

Presentation Tips: Preparation and Practice

1. Rehearse! Use the Index Card method and simulate actual conditions as much as possible. Stand up and say the words out loud.
2. Visit the room you will be speaking in as early as possible. If that's not practical, get a detailed description of the room, the type of crowd, the time of day, etc. It's amazing how different (and real) the presentation will appear when you're actually in the room, and not your office, kitchen, car ...
3. Practice does not create rigidity. "In order to abandon technique, you must first master it." Robert Fripp, guitarist. "You gotta get tight to get loose." Grover Washington, jazz saxophonist. Think about what actors doing 9 shows a week for a year do. They practice and practice, blocking out every move, yet make the words sound fresh every show. "Rehearsing helps you make discoveries."
4. Take an improv class. It's imperative that you can think "on the spot."
5. Find an actor to critique your presentation style.
6. Arrive at the event early and spend time with the audience. You will make friends who will provide non-verbal feedback and energy. You may also hear stories that can be incorporated into your presentation.
7. Take away empty seats and minimize "motes," i.e., the place between the stage and front row. Design your space, even if it means bringing in a plant or playing music when people enter the space.
8. Be able to see the time and have a glass (not a bottle) of water handy.
9. Always remove badges and name tags before presenting.
10. Attend the preceding presentations to assess the audience's engagement and willingness to participate. You may very well receive comments that can be then incorporated into your presentation.
11. Micro-rehearse using index cards.
12. "Trail" a good speaker. Record the speech and say it like them (like a music transcription).
13. Watch yourself recorded on double speed and habitual gestures and habits will be easy to spot.
14. Nothing takes the place of recording yourself. Nothing fancy needed. An iPhone or iPad application works great.

15. Rehearsing while jogging is good because you are moving.
16. Bold words you want to emphasize when writing out key words.