

Giving a Presentation

As part of the Institute of Medical Illustrators' (IMI) scheme for continuing professional development, worksheets will be published at regular intervals in this Journal. These are designed to provide the members of IMI with a structured CPD activity that offers one way to earn credits. It is recognized that this worksheet requires some time spent undertaking the exercises. The answers to the questions, along with any notes and reflections you make or other publications you find, should be kept in your CPD portfolio.

A key aspect of preparing a presentation is to be clear about why you are going to be giving the presentation. What are your aims? To whom are you giving the presentation? You will need to give a different kind of presentation to a knowledgeable audience to one that has never come across the topic before.

Work your way through the questions in *Table 1*. Identify the essential points, identify the audience you want to communicate to, and identify how best to communicate to your audience. The subsequent tasks will rely on you having a clear idea of what you are presenting, to whom and how.

It is important not only to collect and prepare the material you are going to use in a presentation, but also to organize it. There are a number of ways to do this, but two visual creation methods which work well are mindmapping,^{1,2} and the post-it note approach.

The post-it note approach involves writing a single point you want to get across to your audience, from your research or professional practice, on a post-it note. These are then organized to check if there are any common themes. Can any of the key points be grouped together? It is generally best in a presentation to limit yourself to a maximum of seven major points, as this seems to be the key number that an audience can cope with.

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1. Identify the essential points
 - What information is to be communicated?
 - What is the aim of the presentation?
 2. Identify the audience you want to communicate to.
 - Who are they?
 - What is their level of literacy?
 - How numerous are they?
 - What level of general education have they reached?
 - What is their level of motivation to study this particular subject matter?
 - What is their probable level of retention?
 - Have they a prior knowledge of the subject matter?
 - What is their likely reaction to the subject matter?
 - What is their age and sex?
 3. Identify how best to communicate to your audience.
 - The method of communication must be at the appropriate level, ie. method of dissemination, vocabulary and technical content at a level they will easily understand, speed of delivery of new information to be at appropriate level and given the necessary amount of reinforcement.
 - Ensure that they understand how relevant the visuals are to the subject matter and that it is relevant to them, the audience.
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TASK 1. WHAT IS YOUR AIM IN GIVING THE PRESENTATION?

TASK 2. COLLECTING, PREPARING AND ORGANIZING YOUR MATERIALS

Table 1. Checklist for programming audio-visual presentations.

Table 2. An example outline.

Title: **Giving a presentation**

What is your aim in giving the presentation?

- Identify the essential points
- Identify the audience you want to communicate to
- Identify how best to communicate to your audience

Collecting, preparing and organizing your materials

- Mindmaps
- Post-it notes

Creating an outline

Software for presenting

The presentation

References

The advantage of this system is that nothing is final; you can try different ways of arranging your presentation, adding more points or reducing them, before it is ever fixed onto paper. From this you can develop your main headings and sub-headings, and then slowly add your visuals and text.

TASK 3. CREATING AN OUTLINE

Create your outline using an ordinary word processor. This should be a list of headings and subheadings that can be used to present your ideas as a logical sequence to the audience. For example, the outline for the early stage of this CPD is shown in *Table 2*. You can see the headings that correspond with the tasks, and the subheadings that have been developed in the main body of the text.

You can develop your outline for a presentation in the same way as you would for a paper, article or a report. The outline can be imported into Microsoft PowerPoint,³ then edited, so you do not have to retype all your text for your presentation.

TASK 4. CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE METHOD FOR PRESENTING

Microsoft PowerPoint as a presentation tool has been well documented in this Journal,^{4,5,6} and a useful paper on the use and abuse of Microsoft PowerPoint is available online.⁷ However, presentations can be created in many other programs, perhaps some that you may be more familiar or comfortable with. Programs such as Adobe Freehand, Illustrator, InDesign or PhotoShop can be used to create a series of files or pages, which can be converted to a portable document format (pdf) file and viewed as a presentation using Acrobat Reader. If you know more about web design or Macromedia Flash, you could create your presentation in either/or a combination of these formats. Remember that the format should be landscape rather than portrait.

Work out which is the best way for you to present. If you have a small audience they could view the presentation around a computer screen, or you could print out a series of A4 or A3 size sheets of your presentation. The next step could be using acetates with an overhead projector, rather than starting with a data projector. The choice should be the most appropriate for the material you have, and for your audience. It may be that only part of your presentation requires technology, e.g. it could be Information – Demonstration – Information – Summary.

