

# Presentation Skills: A “How To” Guide

If you’re new to presenting or even if you’ve presented on a regular basis, you may want to review this information to help you further polish your public speaking skills.

## Four Ways to Begin a Presentation

The introduction to your presentation is what sets the stage for everything that follows. Think of the introduction as the “hook” to attract your participants’ interest. You have one chance to grab their attention and that’s at the beginning of the presentation. You can use a:

- Story
- Quotation or statement of fact
- Activity
- Joke

## The Power of Stories

Stories are often the best introduction because everyone likes a good story and will remember the story long after they’ve forgotten everything else you talked about. Stories about yourself create a kinship with your audience. They can identify with you, especially when you tell stories that aren’t flattering about yourself. Everyone makes mistakes and when you can share those with an audience, they will more easily identify with you and be more receptive to the content you present.

## Statements or Quotations

Statements and quotations work well as an introduction especially when the statement or quote is unusual or gives your audience a reason to stop and think. Statistics can be very effective. It’s critical that the information you are using is still valid. When you use statistics as an opening consider the source. You want your source to be considered credible so that your audience is “hooked”. Below are some web sites that provide quotations on every imaginable subject:

[The Foundation for a Better Life](#)

[The Quotations Page](#)

[Quoteland.com](#)

[Brainy Quotes](#)

[Wisdom Quotes](#)

## Doing an Activity

Activities are a great way to engage your audience immediately. Activities can include:

- A short quiz to test their home ownership knowledge (true false, multiple choice). Use the results to give away a “valuable” prize.
- Break people up into groups and ask them to list what they want to learn or what questions they have. Post the information so that all can see it. Then as you cover the content refer back to the question or idea expressed.
- Ask questions and have people raise their hands to acknowledge their agreement.
  - How many of you would like to own your own home before the summer is over?
  - How many of you have been told there’s no way you could own a home right now?
  - How many of you think your credit bureau information is accurate?

## The Art of Telling Jokes

Jokes may seem like a great idea but often backfire. Frankly, jokes don’t work for most people. Unless you’re very talented in this arena, don’t even attempt them. You may unintentionally offend somebody. Your joke might be a groaner, and that’s even worse – is the rest of your presentation going to be a groaner too?

When told poorly the audience may disengage from the process and it’s very difficult to win them back. Humorous stories can work well if you can tell them effectively and with brevity. Remember... a good story is like a good joke – get to the punch line quickly.

## Preparing for Your Event

A successful presentation is about preparation. Winging it only works for a select few and isn’t advised as a general rule for presentation preparation. Use the following guidelines to help you prepare for a successful event:

1. Become very familiar with your material. Start by writing out a word for word script. Then begin the process of revising the script so that it sounds conversational. Take out all unnecessary information to keep the content snappy and interesting. Once you’ve got the content where you want it begin rehearsing it out loud. The goal is to become “conversationally comfortable” with the content.
2. Once you’re very familiar with your content, transfer the major ideas and points to note cards. These cards should only have phrases, not sentences. You may want to consider memorizing your transitional content phrases so that they flow naturally and easily.
3. Practice standing up and speaking your content out loud. It has been shown that if you only practice in your head your presentation will take

25% more time when you deliver it. The best case scenario is to practice your presentation in the room you will actually be presenting. If this isn't possible, find a room that is approximately the same size. Deliberately practice talking more slowly so that when you're in front of the group you can "remind" yourself to s-l-o-w d-o-w-n. Rehearse your posture, gestures and movements so that they look natural and make sense according to the content you're discussing.

## **Managing Your Event**

Prior to starting your session, take the time to do the following to ensure that your event is successful:

- Introduce yourself and others you're working with
- Explain to your audience how the session will work and the event timing of:
  - Question/answer session – when it will occur
  - Break – when, how long
  - Bathroom and smoking area location
  - Food/drinks location
  - Request for more information card and location of other information
  - Give away item
- Use the "parking lot" to handle off the topic issues/questions that often come up. The parking lot can be flip chart paper where you write these off topic questions and issues that emerge during a session. Prior to the end of the session you address each question or issue. If you use this method to stay on track it is extremely important that you address these questions and issues.
- Be available before the session, during the break and after the session to answer questions and chat
- Clean up the room and leave everything as you found it

## **Using Handouts**

Handouts are a great tool to help your learners remember salient content or provide resources to help them do more research or learn more about the topic.

When creating handouts, do the following:

1. Keep the information concise.
2. Make copies from an original printed copy.
3. Use white space so that the information is easy to read and is pleasing to the eye.
4. Write your content at about the eighth grade level so that all participants can understand your information.
5. Edit your handout content and then ask someone else to review it. Ask your reviewer to read the handout for content clarity, usage and grammar.

6. Include your contact information on the handout rather than as a separate item such as a business card. If the card and information get separated you may lose a prospect inadvertently.
7. If you're speaking to a bi-lingual audience have your handouts available in both languages.

When giving out handouts, do the following:

1. Hand out the information when you intend to review it. Don't give out handouts earlier than needed because people will look at them while you're talking and may not be paying attention to what you're saying.
2. Have enough handouts for everyone to have an individual copy.
3. Have someone assist in passing out handouts to speed up the process of getting everyone a copy of your handout.
4. Refrain from talking about the content of the handout until everyone has a copy.
5. Summarize the handout information rather than read it verbatim. Refer to some of the interesting points participants may want to review later. Reading the content verbatim will bore some participants, confuse others and some may be insulted that you're "reading" to them.

