

PRESENTATION TIPS

1. Prepare Your Presentation Materials Well In Advance

BE PREPARED:

- Organize your presentation well ahead of time.
- Keep it simple.
- Have back-ups – video demos, simulated walk-throughs, etc.

PREPARE FOR YOUR GIVEN TIME SLOT: Make sure you can stay within your time limit.

PREPARE KEY POINTS:

- Pinpoint the essence of your topic.
- Structure your presentation around 3 to 5 main points.
- Start with a clear outline in mind. Frame your points around a narrative. Tell a story.
- Plan your time wisely in terms of introducing yourself and your concept (elevator pitch), giving some context and background research, discussing your design criteria, implementation process and testing, and showing your prototype.
- The main point of the presentation is to show the working prototype of your project. Showing your project is key. Spend most of your time on this.

PREPARE VISUAL AIDS to structure your talk and prompt your key points:

- Create clear illustrations and easy-to-read slides. When in doubt, use images.
- Visualize abstract concepts. Try to be as concrete as possible. Explain the visuals you use. Use Metaphors where appropriate. Use slides to show the basics. Simplicity is key.
- Don't clutter your slides with too much text. Don't be wordy. Don't use complete sentences or paragraphs. Condense your use of text. Use keywords, not lengthy phrases or sentences.
- Don't use too many slides – use as few slides/idea as possible.
- Make sure the text you use is legible, with no typos. Use beautiful fonts.
- Don't scroll through web pages. Create discrete "screens" for your support materials. Don't use overlapping windows.
- Don't expect to read from slides, just use them as a springboard for what you're saying.
- Deconstruct technical material for the non-technical audience with diagrams, user scenarios, explanations.
- Provide a visual prompt or index of some sort on your slides that shows the structure of your presentation so that you know where you are in your presentation and you can keep the audience with you.
- Maintain a consistent visual identity across all slides. No cheesy transitions.
- The style, attitude and approach of your presentation should fit the theme of your thesis project.

PREPARE A LIVE DEMO

- Be prepared to demonstrate your prototype, show working examples, etc.
- Make sure your demo works.
- For complicated or large installations, consider creating a demo or walk-through video covering the key elements of your prototype. This could be used as a back-up if all else fails.
- For small, table-top projects, consider using a camera to project the details on a screen

PREPARE BACK-UPS (such as video demos, diagrams, etc.) in case your live demo fails. Have a Plan B.

2. Rehearse Your Presentation In Advance

REHEARSE, REHEARSE, REHEARSE ahead of time using your equipment and your visual aides.

- Practice your presentation out loud with a friend. Don't just go through the motions silently. Practice slide transitions.
- When you rehearse your presentation, use practice run-throughs of live demos to make sure you can keep it brief and stay within your focus and timeframe.
- Time your points within your talk so that they flow easily together.
- Be well rehearsed but not robotic. Give yourself time to improvise.
- Know your timeframe and work within it.

3. On the Day of the Presentation ...

ARRIVE EARLY: Get there well ahead of time.

CHECK EQUIPMENT:

- Make sure you bring the equipment and software you need.
- Make sure your equipment works. Check volume levels. Bookmark urls.

CHECK THE ROOM: Find the place where you'll present. If the stage is lit, find your light on the stage and stay within it.

BE WELL RESTED.

- Get enough sleep the night before.
- Take a shower.

DRESS APPROPRIATELY:

- Wear something appropriate and comfortable, something in sync with your project and audience.
- When in doubt, no PJs, dress up, not down.

TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE. NO GUM.

HAVE FOOD & WATER: Go to the bathroom. Eat ahead of time. Get yourself some water.

4. Get Your Presentation off to a Good Start

BE CONFIDENT!

- Be enthusiastic.
- Convey love and excitement for your project. Show your investment in your project. Your Passion.
- Avoid nervousness. Don't panic. Don't fidget. Don't touch yourself. Don't cry. Don't play with your hair. Don't chew gum. Don't watch the clock. Don't stare at the screen.
- Be calm. Relax. Breathe. Stand with good posture.
- If it helps reduce anxiety, memorize your first sentence or at least the gist of what you're going to say first, and your conclusion.

TELL THE AUDIENCE WHO YOU ARE:

- Start off by saying your name and the title of your project.
- Look at the audience. Start off with a bang! Have a good first sentence to get you going. Use an attention grabber, such as a personal story or video clip.
- Mention any contributors by name and say what they did – ex. Graphics, programming, mentoring, etc.

PROVIDE A BRIEF PROJECT OVERVIEW:

- Give your elevator pitch up front.
- Set up the story you're going to tell and make sure your points relate to the storyline.
- Set expectations ahead of time. Make a clear statement of your intentions, goals.
- Clarify your concept and focus within the first 30 seconds.
- Set the comfort level, tell them when/if they can interrupt.
- Explain general things first, then elaborate with details.

ANCHOR YOUR PROJECT before deconstructing it.

- After a brief overview, you could start in any number of places such as with a project demo, or with your background research and inspiration, or with a personal story that frames your project, etc.
- Decide the best place to start your presentation so that your audience is with you from the beginning.
- Have a clear outline. Make your audience aware of it.
- Put your presentation in narrative form, tell a story, describe the path you've taken, define the problem you're trying to solve or area you're exploring, give a rationale, a reason, a why, a history, tell the audience why the project is of interest, make it personal if appropriate.
- Repetition helps - Tell us what you're going to say, say it, then tell us what you said.