Once you have your outline, use this to hang your visuals and ideas on. It is what you show and say that is important; the sequence of illustrations and text you put together is meant to support the concepts and ideas you have developed through your professional practice. Advice about writing for the web applies equally to presentations as they both involve presenting short chunks of information.⁸

Make sure you have a conclusion that gathers together what you have been saying and ends with a clear message, otherwise you can abruptly run out of slides and end up saying 'Well that seems to be the end'. It is better to leave the audience with a slide that encapsulates your message, asks for further questions, or acts as an advertisement for you including your contact details. Whichever way you choose to end your presentation, leave the audience clear that it is the end.

Using a sheet of paper, make a list of the top five things you most liked about a recent presentation, and the five things you dislike about the way some people present.

It is necessary to be realistic about presentations. First of all, accept that a lot of people dislike presenting and, therefore, if you hate giving them, you are not alone. There are a number of books available with suggestions to help you get over your fears, or to improve your presentation skills; for example, Hasbani's 'Making great presentations: conquer nerves and stage fright master powerful communication skills deliver presentations with style'.⁹

The old saying 'practice makes perfect' is very true, but there is more to it than that.

TASK 5. PRESENTATION LIKES AND DISLIKES

TASK 6. PRACTICE

Step 1. Try the pace of your presentation

It can be helpful to talk through what you are going to say in front of your visuals, and to try to work out the pace of the presentation. If it does not make sense, go back and revise your outline.

When trying to gauge the pace of your presentation you need to take into account not only how long you have been given, but also how long the audience can sustain their interest. Most listeners find their attention flagging after about 20 minutes. The next time you go to a talk see how long you last, and how often the presenter changes the pace of the presentation or engages you with questions or activities. Not many presenters can sustain our interest with 30–45 minutes of continuous talk. It can be a good idea to try and break up your presentation with some audience' participation, perhaps a simple question or show of hands, as everyone likes to feel involved.

If in practice your talk lasts 30 minutes and you have only been allocated 20 minutes, do not try talking faster; it is better to eliminate some of the material or keep some in reserve for questions or follow-up. This is part of trying to be realistic about how much material you can cover. Even experienced presenters can overrun by trying to present too much information. For example, a 20-minute presentation could be broken down as follows:

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|---|-----------|
| ● Introduction | 1 minute |
| ● Topic 1 | 4 minutes |
| ● Question for audience and feedback | 2 minutes |
| ● Topic 2 | 4 minutes |
| ● Topic 3 | 4 minutes |
| ● Conclusion or summary | 2 minutes |
| ● Final slide leading on to asking if any questions | |

Note that the total time does not add up to twenty minutes; always allow yourself a bit of extra time for questions.

Step 2. Use the main headings to your advantage

One way of helping yourself in your presentation is to list your main headings and highlight the one you are going to talk about next; this helps you to pause, to remember to take a breath, remind you what the next section is about, and it also lets your audience know where they are and what is coming up next. In this way you can use the slides to help you. As these headings link to your outline, they will help you to avoid reading every word from a script.

Step 3. Practice in front of camera or audience of one

Practice on your own initially, but then with an audience or a video camera, so afterwards you can ask for feedback or view your own performance objectively. This helps us overcome all the little things we do as we talk without ever realizing it – the hair flick, the ums and errs and the likes. Don't forget to use the technology, for example, having a remote for your computer to move from one slide to the next looks very professional. If your presentation venue is available for you to practice in, do use it for a trial run-through as

it helps you become comfortable with your surroundings. It is always advantageous to know where everything is, including electrical sockets for your data projector and computer, and light switches etc.

Step 4. The slightly larger audience

If you are going to be giving a presentation for the very first time to a large audience locally or at a conference, test it out with a friendly and supportive audience of colleagues or at a regional meeting first. Going from an audience of a camera to 100 or more is a big step.

TASK 7. AFTER THE PRESENTATION

Once the presentation is over, wait for a day or two, then reflect back on your presentation. What went well? What questions did the audience ask? Does part of your presentation need adding to in the light of these? You should write short notes for yourself about points you need to change, or highlight things that went well that you could do again next time.

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