

# *Dr. Taylor's Tips For Effective Oral Presentations*

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## *I What You Present*

1. Focus on the critical points. You can amplify during the question period.
2. Content should be self-explanatory or should be explained.
3. Define specialized terminology that you believe will not be known to your audience.
4. Announce your graphics.
5. Slides should be visually interesting but not overwhelming:
  - Use bulleted points and parallel constructions [test 1...test 2]
  - Use an Arial font, at least 16 point, **bolded**
  - For tables/figures, make sure the reproduction is clear and dark
  - Don't overcrowd but do fill the frame
  - Don't overdo multiple colours & whizzing objects. Using two colours based on the same primary (red, yellow, blue) will disadvantage viewers who are colour blind.
6. Principle of emphasis: place the most important material first and come back to it at the end.
7. Use headings and repetition to make your organization clear.
8. Use numerical listings [Our first experiment...].
9. Use wording that establishes a hierarchy of importance [Our most important result...].

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## *II How to Present*

### *1. Here are the things I consider:*

- what is the physical space like [size, shape, seating, lighting, acoustics]? Where am I standing within that space?
- microphone? what kind [podium, stem, clip-on, whole area wired]?
- equipment? how good is it?
- can I go in ahead of time to familiarize myself?

## ***2. Here are the things I do to prepare:***

- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. Time yourself.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid caffeine, but do hydrate with water.
- Practice safe redundancy—bring backups of your presentation.
- Bring physical aids [throat lozenges, tissues, water].
- Dress comfortably but professionally.

## ***3. Here is how I “perform”:***

- Just before you go on, breathe deeply and slowly a few times. Open your throat and breathe from the diaphragm. This both oxygenates you and strengthens your voice.
- Begin S-L-O-W-L-Y. You will naturally speed up as you speak, especially if you are nervous.
- Speak to the whole room. Make eye contact [or pretend to if the audience area is darkened].
- Project your voice to the back of the room or auditorium.
- Use your body—but don’t fidget with jewellery or clothing.

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## ***A Few More Tips on Oral Presentation***

Keep the intro short. Grab the audience’s attention, tell them what you’re going to do, and then get right into things while they (and you) are at their freshest. “Taking command” in this way also helps you psychologically—you quickly get past the inevitable nervousness you’ve been feeling.

For a long presentation, change your subject or mode of delivery every 20 minutes or so. That is, make sure you have distinct and distinctive sections, so if people don’t get it all, they’ll get some useful blocks.

Always end at the end. That is, if you’re running out of time, skip to the end.

If someone asks a question, repeat it loudly and clearly—many in the audience will not have heard it.

Some wag once noted that the big advance of Powerpoint is that it lets the audience sleep in the dark.