Cooperative Extension Service educators are often involved in sharing information with others. Many times this is done in a presentation. This fact sheet will provide you with helpful tips for refining your presentation techniques.

A good presentation requires not only that you master the content that you will present, but also that you master the skills for presenting the content. A good presentation must combine CONTENT and SHOWMANSHIP.

As Extension educators we are all familiar with the 4-H’ers who show their livestock in the judging ring. Many times it is not the grand champion animal that wins the showmanship contest, but instead the youngster who has mastered the showmanship skills, the one who is dressed appropriately, who never takes his eyes off the judge, who guides that animal all over the ring.

That 4-H’er has mastered the showmanship skills necessary to succeed in the ring, and so must we work to master the presentation skills necessary for our success.

This fact sheet contains information that will help you prepare your presentation, as well as information that can help you make the best use of visuals. We have also added ideas and techniques for keeping your audiences alert and interested.

Planning Your Presentation

The most important step in a good presentation is the planning!

Organize your presentation using the TRIPLE T Model

TELL them what you are going to tell them
(Introduction)

TELL them (presentation)

TELL them what you told them
(Summary)

The worst mistake most of us make in our presentation is trying to present TOO MUCH information in the time that we have.

Identify the main points and sub points of your presentation and limit yourself to the
five to nine main points and their related sub points.

If your presentation is short (20 to 30 minutes) then you will want to concentrate on the five main points you want to teach. When your presentation is longer, (one hour or more) you can expand the number of points you want to address.

Once you have identified the main points and sub points you want to cover, begin to think about the techniques you will use to present them.

Strive for a variety of presentation techniques. No one enjoys listening to a lecture on some topic, so think about ways to present your information using different presentation skills.

Most people have an attention span of about 10-15 minutes. Plan your presentation so that you vary your technique every 10 to 15 minutes.

You may want to begin with an introduction, then move to a group discussion. Following that you may want to show a portion of a videotape, followed by buzz groups. This variety will help your audience stay focused on the topic. It also helps to ensure that you tap the different learning styles of your audience.

Develop an excitement for your topic. Nothing is more contagious than learning from someone who is enthusiastic and excited about the topic he is presenting. Strive to share your enthusiasm with your audience.

Practice Your Presentation

For your presentation to be successful, you must take the time to practice it.

Use key word notes, not a script. Put your notes on index cards. Never read a prepared script, unless you want your audience to go to sleep.

Do a stand-up rehearsal of your presentation. Try to do it in front of a mirror, or better yet, use an audio or video recorder. You may want to ask several co-workers if they can listen to your presentation and provide you with feedback.

If possible, do your rehearsal in the room you will be presenting in. This will give you experience on how loudly you must speak and also will provide input for where you will need to stand and where to place audiovisual equipment.

Prior to your presentation, mentally run through the presentation to review each idea in sequence.

Finally, don’t forget to practice answers to questions you expect to get from the audience. You don’t want to appear unprepared, so think about the questions the audience will have.

Placement of Equipment and Materials

Check your equipment setup in advance of your presentation.

Make sure everyone can see and hear. Make sure you can operate the lights and media equipment.
For films, slides, and videotapes, place the screen front and center.

Place the overhead projector or flipchart at a 45-degree angle near the center of the room (if you have the ability of moving the screen.) The overhead projector should be placed to your right if you are right-handed, and on the left if you are left-handed.

Position any real-life objects to be discussed front and center. Be sure to remove them when you are no longer working with them.

These preliminary setup steps for your presentation will require that you arrive early enough to ensure that the facility is ready. Do not rely on co-workers to see that all is ready. This is your presentation!

**Presenting**

Many people’s worst fear is speaking in front of an audience. With practice and the use of some of these tips, you can soon overcome this fear.

**Anxiety**

Nervousness and excitement are normal before and during a presentation. Some anxiety and concern are important for an enthusiastic and dynamic presentation.

Harness your nervous energy and use it positively with body movement, supporting gestures, and voice projection.

**Delivery Stance**

Stand when presenting. Avoid the temptation to sit on the desk.

When you stand, you and your message command more attention than when you sit. Stand facing your audience. Place your feet 10-12 inches apart and distribute your weight equally on both feet.

Your knees should be unlocked, hands out of your pockets, arms at your sides.

If you must use a lectern, stand to its side. This places you on a more personal footing with the audience. It allows you to be seen and to be more natural.

Remember to move while you speak. Don’t race across the front of the room, but try to move around in a natural and relaxed way.

