

Preparing Your Presentation

Preparing and delivering a successful presentation is a three part process:

I. Understanding Your Topic.

Review the program publicity and/or the description of your topic you received when you agreed to present. This is the information your audience will expect to receive. You may of course cover additional material as well, but do not neglect the main points that have attracted the audience to the session.

Be sure you understand the level of your session. That is, whether your session is a basic one, designed to cover fundamental concepts, skills and practices, or an intermediate or advanced session designed to address the topic at a more advanced level. Plan your presentation and written material accordingly.

Identify the length of your session. In consultation with your session coordinator, the session moderator and your co-presenters, agree on a logical division of the subject matter and the available time between the session participants.

Based on your knowledge and experience and the session description, identify the most important concepts, practices, skills and information members of your audience should take away from your presentation. Plan and arrange your presentation to ensure you convey this key information and achieve the educational objectives of the session.

II. Preparing Your Written Material.

Written materials should not only form the basis of your presentation, but should function for audience members and others as a lasting resource that can be consulted long after the program is over. This means a well-organized, narrative text manuscript with appropriate legal citations, accompanied by applicable forms, checklists, sample documents and other practice aids you have identified.

III. Planning and Delivering Your Presentation.

With your objectives identified and your written material completed you are ready to plan and then deliver your presentation. Here are some reliable rules for your presentation:

1. *Consider the Best Method of Achieving Your Educational Objectives.* While you may opt to deliver your presentation in a traditional lecture format, you can feel free to be creative and consider other alternatives if you are comfortable with them. Consider case studies, audience interaction, effective visual aids, role playing, panel discussions and other techniques as possible features to incorporate into your presentation. If you have co-presenters, work with them to ensure your plans coordinate with those of other panel members. The most important consideration is effective delivery of your key points in an engaging manner.

2. *Plan the Beginning and Conclusion of Your Presentation.* First and final impressions are important. While it is generally not a good idea to memorize your entire presentation, you should know exactly what you plan to say at its beginning and end.
3. *Don't Delay or Digress.* You will have a limited amount of time to effectively convey your message. Move rapidly to the substance of your presentation.
4. *Raise, Rather Than Lower, Expectations.* Humility is a virtue but your presentation is not the appropriate time to display it. Self-effacing statements minimizing your expertise will only cause your audience to wonder why they should listen to you. Speak with authority, letting your audience know what you're going to cover and why it's important.
5. *Provide Your Audience a Roadmap.* Don't let the audience guess how your presentation is going to unfold. At the beginning let them know the main points you intend to cover.
6. *Follow (but don't read) Your Written Material.* Your audience will expect your presentation to correspond to your written material. You must not read your materials, but you should adhere to their general organization and provide timely references to page numbers that correspond with the points you are making. If for any reason your presentation will not correspond with your materials, let the audience members know that.
7. *Emphasize Your Key Points.* Don't make the audience guess at the main points of your presentation. Underline and emphasize them throughout your talk.
8. *Be Practice-Oriented.* Don't let your presentation consist solely of abstract information. Include plenty of practice tips and examples. Tailor your presentation accordingly, and reference helpful practice aids, such as sample documents, forms, checklists, and resources you have included in your written material.
9. *Plan Your Time and Adhere to Your Time Limitations.* Be certain you cover all your principal points within the allotted time. Moreover, don't *exceed* your allotted time. To do so is discourteous to any speakers who follow you on the program.
10. *Use Good Presentation Techniques.* Use appropriate variations in voice cadence and volume to hold audience attention and provide emphasis. Speak clearly and directly to your audience, maintaining regular eye contact and accentuating your remarks with appropriate gestures.
11. *Use PowerPoint Where Appropriate.* Well conceived and executed PowerPoint slides will reinforce your message. Only use slides with which you are totally comfortable and reserve them for your most important or complex points. Slides should be of simple design and incorporate clear font size, type and color contrast.



12. *Highlight Any Ethical Issues.* If aspects of your topic raise issues of professional ethics, you should highlight these for your audience along with applicable rules.
13. *Respect Your Audience Members.* Don't be thoughtless in your choice of words, examples, or humor. Assume that your audience will be diverse and remember that your objective is to teach. Why risk needlessly offending any one of your students? Carefully scrutinize both your lecture and written material for stereotypes or other potentially offensive matter.
14. *Always Leave Time to Answer Questions.* Time should always be reserved at the end of your remarks or of the session as a whole to answer questions from the audience.
15. *Avoid Overt Promotion of Services* (for presenters from law firms). Let your expertise speak for yourself and your firm. Registrants invariably react poorly to anything they perceive as a sales pitch or self-promotion, and often demonstrate their unhappiness with negative comments on the session evaluation. Instead of telling them how much you know, tell them what you know. Giving registrants valuable information they can use always leaves the most positive impression of you and your firm.

Finally, Convey Enthusiasm and Interest. Your interest in and enthusiasm for your topic will be picked up by your audience. They will be interested because *you* are!