HBS Guide to Presentations

Developing the Presentation

- Identify the purpose for your presentation (to persuade, to sell, to inform, etc.).
- Identify the audience of your presentation; consider the audience's needs and interests
- Organize your information
    - Introduction—start with an attention getter. Outline the information you will cover.
    - Body—organize information logically. Develop transitions between topics/ideas and between presenters (if applicable).
    - Conclusion—Review your main points and develop a memorable conclusion. The audience is most likely to remember what you say last.
- Transitions between presenters should be planned; current speaker should summarize/conclude their section and pass the presentation to the next speaker
- Practice your presentation.

Creating Visuals for Presentations

- Use title, outline, transition and conclusion slides.
- Keep the design template very simple and businesslike. Do not use too many colors or fonts, which can be distracting.
- Limit slide content to one main idea per slide. Busy slides distract the audience from you, the presenter.
- Minimize text on slides. Slides are not notes or papers/articles.
- Use brief short phrases or bullet points, not complete sentences, to highlight your ideas. Keep slides brief and the focus on you, the presenter.
- Use informative images, graphics and illustrations to illustrate your talking points, but limit them to one or two per slide. Audiences prefer and remember images (pictures/charts/graphs/map) more than text.
- Remember the ingredients of a great slide—background, color, text and images—and use them effectively.
- Do not insert graphics for graphics' sake (and be leery of using clip art or uninformative graphics; it's ok to have a few slides without images).
- Use 24-point or larger fonts for ease of reading.
- Use a light background and a dark font color for readability and contrast. White or red lettering on a dark background are very difficult to read.
- In organizing a slide, remember that audiences read them from left to right, top to bottom, so make your logical points in the same direction, ending with the strongest point in the lower right of the slide.
- Use hyperlinks to incorporate illustrations, graphs, and videos into the presentation, rather than have them as stand-alone illustrations.
- Place sources of information or citations at the bottom of the slide, either on the left or in the center of the footer. Use this electronic link to view the university copyright and intellectual property guidelines https://www5.stcloudstate.edu/Policies/SCSU/Viewer.aspx?id=128 and for information about the potential consequences of plagiarism, see the **SCSU Academic Integrity Policy** at https://www5.stcloudstate.edu/Policies/SCSU/Viewer.aspx?id=6

Delivery in a Presentation, in Person

- Project enthusiasm, interest and confidence. **Smile.**
- Use appropriate volume and projection. Avoid speaking too quickly or too slowly, too loudly or too softly. Use natural inflections (avoid monotone).
- Pronounce words clearly and correctly; avoid dropping ends to words (ex: talkin vs talking) and using slang (like, stuff, you guys etc.).
- Avoid filler words (um, er, ah, etc.).
- Make eye contact with audience.
- Do not read from your notes or your slides; use them to recall your talking points. Know your information thoroughly so you can speak knowledgably.
- Use natural gestures and body language; avoid distracting movements (rocking, tapping pen or paper etc.).
- Do not turn your back on your audience to read from or point out your slide.
- Do not, if at all possible, stand behind a podium or desk when presenting.
- In group presentations, let the student who is presenting take a position to the front and side of the screen, and the other team members should stand off to the far side until it is their turn.

Using Visuals in a Presentation

- Stand to the side of the screen facing the audience. Never stand in front of the screen to block the view and create a shadow.
- Use the on screen icon or a laser pointer, not your hand, when pointing at something on the slide.
- Use a remote control to pace your own slides, versus having someone click through for you. It is much smoother and less prone to error.
- Have your visual presentation available in multiple formats (a flash-drive, on a network drive, in a pdf) in case technical problems occur.

- **NOTE:** PowerPoint™ and Prezi are two of the most common forms of visual presentations. Most of the above guidelines also apply to other visual aids.

Appearance

- Your overall appearance should not be distracting to the audience. Try not to be remembered for your attire.
- Hair should be well-groomed and neat. No baseball hats.
- Clothes should be well-fitted, clean, in good condition, and wrinkle/lint free.
- Solid, dark, or neutral colors are best. Lighter colors can be worn underneath.
- No large stripes, bright patterns, or shiny sequins/rhinestones.
- If you wear a skirt, hemlines that fall just below or just above the knee are most appropriate. Cultural exceptions may apply.
- No jeans, exercise/yoga pants, cropped pants, or shorts.
- Button-down shirts with collars and blouses are appropriate. Sleeveless, low-cut scoop and v-neck tops are not.
- Shoes should be closed-toe dress shoes with a low to moderate heel. No athletic shoes, sandals, or flip-flops.
- Avoid bulky, flashy, or noisy accessories.

- For additional information on professional dress, see the SCSU Career Center web page on preparing for interviews at: https://www.stcloudstate.edu/careercenter/career-prep/interviewing.aspx.

- For more information on creating and giving presentations, visit The HBS Online Communication Lab at http://blog.stcloudstate.edu/hbscl/

Delivery in a Presentation, Virtual
Technical
- Cameras should be on, unless discussed with professor before the presentation
- Look into the computer's camera; this appears as eye contact with the audience
- Computer's camera should be about eye-level to your face; test the video before the presentation to ensure you appear in the video
- Appear from shoulders up, centered on screen
- Check microphone and volume before presentation and adjust as needed
- Present in front of a plain or curated background, or a blurred screen; do not present in front of closets, messy desks, or in bed etc.
- Check the lighting in the room; the light source should be in front of your face. Move any lights behind you (they cast your face in shadow) and turn off ceiling fans (creates a strobe-light effect)
- Tell the audience if the presentation is being recorded and how questions will be handled (in the chat, afterwards etc.)
- Avoid background noise and distractions (except cats)
- Close any unnecessary tabs on your computer

Delivery
- Smile
- Delivery should be engaging; project more enthusiasm and confidence (even more so than in an in-person presentation)
- Speak clearly and clearly articulate your words
- Do not read from a written script
- Stand if possible; if sitting, do not slouch; sit up straight
- Avoid "you knows," "ahhs," "umms," and other distracting speech mannerisms.
- Avoid slang such as "stuff like that" or "you guys."
- Do not chew gum during presentation.
- Use effective facial expressions to reinforce message.
- Make eye contact by looking directly into the camera
- Avoid large gestures too close to the camera

Appearance
- Should be seen on camera
- Be clean and well groomed.
- Wear clean, neat business or business casual attire. A long-sleeved shirt or blouse with tie or business suit is always acceptable.
- Wear plain, non-patterned attire, if possible; some patterns and stripes may appear distracting on screen
- Do not wear T-shirts, jeans, leather jackets, pajama-like pants, exercise pants, or everyday sweatshirts/hoodies with graphics or large prints.
- Do not wear bright neon-colored clothes or clothes that reveal too much skin.