

RESC 098 TECHNOLOGY EQUALS PROGRESS

Preparing a good presentation

The goal of any presentation is to communicate with your audience. The matter you wish to convey may be an idea or some information, but ultimately, you wish to accomplish two things:

*have your audience **understand and appreciate** the content of your talk.*

There are common misconceptions about giving talks. Their purpose is not to impress people with your use of jargon or to flaunt your facility of PowerPoint. Moreover, talks take a lot of time to prepare—no matter how well you know your material.

All talks should have a logical structure—just like your writing. The easiest way to develop this structure is to decide where you want to end and then work backwards. Think about the ‘pieces’ that you will need to tell your audience so as to lay the groundwork for the ending. Then come up with a natural sequence in which to present these pieces.

If one particular piece is missed by your audience, the effectiveness of your talk could be lost. Unfortunately, this happens quite often. Audience members can miss a specific point that can then derail their appreciation for the rest of your talk. To avoid this, make use of *transitions*. At the end each section of your talk:

- pause and face your audience;
- briefly summarise the key point(s) of the previous section;
- describe how your ultimate goal requires another piece (the next section);
- move onto that next section.

Your Opening

The first 1-2 minutes set the scene for your presentation. It is your first interaction with your audience, and the part of the talk in which you are most in control. As such, you should know *exactly* your opening few sentences.

What to AVOID:

- Do not repeat your name and title of your talk.
- Do not begin with a slide.
- Do not begin with a joke.
- Do not include an outline.

What to do:

- Begin by talking directly to your audience *without* any visual aids.
- Know your opening sentence and do not be swayed to change it.

(cont.)

General Advice

- Giving a talk is a form of story-telling.
- Don't be fooled by style over substance.
- Avoid jargon. Introduce terms and concepts only as needed, and beware of spending time talking about something that is only peripheral to your subject.
- Do not use fancy PowerPoint features.

Preparing your slides

- Avoid slides that simply outline your talk.
- Select a background that really remains in the background (simpler is better).
- Avoid banners and footers; they only serve to take up valuable real estate.
- Figures and tables require additional time to work through. Don't rush through these slides.
- Use a pointer to guide the audience's attention.

Final Advice

- Practice, and revise
- PRACTICE, AND REVISE
- PRACTICE, ONCE AGAIN

Preparation for class on the week beginning December 2:

During our classes, everyone will have the chance to practice their opening 3-4 minutes of their talk. By then, you should have decided on the specific goal of your presentation (i.e., what you will want your audience to *understand* and *appreciate*). While you still may be working on the final details, you will know enough to open your talk.

Come to class prepared to give a practice of your first 3-4minutes.