesn't have to bring the house down; even a chuckle can bring us all together.

Yes, this speaker did all five of these in the first few minutes. He showed humility, depth, and passion about his topic. I bet you can too, and I would love to hear what you do in the first five minutes.

## **How to Handle Undesirable Behaviors in Presentations or Training: Use the Intervention Escalator**

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Many years ago, while leading a workshop for effective presentations, I had a number of students who were actually there because they had been asked to conduct mandatory safety training. They talked about undesirable behaviors on the part of their learners: people falling asleep during the training sessions, arguing, or making inappropriate comments about the content. I asked what they would do in such cases, and their immediate response was to "kick them out of the class." I thought this was a pretty

response was to kick them out of the class. I thought this was a pretty radical reaction, so we talked about what else they could do to get through to their learners. I am not sure they bought into my suggestions to start with a more subtle intervention at that point, but I hope as they became more experienced in the classroom they tried some more subtle techniques.

Over time, as I heard and experienced similar audience behaviors, I developed and shared the Intervention Escalator, a reminder to start with subtle interventions, and move toward more extreme responses only as needed. The hope was that presenters could use subtle but active interventions to maintain harmony in meetings, presentations, or training sessions without relying on extreme or unilateral methods.

Take a look and let me know what you think of this approach. Where do you start on the scale? What is the most effective technique, in your experience? Have you had to eject participants from a classroom or meeting? Are there other steps you would suggest adding?

1. **Ignore it.** If you see or hear a behavior once, you may be able to ignore it. For example, a short side conversation, heavy eyes, or a comment you think is just a little “off” can probably be ignored for a while without fear of losing control of the classroom. Keep an eye out for continued behaviors around the room or from the same people but just take note.
2. **Silence it.** Instead of stopping your presentation or commenting directly to the offender, insert an extended pause into the conversation. Most times, when the room gets quiet, so do those who are indulging in side conversations. Wait until everyone is quiet, then continue without comment.
3. **Eyeball them.** Often you can head off a confrontation non-verbally by making extended eye contact with people who are distracting others. Your silent message is: “I have my eyes on you.” You still don’t have to be confrontational or put anyone on the spot. Just extend the eye contact beyond 5 seconds and they will get the point.
4. **Stand by them.** As you move around the room, standing close to those who are being disruptive can help quiet them down, again without a direct confrontation. If only one party to the side conversation is “into it” the other person may appreciate your non-verbal intervention.
5. **Ask a question.** As the behaviors continue unabated, you are moving toward direct action. But before you jump on someone, start with questions. Ask a question of the audience at large: for example, “I have shown you some of the facts about eye safety, now who can tell me which one you think is most compelling?” Questions sound different than questions, and this may be enough to grab the attention of those who are drifting. By the way, ask the question first, then call on someone. That way, everyone in the room must think, in case you call on them.
6. **Ask for input.** If lots of side discussions are breaking out, or if lots of eyes are fluttering, you are going to have to deal with it. Call it out: “I have noticed a lot of side conversations, and I’m going to have to ask everyone to focus on me for the next 5 minutes. If you have any questions, please ask them now.”

out: "I see some of you are drifting... Is it too warm in here? Do we need a break now? Did you have a question? Was there a comment you could share?" Note that it is really easy to sound sarcastic here, so try not to let that happen. You could try humor too, if it seems natural and appropriate. "Try this lecture tonight on your three year old to get her to sleep." (And if you are lecturing, stop, and change the pace to discussion or action.)

7. **Talk offline.** If one or two people are causing the distraction, try connecting with them on a break. Let them know the impact of their behavior, on you and on others. Ask if there is anything you can do to keep them engaged. Let them know the consequences of continued behavior. At least this way you aren't embarrassing them in front of others and you are giving them fair notice.
8. **Divide and conquer.** If certain people are developing distracting behaviors, it may help to get them apart. Break into "discussion groups" by counting off, thereby breaking up teams or whole tables who are too chatty. After lunch or a break, ask people to sit in a new spot so they can "meet new people." In long meetings or training sessions, this is great practice anyway. Just note that people get attached to their territory and sometimes resist moving. If you use name tents, you can move them over lunch, or catch people at the door and ask them to move. If even a few people change seats it is often enough to change the dynamics.
9. **Address them directly.** You are getting toward the most direct approaches. If behaviors have continued to this point, you will have to address them directly. Be direct, calm, and factual. "Bill and Sam, I am going to ask for your cooperation. Let's eliminate the side comments so we can finish our session on time." (I love telling them this; everyone wants to finish on time.)
10. **Eject them.** In twenty years of leading training sessions, I have only had to ask someone to leave once or twice. But if you feel their presence is impacting or threatening the physical or psychological safety of the other participants, you will need to take action. Personally, I would ask them to step outside the room and then privately ask them to make a choice about leaving the class or changing their behavior. If you feel threatened, you will want to call security or ask for help. Hopefully, you never have to get this far on the Intervention Escalator.

It is a fine line to walk between being respectful to individuals while being a strong leader, but by starting at the bottom of the escalator, you may never have to get to the most direct actions. Don't confuse subtlety with avoidance or evasion; take action early to maintain a healthy environment in your next meeting, training session or presentation.

## Additional Perspectives on Presentation Skills (Public Speaking)

There are numerous articles on the Internet about public speaking, presentation skills, etc.

