

Section 1: Tips for Effective Presentations

1. Presentation Considerations

When is the presentation?

If preparation time is short:

- Stick with what you know; focus on areas in which you have direct experience and concrete facts.
- Enlist help for the actual presentation (e.g. have experts join you either to deliver a portion of the presentation or to help answer questions).
- Provide your audience with a way to obtain information you were unable to prepare. You may even want to schedule another session if the missing material requires discussion or cannot be easily obtained.

Where is your presentation taking place?

Characteristics of the venue (e.g. size, atmosphere) usually influence the formality of a presentation. Knowing your venue will also help you decide if you need a microphone, audio-visual aids and what to wear.

Informal presentations usually encourage participants to engage in one-on-one dialogue and small group discussions.

Formal presentations generally convey more information to more people.

Why is this presentation necessary?

Whether it is a scheduled event, a response to a crisis, or an impromptu response to a “teachable moment,” all presentations require different approaches.

Audience expectations will vary, but honesty and willingness to cooperate is always expected and will enhance your presentation.

2. Planning Your Presentation

Determine your exact topic.

Whether your topic is broad or precise, you should be able to express it in a simple sentence. Always speak on a subject that you have a strong knowledge of and experience in.

If the amount and complexity of the material is inappropriate for your audience and/or the time available, refocus your topic accordingly.

Determine your overall purpose.

A presentation may have many purposes:

- to inform
- to educate

- to entertain
- to inspire
- to convince

It is the purpose of a presentation that forms its topics, order and delivery. Therefore, while it is possible to combine two or three of the purposes listed above, a well-constructed presentation will have one dominating purpose.

For example, you may wish to inform your audience of new developments in a situation and convince them that appropriate measures are being taken to assure their safety. However, you must decide what your primary purpose is: getting the correct information out or reassuring them. It may help to consider if your presentation time were drastically reduced, which single message would need to reach your audience?

While determining the most important facts to convey, ask yourself: in what way do I want to inspire the audience?

Analyze the audience and the situation.

Every audience is different. To ensure a successful presentation, you should always consider the character and expectations of your audience. Failure to address the needs and level of interest and understanding of an audience spells disaster for a speaker.

Determine what are the needs and limitations of the audience, based on their occupation, age, interests, and experiences with corrections? What are their concerns?

If you do not have personal knowledge of the audience, contact someone who can give you some insight into their nature, attitudes and expectations.

3. Presentation Style and Method

Style

Informal presentations are best for:

- small audiences
- peers and young people (under 18 years old)
- conveying affective (emotional, attitudinal) messages
- communicating one main point or a small amount of information

Formal presentations are best for:

- large audiences
- conveying complex arguments
- multiple sets of information

Affective messages can be fostered within formal presentations by engaging the audience with problems and exercises to be discussed, and role-playing scenarios (e.g. Ethics 101 - You move into a new

neighbourhood and find out that the apartment block behind you is being converted into a half-way house. What is your reaction?)

Work to your strengths

If you are better at relaxed, personal encounters, you may want to skew your presentation to reflect an informal feeling. However, if you excel at organizing and conveying facts, a polished, formal approach will be the best way to achieve your objectives.

Method

Note: Two or more methods may be combined if time and resources allow.

Speech without audiovisual aids:

- effective when speaker is comfortable and a good communicator
- inexpensive and relatively quick to prepare
- less vulnerable to technical complications
- allows for more personal speaker-audience interaction: lights can be left on, speaker may be able to move around – this fosters a closer relationship with the audience

Speech with audience participation:

- enjoyable for most audiences, especially in long presentations
- promotes a greater degree of learning and understanding
- useful when purpose is to entertain, inform and/or convince
- wide variety of options: asking questions, solving puzzles, sharing experiences, learning a physical skill, individually or in a group

Storytelling:

- entertaining and relaxing method of opening a presentation
- allows for a greater range of expression than conventional speechmaking (humour, props, visual aids)
- helps form a bond between speaker and audience, especially if story is from speaker's own experience

Humour and drama:

- makes a presentation more entertaining and memorable
- Practice! - a performance can easily lose its effectiveness with poor delivery
- as with other styles, use these elements only if appropriate to your topic
- humour can be extremely effective (the Internet is a gold mine for jokes, one-liners and funny stories on any topic)
- drama (re-enactments, demonstrations) offers a pleasant diversion to an audience expecting a dry speech

Audio-visual aids:

If properly used, audio-visual aids can be extremely effective. They engage more of the senses, increasing the audience's attention and retentiveness. Audio-visual aids can also offset a speaker's nervousness by diverting the audience's attention to "the show".

