

Tips on giving presentations

Giving presentations is an important element of your doctorate and being able to speak in public is a really valuable transferable skill. But a lot of people do get nervous at the thought. Remember that nerves don't need to stop you from giving a great talk! Although everyone will react differently, we hope that these general tips may help you.

Prepare

Feeling well prepared will make you feel less stressed on the day. You will get to know where your preferred balance of preparation and spontaneity lies, but it may be better to err on the side of caution to begin with. Make sure your talk has a good story line and you have all the facts at your finger tips. Use crib cards if you need to. Have any slides on you in different formats, just to make sure IT compatibility issues don't spoil the day.

Structure

A good introduction is essential to enthuse people and convey why what you are doing is interesting. There are probably different ways to order your presentation so have a think which will work best. A strong summing up will help your audience remember.

Illustrate

If you use Powerpoint, don't show a shortened (or worse, verbatim) version of the text of your talk, but illustrate it. If you have an interesting analogy to illustrate your work this will help people remember your talk.

Practice

Practice may not make completely perfect, but it really is amazing how much better any presentation gets once it has been given a few times. Practice addressing the audience, rather than reciting a memorised lecture. Some eye contact with people listening will help engage them. Don't worry about becoming stale, it will mature like fine wine.

Time

Check your timing. It would be a shame to run out of time and be stopped mid flow. Nerves may make you speak faster (practice may help you to slow down).

Refine

Get feedback from your practice audience, check their reaction (and your own) and incorporate into the next version.....

Practice again, as often as you can. It is also a good idea to practice fielding questions.

More in depth information on this can be found on the Vitae website: www.vitae.ac.uk/pgprofile