**Voice**

Use a natural, conventional style. Work at relating to your audience in a direct and personal manner.

Use vocal variety. A monotone is usually caused by anxiety, so relax and speak in a conversational tone.

Use a comfortable pace. If you are nervous, you will speak faster than you should, so slow down and relax.

Speak up so you can be heard in the back of the room. Also if you speak up, you will slow down. Ask the people in the back if they can hear you.

A pause (silence) after a key point is an excellent way to emphasize it. Taking a drink of water is a good way to work a pause in.

**Eye Contact**

Don’t speak until you have established eye contact with your audience. Eye contact will
make your presentation similar to a one-on-one conversation.

An excellent way to keep your audience’s attention is to look eye-to-eye at each person for at least three seconds. Don’t quickly scan the audience. Don’t look at the wall, or your notes, for long periods of time.

Maintain eye contact with your audience. If you must write on a flip chart, overhead, or chalkboard, stop talking while you write.

**Gestures:**

Learn to use natural gestures. Try to gesture in front of an audience just as you would if you were having an animated conversation with a friend.

**Don’t put your hands in your pockets!**  
**Don’t put your hands behind your back!**  
**Don’t wring your hands nervously!**  
**Don’t play with a pen, paper clip, or other objects!**

**Humor**

Use humor only if you are comfortable with it.

Use humor throughout your presentation, not just at the beginning.

Make fun of yourself, not your audience. Do not tell sexist or ethnic jokes!

**Chalkboards and/or Dry Eraser Boards:**

Maintain eye contact with your audience. Do not talk to the board, and do not obstruct their view of what you have written. Write, then talk!

**Print large and neatly.**

**DO NOT USE SCRIPT!**

Use upper and lower case letters. **Do not use CAPITAL LETTERS!** When we read a word, we recognize it by its shape, and when you write with all capital letters you destroy the shape. This slows down the reading rate and increases the difficulty of understanding.

Use large enough letters to be read by everyone in the room. **The letters should be one inch tall for every 10 feet of viewing distance.** You should use 3-inch letters in a 30-foot room.

Practice writing on the board. If you have trouble keeping your lettering straight, use a water-soluble felt pen to put guidelines on the board.

Get in the habit of putting an outline of your presentation on the board. You can do this as you cover the key point, or you can do it before the presentation and check off the points as you go.

Use colored chalk only for emphasis. Be certain that the colors are visible from the back of the room. Do not use more than five different colors at one time.

Use a template (pattern) cut from wood or heavy cardboard for frequently drawn shapes. An empty thread spool or 35 mm film canister mounted on the template makes the template easy to hold while tracing. Having a template of the 4-H clover in useful sizes allows you to brighten up and personalize your 4-H presentations!
Flipcharts

The flipchart is great for drawing illustrations and for writing key words to supplement your presentation.

Position the flipchart at an angle so everyone can see it. Place the flipchart on your left if you are right-handed, on your right if you are left-handed.

Avoid blocking the audience’s view of the flipchart.

Be sure your materials are in proper sequence.

Use a blank sheet when not referring to the flipchart. Reveal pages only when you are ready to discuss them, not before.

Keep visuals and lettering simple, and large enough for all to see.

Print rather than using script. Keep your words short or use well understood abbreviations.

Use broad-tipped marking pens that provide contrast, and that will not bleed through to the next sheet. You can use more than one color marker, but not more than four colors on any one sheet.

Prepare lettering and visuals in advance if possible.

Put summary points on the last sheet rather than paging back as you make your summary. Or, have your audience give you the summary points.

Overhead Projector

The overhead projector and transparencies have become one of the most widely used audiovisual materials.

Before using the overhead projector, close the blinds and if possible use a medium light setting. If medium lighting is not available, try to turn off the lights directly above the overhead.

Make sure that the image is focused and fills the screen. Usually this means using your transparency in the horizontal position, rather than vertical.

Make sure the transparency is LARGE ENOUGH to be seen at the back of the room. To check legibility, place the overhead on the floor at your feet. If you can read it from a standing position, then the audience should be able to read it also.

Use simple lettering and visuals. **Strive for 30-point lettering. 24-point is minimum, while 36-point is best.** Use only 5-6 lines with only 5-6 words to the line.

Keep the transparency up on the screen only as long as necessary. Strive for frequent changes of transparencies. DO NOT leave a transparency on the screen when you’ve finished discussing it.

TURN OFF the overhead when the audience does not need to see the information. However, avoid turning off the projector each time you change an overhead.

