

# Tips for delivering engaging presentations

Developed using the feedback received from past delegates, this tip sheet is designed to provide you with some practical tips and handy reminders on how to maximise the success of your presentation.

## Prepare your content

- **Audience:** Think about your audience – who are they, what do they already know, what do you want them to get out of your presentation, why are they here, what are the potential benefits for them to undertake the learning. “What’s in it for me?”
- **Environment:** Consider the environment that you will present in and how it may affect your presentation. Ensure you know what equipment will be available, how to use it, and the layout of the room.
- **Key messages:** Clearly identify the main point or theme of your presentation, and the sub-points that support it. Prepare an outline that sequences the points in a logical order, and break the information up into manageable chunks. Your first slide should outline the content of your presentation and your final slide should summarise your key points.
- **Brainstorm content:** To encourage audience participation, brainstorm each portion of the presentation any examples, data, case studies, visuals, videos and stories that illustrate your key points. Adults are problem-centred in their orientation to learning and are therefore more motivated to learn something if they perceive it will help them deal with their problems. Build on the participants’ previous experience by relating the material to, and building on, their existing knowledge and experiences.
- **Take away messages/practical tips:** Participants want to come away from the session and apply what they have learnt to their work.

## Prepare your visual aids

- **Visual aids:** Use visual aids to support your presentation and engage the audience. These aids will provide additional context and interest.
- **Less is more:** A single, strong, graphic image or succinct line of text will tell your story better than a crowded collage or packed paragraph. “Title and bullet-points” slides are tiring to read.
- **Text quantity:** Use key phrases rather than complete sentences. Sans-serif fonts (like Arial) are easier to read at a distance.
- **Text size:** A minimum of 14 point font can be easily read by your audience. Stick to one or two font styles and sizes and avoid overuse of colour (particularly white font), bold, italics, capital letters. For PowerPoint presentations, use a font that can be easily read from the screen and don’t over-crowd the slide.
- **Slide background:** A simple background keeps your text readable. Avoid dark colours as these can be difficult to read from a distance.
- **Graphs, graphics and photos:** Use visually arresting, high-quality images, data and large text. Include a variety of visuals including graphics, pictures, cartoons, charts, video, and quotes, but remember less is more.

## Your delivery

- **“Practice makes perfect”:** A seamless and effortless presentation comes from preparation and rehearsal.
- **Your passion for the content:** You are immersed in the content each day, so show your passion for the content and most importantly enjoy yourself!
- **Start strong:** It only takes 45 seconds to make a positive impact, so prepare a good strong introduction.
- **Convey energy:** You are your own most powerful visual aid. Stand upright with your feet apart, head up and make eye contact with the audience.
- **Deal with nerves:** If you suffer nerves before a presentation, take some deep breaths and remember that your audience want you to succeed. They didn't come expecting to be bored or irritated, and they're glad it's you up there, not them!
- **Encourage audience interaction throughout the session:** Adult learners prefer to be actively involved in the learning process and to be given the ability to direct their own learning and choices. Ask questions of your audience at the start to ease them into it gently. Use open questions and invitations to talk. Conduct the presentation as a conversation with your audience. They may not say much (lawyers can be particularly eager to sit and absorb information rather than interact), but make them feel consulted, challenged, questioned and included. Look for reactions to your statements and respond to their signals. If you are getting no reaction, find another way to communicate. Treat all questions and comments with respect.
- **Pauses:** Allow the audience time to digest and process the information.
- **Manage your time:** The chair of your session has the responsibility of making sure that your session runs to time and will let you know how he or she will address the timing issues of your session. Please be aware that the time allocated for your session includes an introduction by the chair (no more than 2 minutes) and time for questions at the end (no more than 5-10 minutes). If you prefer to take questions during your session (rather than at the end of the presentation) then please advise your chair that this is your preference.
- **Close firmly:** Recap your key points, then close positively and firmly. Ask for an action from your audience, even if it is just to go away and think about what you've said and how they can apply it.

## Things QLS audiences don't like

- Reading directly from papers or slides.
- Running overtime or into scheduled break periods.
- Skipping through presentations or the final slides to meet deadlines.
- Presentations with a lack of examples describing practical application.
- Content not matched to the professional level of the audience.
- Too much information being presented.

### When the presenter...

- Apologises if their presentation/information is dry.
- Asks the audience to bear with them for a while, whilst they...
- Apologises for not being able to prepare the presentation because they have been in court all week.
- Apologises for not being very good with technology.
- Apologises for probably running overtime.
- Whether due to nerves, ignorance, or poorly executed humour – uses discriminatory, non-contemporary, or offensive words, tone, language, examples, and references.

## Continuous improvement

- Make a habit of doing a review after each presentation and incorporate the learnings to build your skills.
- You will be provided with a feedback summary by QLS, so please take it on board when preparing for your next presentation.