

GIVING and GETTING EFFECTIVE PAPER PRESENTATIONS

(See Presentation Models on the DBC website for videos of past presentations.)

I. PRESENTER'S ROLE: The overall purpose of your presentation is to teach your colleagues. Whatever passage and topic you choose for your research, aim to provide your listeners with new information that will stimulate in them a deeper understanding of the text. In planning, keep in mind these three main factors: your material, your audience, and your context (in this case, a 5-minute presentation followed by a Q&A period).

Preparing your paper for presentation. Be clear, be explicit, be brief. Five minutes go fast! Therefore, in the first paragraph of your paper, let your listeners know the essential content of your research, the passage it relates to, and how your research expands understanding of the text. Then stay with the main points throughout the body of your paper. (Details can come in the Q&A session following each panel.)

Practicing for your paper presentation. Plan to deliver your paper, not simply read it. That means speaking slowly, clearly, and expressively so your audience can understand. It also means knowing your paper well and making it flow smoothly so that you can look up from it often to make eye contact with your audience.

Simple tricks can help. Double-space your paper and use a large, easy-to-read font. Bold or otherwise highlight portions of your paper to signal where you plan to look up at your audience and to help you find your place again when you look down. Keep your diction simple and avoid tongue-twisters. But nothing is more important to delivering a paper effectively than practice.

Time yourself as you read your paper aloud—again and again. Read it in front of friends. If you get stuck or stumble, rewrite the offending sentences. If your rehearsal audience seems puzzled at any point, revise that material. Then read your paper aloud again and again, until every sentence flows naturally from your mouth within 5 minutes. (More tips on style below.)

II. AUDIENCE'S ROLE: Even when not presenting, you play a crucial role in the presentation and determining its quality. As a listener, demonstrate your interest: make eye contact with the presenter, nod to show your understanding or appreciation, listen closely and take notes so you can ask informed, pertinent, and helpful questions during the Q&A period. Putting a presenter at ease can go a long way to ensuring an effective presentation.

Tips for saying a lot in a short time

- Keep your diction simple and bold: eliminate the multi-syllabic Latinate words and phrases (*provide, make available, observe, distinguish, perceive, demonstrate, illustrate, exterminate, eradicate*) and take up their quick Anglo-Saxon synonyms (*give, see, show, kill*). This will make it easy on your tongue as well as your listeners' ears, and it will save valuable seconds in a 5-minute time period.
- Keep your writing alive and active: eliminate all adverbs. Yes, all of them! Eliminate prepositional phrases, too. Change "Some of our more liberal lawmakers sought an increase in the amount of funding allocated for animal conservation across the globe" to "Liberal lawmakers sought to increase international animal conservation funding" and you save valuable time without sacrificing valuable content.
- Finally, consider using a simple visual aid or brief handout to provide your audience with details too time-consuming to communicate orally. A poster or handout might include a bulleted list of your main points, or a statistical chart or graph showing important comparisons at a glance, or even a map if geography is an issue.