Presenting with Poise

Effective presentations are often not as effortless as they seem. It’s natural to be a bit nervous and tenuous when giving presentations, but good presenters work to deliver their sessions concisely and with confidence. With adequate preparation, willingness to experiment, and patience, everyone can improve their presentation style and deliver meaningful, effective presentations.

The Prudence of Preparation

- A fluent and informative presentation requires preparation to avoid awkward transitions and redundant or unnecessary content. Begin preparing well in advance of your presentation to ensure you are comfortable with the material and confident in your plan to present it.
- The most crucial part of preparation is practice. You will know what sections and transitions need work when you practice. Try practicing in an empty room. However, be sure to practice on your feet, speaking aloud as though to an audience.
- Make sure you research the material you are presenting thoroughly, even beyond the scope of your presentation. This will make you more comfortable discussing your topic as well as answering questions.
- Acquire information for your presentation from a variety of sources. Putting together pieces from several sources will require your own input and creativity to make it all fit, rather than relying too heavily on a couple of sources.
- If you feel anxious as a presentation approaches, use that anxiety as a cue to do more preparation for it. This will help to reassure you that you know what you are doing, and warm you up for settling the nerves we often feel when we speak to a group.

Key Ways to Keep Cool and Calm

- Arrive early and acquaint yourself with the space you’ll be presenting in.
- Keep notes with you during your presentation, but do not try to memorize your entire speech. Try writing reminders on cue cards to keep you on topic with room to maneuver.
- Make sure you are hydrated and take care with your appearance. Anything you do that makes you physically and mentally more comfortable will ease the pressure.
### Catering to the Crowd

- Make opportunities for discussion. Involving your audience will help you get a better sense of how they receive the content, establishing a dialogue that benefits everyone.

- Make eye contact with your audience and smile. People pay more attention when they feel they are being spoken to directly, especially by someone with a welcoming demeanor.

- If you ever forget what you were about to say or start feeling overwhelmed by anxiety, allow yourself some pause and take a couple of deep breaths. No one will hold it against you; just keep the presentation from slipping away.

- Above all, be natural. There is no need to present yourself as something you are not, so be yourself and have fun with it. Audiences appreciate and relate to authentic presenters.

### Trustworthy Tips for PowerPoint

- A lot of people use Power Point to aid their presentations, particularly in a university setting. While it can be a useful tool, it should be used mindfully and not as a replacement for having to present material yourself.

- Use Power Point slides to identify key points and concepts. The slides offer a condensed, concisely written summary of what your presentation is about.

- Always present more material than what you put on your Power Point slides. Your audience can read what is written on the slides, so elaborate on the points to keep them listening.

- It can be useful and entertaining to incorporate different animations, transitions, and other features of Power Point. However, don’t get too fancy. If special effects are overdone, they distract from the point of your presentation and often come across as corny.

- Try not to get hung up on any particular slide unless it has crucial significance or cues a transition into something different such as group discussions or activities.

- Keep your focus on the audience; don’t speak to the projector screen.

- If you incorporate any other electronic media into your Power Point presentation, such as video, make sure you test it out before the presentation. You don’t want to scramble as you discover something is not working while the audience waits.

- Have a backup plan in case technological difficulties arise and Power Point doesn’t work. You don’t want to be caught off-guard and put in a panic. Always be prepared!

### Remember – Practice makes Polished!