Audio-visual aids should be chosen with the following factors in mind:

- information you want to convey
- size of audience
- venue/environment
- equipment available
- time available to prepare
- budget

a. Microphones

The best advice concerning microphones is to speak in a normal voice.

Other hints:

- Many “pops” and other mouth noises can be solved by adjusting the microphone so that your voice will be directed more to its side than head-on
- It never hurts to ask, “Can you hear me at the back?” — be sure to watch and listen for the audience’s response and adjust accordingly

b. Flip charts

Flip charts are useful for displaying graphs and emphasizing details when speaking to a small group. This low-tech visual aid has several advantages:

- pages can be prepared in advance
- displays can be creative and colourful
- inexpensive
- portable
- no electricity required
- you can add details or new pages during the presentation

Tips for flip chart users:

- bring an easel and extra markers
- to prevent marker bleed-through, write only on every other page
- write big enough for everyone in the room to see
- don’t turn your back to the audience when referring to, or writing on the chart

c. Marker boards (white boards)

Marker boards also allow a speaker to visually reinforce important points.

- marker boards are particularly effective if used for only a few words or simple diagrams
- group ideas and items in no more than threes
- keep lettering big
- turn your back to the audience as little as possible
- bring your own markers and erasers

d. Overhead projectors

Overheads are more expensive and complicated than the previous aids, but vital if you need to get facts and ideas across to a large group. Transparencies for conventional projectors can easily be produced with a computer and laser printer. Another option is a laptop/overhead combination, which allows you to project text, images, graphs and charts either as a series of stills or partially animated visuals.

- limit text on transparencies to seven lines and seven words per line
- search the CSC Web site for slides, graphs and other material to convert to transparencies

- if you have limited computer resources or time, many print shops can prepare transparencies for you
- practise with the projector before you present, preferably in the venue
- familiarize yourself with the layout of the venue (Where are the outlets and light switches? Will you need extension cords? Where is the screen?)
- be sure the print is large enough for all of the audience to read
- “animate” your presentation by writing on your transparencies with coloured markers

There are two disadvantages to using an overhead projector:

1) You have to dim the lights. This reduces your connection to the audience.

- leave on as many lights as possible to allow you to see the audience, gauge reactions and respond to questions immediately
- stand near the screen or projector light so you don't “disappear”

2) It elevates the noise level in the room, which may drown out the sound of your voice or distract audience members.

- raise your voice while the machine is on and talk to your audience, not the screen

e. PowerPoint presentations

PowerPoint (PP) presentations provide a much richer visual experience than overheads. Presentations can be easily adapted to show a variety of visual images such as video clips, graphic designs, and animated objects. The sequence of the images can also be timed. PP presentations have a great emotional impact and can range from simple to fancy - creativity is your only limitation.

- carefully organize and coordinate PowerPoint slides to reinforce your presentation
- make sure the right equipment is available and in working order
- arrive early to set up your presentation and check equipment
- most audio-visual production houses can help you produce your presentation
- clipart, graphs and written information can be converted into handouts
- dim rather than turn off the lights to keep your connection with the audience

If you need help getting started, a general [Speakers Bureau PowerPoint](#) presentation can be found on the CSC Web site. You may use it as is, or you can modify it to better suit your presentation needs. For help with specific topics, you may wish to contact the [Speakers Bureau](#) directly.

f. Props and displays

Props use two or more of the audience's senses to reinforce your message, particularly if props can be passed around. This is an excellent way to make a dry subject entertaining and memorable.

- props can be used for audience participation during the presentation
- using props during Q&A can inspire and focus questions
- display the item(s) before and after a presentation to let audience members get a closer look

To help you with your display, you may wish to consult CSC's Public Affairs and Parliamentary Relations Sector which loans audio-visual and exhibit materials to help staff with upcoming presentation and conference needs. For more information, you may wish to contact the [CSC Publications Unit](#).

g. Video presentations

A well-made video is often much more effective in bringing the realities of corrections to life. When using a video while presenting:

- keep the lights on so the audience stays alert and to observe their reactions
- make sure all audience members have a clear view of the set and can hear the sound
- ensure that your screen is large enough for all audience members to see
- pause, stop and rewind the video to emphasize points
- ask the audience questions or give them background information before and/or after the video
- consider replaying the video once you have discussed it so the audience can view it more analytically

The Speakers Bureau Video is an excellent resource if you are considering using video in part of your presentation. This video was developed to inform the public of the different aspects of the criminal justice system. It contains 5 ten-minute presentations and is available in both official languages on VHS or DVD. To order copies, please e-mail us at bureau@csc-scc.gc.ca.