## **Relaxation Techniques**

Use relaxation exercises as a way to gain control of your emotions, breathing and nerves.

### **Shake out the Tension**

Stand with your feet 6 inches apart, arms hanging by your side with fingers unclenched. Gently shake each part of your body starting with your hands, then arms, shoulders, torso and legs. Shake out the tension. Rotate your shoulders forwards and then backwards. Rotate your head clockwise and then counterclockwise.

### **428 Breathing Technique**

Breathe in slowly for a count of 4.

Hold your breath for a count of 2.

Breathe out slowly for a count of 8.

### **Visualization Technique**

Find a private area where you won't be disturbed for 10-15 minutes. Close your eyes and focus your attention on your hands concentrating on how they feel as you imagine them becoming relaxed.

As the relaxation from you hands extends into your arms, shoulders, chest and legs, imagine yourself in a comfortable place. Maybe it's the beach, or sitting on your

back patio resting in your hammock, or listening to music. Immerse yourself in that setting. The more you can recall about that time, the smells, and shapes and sounds the more real it becomes.

Using those feelings now picture yourself watching television and seeing yourself on the screen. Look at your cool and calm demeanor while giving your presentation. Notice what it is about you on the screen that lets you know you're relaxed and comfortable.

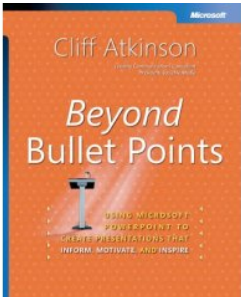
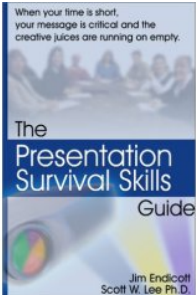
Drift into the screen and experience what it feels like to be speaking in that way using the same feelings you had when you started your visualization session. When you have done this for a few minutes, open your eyes. You will feel refreshed and alert.

As with any skill, it may take you some time to become proficient using this visualization technique.

For more information: [http://www.uncommon-knowledge.co.uk/public\\_speaking/exercise.html](http://www.uncommon-knowledge.co.uk/public_speaking/exercise.html)

## Books

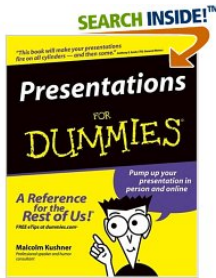
Books are still one of the easiest and best resources you can use to learn more about any given topic. Below are some books you may want to pick up from your library or add to your own collection.

Title	Author	Comments
<p data-bbox="230 1003 511 1035"><b>Beyond Bullet Points</b></p> 	Cliff Atkinson	If you design your own Power Point presentations but aren't happy with your results, this book is definitely for you. The author provides templates to make using Power Point easy and shows you how to combine storytelling with this media to create compelling presentations.
<p data-bbox="230 1392 511 1455"><b>The Presentation Survival Skills Guide</b></p> 	Jim Endicott & Scott W. Lee	This book provides practical information about doing presentations. The authors provide a psychologist's perspective on how and why audiences learn, retain information and take action.

**Presentations for Dummies**

Malcolm Kushner

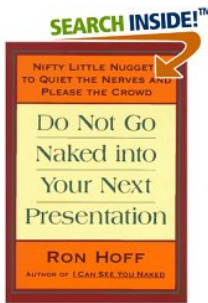
This book provides all the practical information you need for doing effective presentations. This book provides cheat sheets that you can tear out and use. It covers absolutely every aspect of the presentation process. Even if you're not a dummy... this book will prove invaluable!



**Do Not Go Naked into Your Next Presentation**

Ron Hoff

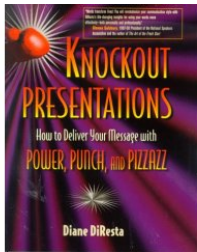
This is a quick read that is guaranteed to help get through your public speaking events with flying colors! The author uses stories and quick pointers to explain concepts. Common sense information is provided, and you will have fun reading it to boot!



**Knockout Presentations: How to Deliver Your Message with Power, Punch and Pizzazz**

Diane Diresta

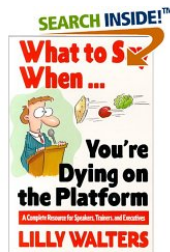
If you're looking for a book that puts everything in one place and really helps you with every aspect of preparing for and delivering a great presentation, then you may want to check out this book. The author provides checklists at the end of each chapter so that you can verify that you've done everything you're supposed to before making a presentation.



**What to Say When... You're Dying on the Platform: A Complete Resource for Speakers, Trainers and Executives**

Lilly Walters

This guide gives you every possible scenario of things that can go wrong during a presentation and then provides creative ways to prevent it, what to do about it and what to say about it.



## Want More Information?

**For more information** about our services, contact us at 303-426-1027 or 800- 433-3755.

**For questions**, please email us at [questions@intouchtoday.com](mailto:questions@intouchtoday.com).

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