



No.8: How to present at a conference

Professional presenters often say that they engage their audience as if it were a person. They make sure that they regularly make eye contact with the audience and they always speak up, and speak slowly. Talk **to** the audience, don't talk **at** them.

- Stand tall – make sure you adopt a good posture. Keep your head up and look at the audience and pause before you begin.
- Adopt a 'professional style' that's assertive but friendly and enthusiastic. Never be dogmatic and always speak up! If you have a microphone, it can't amplify a voice that is not there!
- And as you do... slow down! The overall pace of your speech should be 30% slower than normal conversation. That will feel slow at first but will be right for the audience.
- Avoid speaking in a monotone. Change your pitch and pace, intonation and inflection, and add force or volume to help the audience take in what's really important .
- Use pauses to help dramatise your points or to change subject.
- Never look over the audience's head or, worse, lock your eyes downwards. Present to all four corners of the room. Make the audience believe you are talking to each of them individually, even if the stage lights prevent this!
- Connect with the audience by using body language. This will be easier if you are not behind a lectern. If you prefer to stand behind one, then don't stoop and grab the sides of it.
- Use gestures for emphasis. Make them big and use open gestures which are more relaxed, graceful and slower than your normal ones.
- Work the stage: think about how you could dramatise your presentation by the way you move around it.