Direct attention to parts of the transparency by pointing to specific portions of it with a pointer. **Do not point to the screen.**
Place the transparencies under the acetate on the projector. This will allow you to add meaningful details to the transparency, but avoid using the transparency as a doodle pad.

Reveal information ONE POINT AT A TIME by placing a piece of paper under the transparency. Placing it under allows you to keep control of the audience’s attention, while allowing you to see what is coming next.

Place your notes or key words on the frame of the transparency. Do not read from a prepared script.

Number your transparencies sequentially as they are to be used.

Make a second transparency if you need to use the same visual twice.

**Slides**

Make sure the room is set up for viewing slides. Can everyone see? Can the room be darkened enough to see?

KNOW YOUR PROJECTOR! Know how to turn it on, use the remote control, and change the bulb if necessary.

Check that your image is focused, fills the screen, and is all on the screen.

Use text that is at least 30 points and use a sans serif font.

Preview the entire set of slides to be sure they are all in right side up.

Number each slide in case you drop them.

 Begin and end your presentation with an opaque slide. A bright white screen can be irritating to the eyes.

Stand facing your audience and use a remote control to advance the slides.

Use a slide tray that does not have a history of jamming.

**Videotapes**

Check lighting, seating, and volume to be sure that everyone can see and hear.

Close the blinds to eliminate glare. Strive for medium lighting, not total darkness.

List the main points presented in the videotape on the chalkboard, overhead, or flipchart. Preview these points with your audience. Share with them what you want them to watch for.

Discuss any new vocabulary or technical terms they may hear on the video.

Stop the videotape every 10 minutes at appropriate points to discuss the key points and to reinforce the audience’s learning. If you let the videotape run too long the viewers may forget what they have seen.

Use only relevant parts of the videotape. It is very easy to cue videotape to the portion desired.

**PowerPoint Presentations**

Many tutorials are available to help you
design a PowerPoint presentation. They give step-by-step instructions in the mechanics of preparing a presentation. Contact AgIS for help in locating these guides.

Here are some tips that will ensure a successful presentation.

You need to streamline the talk so your audience wants to keep listening to you. You want to reduce the total amount of information to only the essentials your audience needs to know. On each slide you want to include only the text and graphics needed to make your point.

Here are some ways to do this:

A. **Omit repeated words on a slide.**
   Don’t have the same word on a slide more than once.

B. **Delete adverbs and adjectives** such as “really” and “very.”

C. **Use a table for comparisons** to omit repeating words

D. **Omit non-impact words,** especially in titles, such as: “that”, “while”, and “in order to.”

E. **Simplify your words:** use “estimate” instead of “give an estimate;” use “to” instead of “in order to;” and use “tell” instead of “give you information.”

F. Ask yourself, **“Is this information pivotal to help my audience do, know, and believe my objective?”**

G. **Put in what your audience needs to know, not what you know.**

Another way to cut information is to pretend you only have ten minutes to make your point. Decide what three supporting points you would use, and what background details would you omit. Just because you have it does not mean you should use it.

Keep It Short and Simple. Elaborate designs will destroy the impact of the message with the intensity of the design.

**The 666 Rule** (otherwise known as the devil made me do it!)

**No more than 6 words per bullet, 6 bullets per image and 6 word slides in a row.** If you have more than 6 words, it is not a bullet point. More than 6 bullets, your audience will have difficulty reading the slide. Six word slides in a row means you've been talking for at least 10 minutes without a visual. You may be losing the audience's attention.

Create a master style to use for the whole presentation. Use the same fonts, colors, and graphic styles for continuity and flow.

**Colors**

Select colors that match or complement. Stick with them. Complementary colors should complement. The colors for charts, accents, and highlights should draw the attention, not command it.

**Fonts**

Fonts come in families. That means that there are variations within one font. Choose two font families and carefully select standards for titles, subtitles, copy, footnotes, axis labels, legends, and call-outs.

**Templates**

Templates are a good starting point but should not be used without customization. If you are in a rush, use templates to jump-start the presentation design process. But you may change the colors and fonts to match your objectives.
Data presentation

Visually representing data and statistics is the critical difference between quickly making a point and completely losing your audience.

It is important to understand the proper use of the common types of graphs and how to design them for quick comprehension.

There are two common mistakes people make when presenting graphs:
- Using the wrong type of graph.
- Using the correct graph, but making confusing design choices.

The key to graph design is the simpler the better. Keep the information, color, and design elements clean. Remember the graph will support what you say. It does not have to say everything for you.

References:

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