MAKE THE AUDIENCE FEEL THEY'RE LEARNING SOMETHING

- Introduce them to what's new or unique or timely about your project.
- Tell them the problem you're solving, and why it's a problem, then show them how you've solved it.
- Show your process, your phases of completeness.
- Particularly with Art projects, show your preparatory studies, your trial and error process.

PROJECT YOUR VOICE:

- Make sure you project your voice so that everyone can hear you.
- Speak loudly and clearly. Don't talk too fast or too slowly. Don't swear or pace. Don't mumble or swallow your words.

- Avoid speaking in a monotone voice. Avoid saying “ahh,” “mmm,” “like,” “you know,” etc.
- Don’t start sentences with “So ...”
- Avoid jargon. Define technical and/or complicated terms.
- If you tend to speak softly, consider using a microphone.

EXPLAIN YOUR DEMO IN ADVANCE:

- Before you give a demo of your prototype, explain briefly what the audience will be seeing.

HAVE FUN: Use humor where appropriate. Be light. Be alert. Set the tone. Be yourself.

5. Engage Your Audience – Seduce the Audience

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE:

- Are they technical? Conceptual? If not sure ahead of time, ask at the beginning of your presentation.
- Don’t assume they know the kinds of things you’ve learned at ITP.
- Anyone or reasonable intelligence should be able to understand you.

ESTABLISH EYE CONTACT with the audience and maintain it throughout. Read the audience & adjust accordingly.

SHOW YOUR EXCITEMENT ABOUT YOUR PROJECT.

- Smile.
- Be energetic, but avoid excessive mannerisms. Use appropriate body language to express excitement.
- Don’t stand motionlessly – move about the stage as you talk. Tell jokes or funny anecdotes if you feel comfortable telling them.

INTERACT WITH THE AUDIENCE

- Time-permitting, ask for questions from the audience.
- When appropriate, ask the audience questions. Poll the audience.
- When appropriate, provide handouts or pass around things to look at related to your presentation to further engage your audience.
- Ask them to try out your prototype themselves.

DON’T READ NOTES OR SLIDES. Use slides as talking points only.

- Know your topic inside and out.
- Remember, you know your project better than anyone else.

KEEP IT INTERESTING

- Don’t ramble. Stay on target.
- Move around. Gesture. Don’t stay frozen behind a podium.
- Use a mix of images, video, sound, live demonstrations, performance, props.
- Use metaphors, analogies, common themes.
- For spoken points use visual aides: Show illustrations, charts, objects.
- Change the tempo, mix up the pace as well as the type of media support you use.
- Have an element of surprise, keep them guessing to keep them listening.

6. Keep Your Focus While Presenting

FOCUS: Keep your comments targeted on your key points throughout the presentation.

- Be consistent. Make sure you convey your main idea(s). Present the essence of your project.
- Weed out extraneous comments. Don’t give too many examples. Don’t use too many details.
- State your important points clearly and often. Be concise, clear, and focused.

PACE YOURSELF:

- Pace your talk. Pause from time to time. Don’t appear rushed.
- Rhythm, sequencing, pacing, timing are all important.
- Don’t go too fast or too slowly. Don’t rush, but don’t run over your time.
- Vary your speech tone and speed. Don’t be too loud or too quiet.
- Maintain a flow by giving a little information at a time.

PROVIDE A CONTEXT for your comments:

- Describe the role of your project in the bigger picture.
- Include counterpoints where appropriate.
- Tell them what you’re going to say, say it, then tell them what you just said

TELL A STORY:

- Your presentation should have a narrative arc.
- Personalize your comments and use anecdotes where appropriate.
- Chunk your comments into conceptual units.
- Relate everything back to your central points and narrative structure.

MONITOR THE AUDIENCE:

- During your presentation, check the audience to see if they are with you and adjust your talk accordingly.
- Be flexible. Respond to the audience appropriately.

KEEP GOING: If problems come up, technical or otherwise, make light of them and just keep going.

- Don't apologize. Motor on despite yourself. Improvise.
- Have a back-up plan ready.

BE CLEAR: Make your opinions clear. Summarize. Condense. Simplify.

7. End Your Presentation with a Strong, Clear Summary

HAVE A CONCLUSION.

- Show how you have solved the problem(s) you've addressed with your project.
- If your solution did not work as expected, tell the audience what happened and what you've learned.
- Discuss any unanticipated consequences you've discovered and why they're important, interesting, etc.
- Outline your next steps.

IDEALLY, END ON A POSITIVE NOTE SOLICIT FEEDBACK.

- Listen patiently to feedback.
- Give concise answers to questions.
- Wait for questions or comments even if they are not forthcoming.
- Address answers to the whole audience.
- Come prepared with extra materials to help illustrate answers to questions you expect to get.

BE READY FOR DIFFICULT QUESTIONS or comments from the audience.

- Remain calm when responding to hostile or awkward questions.
- Don't get defensive.
- Thank people for their input, smile, and move on.
- If things get really tense, tell the person who's giving you a hard time that you'll be happy to continue the discussion after the presentation is over.