Other CSC videos are also available from the [Video page](#) of the CSC Web site.

Other videos may also be available on specific subject matters such as women offenders, aboriginal offenders etc. To enquire regarding videos of a specific subject matter, you may wish to contact the OPI (office of primary interest).

4. Writing Your Presentation

Opening

Opening words capture the audience's attention and lead them into the presentation.

Introduce the speaker

If you are not going to be introduced, introduce yourself. Your audience will be more receptive if they feel they "know" you a bit and if they realize you are speaking from a background of preparation, knowledge and experience.

- tell your audience your name and position/title — you may want to use audio-visual aids for reinforcement
- mention your academic and professional qualifications
- give a brief description of yourself, listing interesting qualifications, particularly if they are related to your topic
- use humour if appropriate to the situation

Introduce the topic

Always begin with the exact title of your presentation. Draw the audience in by clarifying why you are speaking to them about this subject at this time.

- assure the audience that you understand their particular interest and need for more information on the subject
- if you can promise them new or surprising facts, tell them this

- define the focus of your subject so you don't disappoint or mislead your audience (state areas where there is no new information; acknowledge that the subject is vast and that you can only address a specific area)

Body

- contains main points (three to five points are optimal)
- each point is followed by a statement of fact and supporting material

Conclusion

- reviews and/or summarizes main points
- memorable (inspirational, reassuring, most important fact) statement based on central purpose of presentation

5. Practice

Practice your presentation before you deliver it – several times if possible. This is particularly important if you are using visual aids.

- practice in front of one or more persons
- if you will be using a microphone or any audio-visual equipment, practice with it at least once
- if possible, try out the equipment in the venue beforehand
- if you have several audio-visual items to juggle or are unfamiliar with any of the technology, bring someone to help you set it up, run it, and troubleshoot for you

6. Overcoming the Jitters

Every speaker experiences some degree of stage fright and can benefit from remembering the following about public speaking:

- feeling nervous before – even during – a speech is normal and actually helpful: adrenaline energizes you
- interpret your nerves as a sign that you care about your topic, audience and doing well
- recognize that most of your audience wants you to succeed
- remember you are better prepared than anyone else in the room to handle the topic
- think of the information and expertise from the audience as useful, not threatening
- focus on your purpose for speaking, not on the words you say
- take your time
- all public speaking experiences better prepare you for your next venture
- a good conclusion, Q&A period, or wrap-up can redeem an otherwise disappointing presentation

Above all: prepare, prepare, prepare - and then rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! With practice and preparation, you will deliver a winning presentation.

7. Questions and Answers

Improve your odds

Question and answer (Q&A) sessions may seem daunting, but in fact they are invaluable for clarifying or correcting wrong impressions the audience may have inadvertently picked up during your presentation. Just as with presentations, preparation is a vital tool to answer questions with ease and confidence. To prepare for the question and answer session, try to anticipate:

- what questions might be raised
- material the audience is interested in but was outside the focus of your presentation
- the expected attitude of the audience (e.g. hostile, friendly, curious or confused)

The best way to prepare yourself and build your confidence is to take the time to write down as many possible questions as you can think of, and then practice answering them prior to the event.

To get more ideas of possible questions, ask others to think of likely queries and practice answering them. You can also prepare by:

- bringing printed material (pamphlets and other handouts), business cards, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and Internet addresses for the audience's further information
- practicing the answers to difficult questions
- remembering that although there will be some surprises, most of the questions will be less difficult than those you would ask yourself

Additional tips for Q&A sessions

- if you did not hear the question or understand it, ask the person to repeat it
- keep calm even if your audience is hostile or upset
- always respect the questioner, even if you do not like the question or the manner in which it is posed; he or she may have a very good reason for being upset
- do not react negatively if someone asks you a question that you feel you already answered during your presentation or in response to a previous question; they may not have heard or understood the information previously presented
- honesty is the best policy; if you don't know the answer to something, admit it and offer to contact the person later with the information

8. End on a High Note

Even in a Q&A session, you will usually have the last word. Use the opportunity to summarize your position or stress what you think is the most important point of your presentation. This will be your last chance to impress, persuade or inform your audience - use it to your advantage. Be positive, concise, and clear.

9. Post-Presentation Follow-up

Following the event, review your performance to identify what you did well and what could be improved. If possible, get feedback from the audience or observers. Many speakers request that the audience fill out evaluation forms, which provide the speaker with comments, ideas and suggestions. These are especially useful if the speaker will present the same topic again to a different audience or to the same group in the future on another topic.