Tips for Giving a Great Presentation

- First and foremost, your data needs to be of the highest level of quality.

- Know your objective.

  This may sound silly, but you need to ask yourself "what am I trying to accomplish?", and "what is it that I want the listeners to get out of this presentation?".

- Remember to be persuasive.

  To be persuasive, you must be credible. Tell the audience what they need to hear to believe in you; *be specific and precise*.

  Things that help you to be more persuasive:

      Show some enthusiasm (but only if you feel it!)
      Use body language that shows confidence (see comments below)
      Look people in the eye - include the whole room - talk *to* them, not *at* them.
      Use humor (cautiously - and don't be a clown, act respectable)
      It's OK to show vulnerability (you can say when things didn't go perfectly).
      Show respect for your audience, listen to their questions; if necessary, agree to disagree.

- Keep your bargain with the audience – deliver what you promise.

  The age-old axiom for giving a compelling and comprehesible talk is: **Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you just told them.**

  People don't like surprises or to sit there wondering when you'll finish. Tell them how long the talk is and stick to that promise!

  Be prepared to shorten your talk (know what is optional information that they won't miss if you leave it out - i.e., make sure you deliver what you promised. Backup slides are great for info you might not have time to reach).

- Avoid the word "Prove". Proving something is incredibly difficult, and seasoned scientists will latch onto this word as evidence that you lack experience. Opt for words like "demonstrate", "imply", or "suggest", depending on your level of confidence in the data.

- Be over-prepared.

  Practice your talk at least once if not twice or more times. If you can, get someone to be your audience. Check yourself for "umms" and have them check you too. Also, have someone

check to see if you have any nervous body movements (swaying, scratching etc.) and be sure to eliminate these so that the audience isn't distracted.

Check your slides/overheads ahead of time. Be sure to check them in a room that is similar in size to the one you plan to use and *go through the slides from the back of the room* to make sure everything is legible! Use color in slides *carefully*, (it's very frustrating when you can't see the data because it's a blue line on a purple background), and be certain that the final slide has good contrast.

If you can, get someone to listen to part of your talk in the room you will give it so that you know how loudly you need to speak.

Make sure that you have everything you need to give your presentation way ahead of time (a pointer, visual aids, etc.)

- Avoid fear of public speaking.

    The better prepared you are, the less fear you will feel. You should be able to say to yourself "I know exactly what I'm doing, so there's nothing to fear".

    If you can, take a 5 minute walk to calm yourself before your talk.

    Take 3 deep breaths before beginning. Remember, you can pause to breath whenever you want - *you don't have to be constantly talking*!

    Review in your mind the good qualities of your presentation (quality data, excellent examples, thoroughly organized, good illustrations etc.).

    <u>Turn it around</u> - this is not about *you*, how *you* look, or what they think of *you*, this is for *them*. How well will *they* understand, what can you do to make it easier for *them* to understand.

    Remember that feeling nervous is normal and many people who have given hundreds of presentations routinely feel butterflies before presenting.

- Don't illustrate your words with text. <u>Use text sparingly, not as your own script.</u>

    If you feel safer having cues, you can write things out on paper for yourself. Put the paper on the table or podium and casually move the paper over (without flipping it) so that this is not distracting. You shouldn't be reading from what you've written, but it can help you stay on track.

- Make Good Looking Slides

    Avoid excess text
    Label your axis; make sure you use colors visible on any projector
    Make sure your font sizes are ample so that old people in the back can still read it.

Don't over clutter.
Make things fill the slide.
A rule of thumb is to present one slide per minute. Try not to rush.
If you present data, go though it carefully - say what is on the axis. Make sure the data is meaningful to your overall objective.

- Dress for success. Look dignified – don't let your clothes be a distraction.

- Use body language that engenders confidence in you.

  <u>Don't talk to the screen, talk to the audience</u>.

  Use good posture (don't slouch or shuffle).

  Do not stand like a soldier (aggressive), no hands in pockets (weak), don't stand with hands clasped in front of you (shy), don't put hands on hips (aggressive), don't fold arms (defensive).

- Give credit where credit is due.

  Say who did what. If you don't want to end your talk with a long list, put the list in the beginning, and go through the names then. At the end, display the same list, but you needn't go through it again.

- Learn from the experts. When you are at a good talk, take notes on the aspects of the presentation that work for you. You're in a prime position to learn from the very best!

- General Checklist:

  Am I clear in my general and specific subject?

  Have I defined my objective in precise terms?

  Have I done all my research?

  Am I the master of the subject?

  Will I leave them with something to think about?