## Recommended Articles

[Basics of Public Speaking](#)  
[Delivering the Speech of Your Life](#)  
[Public Speaking and Presentation Skills -- 7 Tips for Beginners](#)  
[Now That We Have Your Complete Attention...](#)  
[The Essence of a Great Presentation](#)  
[20 Great Ways to Engage Your Audience](#)

## Additional Articles

[Three Mind-Tickling Techniques to Make Your Presentation Content More Memorable and Motivating](#)  
[Big Dog on Presentation Skills](#)  
[Delivering the Speech of Your Life](#)  
[Presentation Skills](#)  
[Fear of Public Speaking](#)  
[Public Speaking](#)  
[Topics For Persuasive Speeches](#)  
[Three Things You Should Know About Communicating Credibility](#)  
[How to Improve Public Speaking](#)  
[Tips for Public Speaking](#)  
[20 Ways to Engage and Involve Your Audience](#)  
[Power Presenter](#)  
[10 Ways to Deliver Winning Team Presentations](#)  
[Purposeful Stage Movement for Trainers, Speakers, Actors](#)  
[Are you performing or just presenting?](#)  
[Tips and Skills to Prepare for Effective Public Speaking Tasks](#)  
[How CEOs Can Improve Speeches](#)  
[The Essence of a Great Presentation](#)  
[Improve Your Public Speaking with a More Effective Mindset](#)  
[10 Ways to Encourage Continuous Learning in Presentation Skills](#)  
[5 Tips for Building Effective Delivery Skills](#)  
[Training by Toastmasters?](#)  
[Humor has it: How to use Humor in Business Presentations](#)  
[Top Ten Tips for Becoming a Skilled Presenter](#)  
[Humor Has it: When Should you Use Humor?](#)  
[Become an UM Fighter! How to Get Rid of Filler Words](#)  
[How to Use Humor in Your Next Presentation](#)  
[Hello my name is....How to Introduce a Speaker](#)  
[Speaking or Lecturing Between the Adult "Glee" Practice and BINGO](#)  
[Training and Teaching Public Speaking with A Difference](#)  
[The Visual Communicator](#)  
[PowerPoint Debate Continues](#)  
[Tips for Telling Stories in Your Presentations](#)

## Alphabet Series on Presenting

[A is for Authentic](#)  
[B is for Brilliant](#)  
[C is for Courage](#)  
[D is for Dvnamic](#)

[E is for Energy](#)

[F is for Focus](#)

[G is for Gracious](#)

[H is for Heart and Head, Humor and Honesty](#)

[I is for Introducing Yourself](#)

[J is for Joy, Jobs and Jagger](#)

[K is for Killer and KISS slides](#)

[L is for Live, laugh and love \(your audience\)](#)

[M is for Message](#)

[N is for Never](#)

[O is for 'Oops'](#)

[P is for Poise and Persuasion](#)

[Q is for Quiet Audiences \(Part 1\)](#)

[R is for Perfect Rehearsals and Reading Your Audience](#)

[S is for Storytelling](#)

[S is for Storytelling Part Two](#)

[T is for Timing](#)

## Using Visual Aids

[Developing Winning Team Presentations](#)

[Using Graphs and Charts](#)

[Top 10 Ways to Create Better Visuals?](#)

[More Than 100 PowerPoint Tutorials & a Free Template The Rapid eLearning Blog](#)

[How Visual Aids Undermine Presentations - Three Ways You May Be Boring Your Audience to Tears](#)

[When Learning Takes Place -- PowerPoint vs. Presenter](#)

[Building Slides to Support Surprise Conclusions in Presentations](#)

[My Favorite Tool for Making Presentations](#)

[5 Tips for a Great PowerPoint Presentation](#)

[How to Brainstorm with Visual Aids](#)

[How to Stop Abusing Your Visual Aids](#)

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## For the Category of Interpersonal Skills:

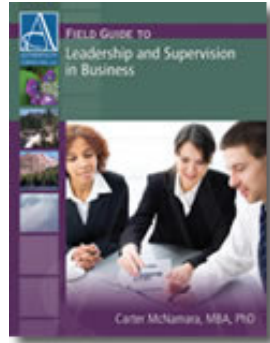
To round out your knowledge of this Library topic, you may want to review

some related topics, available from the link below. Each of the related topics includes free, online resources.

Also, scan the Recommended Books listed below. They have been selected for their relevance and highly practical nature.

## Related Library Topics

### Recommended Books



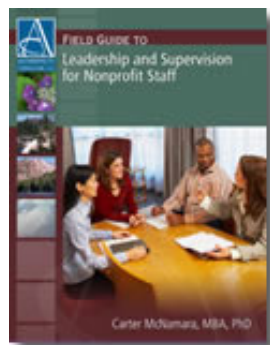
#### [Field Guide to Leadership and Supervision in Business](#)

**by Carter McNamara, published by Authenticity Consulting, LLC.**

Includes step-by-step guidelines, tips and tools to effectively lead:

1. Yourself
2. Other individuals in the business
3. Groups and teams in the business
4. Business organizations
5. As well as all functions within the business organization.

Many of the Library's materials about business, leadership and management are adapted from this book. Just click on the title of the book above to see the Index and Table of Contents.



#### [Field Guide to Leadership and Supervision With Nonprofit Staff](#)

**by Carter McNamara, published by Authenticity Consulting, LLC.**

Includes step-by-step guidelines, tips and tools customized for personnel in nonprofits to effectively lead:

1. Yourself
2. Other individuals in the nonprofit
3. Groups and teams in the nonprofit
4. Nonprofit organizations
5. As well as all functions within the nonprofit organization.

Many of the Library's materials about nonprofit leadership and management are adapted from this book. Just click on the title of the book above to see the Index and Table of Contents.

The following books are recommended because of their highly practical nature and often because they include a wide range of information about

this Library topic. To get more information about each book, just click on the image of the book. Also, a "bubble" of information might be displayed. You can click on the title of the book in that bubble to get more information, too.

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[Communications \(Organizational\) -- Recommended Books](#)

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