A Checklist for your Presentation

You owe your audience and yourself a good presentation, but creating an effective presentation takes planning and practice, so here are some pointers.

**Start preparing early; don’t wait until the last few days to prepare**
- Prepare it early, let it rest a little bit and come back to it.
- Practice your entire presentation-including your slides.
- If you can, practice it before a group of colleagues or friends.

**Think about your audience**
- Who are they and why are they here?
- What are their interests?
- What do they know; what do they want to know; what is a worthwhile investment in their time?

**Be clear about your purpose**
- Are you informing or persuading?
- Tell them what you are going to do, tell them, tell them what you told them.
- What do you want the audience to know, feel, or believe afterwards?

**Use an effective introduction**
- Orient the audience; explain why it is important; set the tone.
- Establish a relationship between the speaker and the audience; establish credibility.
- Avoid weak introductions such as apologies, jokes, rhetorical questions.

**Organize your presentation clearly and simply**
- Prioritize topics and allocate time accordingly.
- Stick to only 3-5 main points.
- Have a well thought pattern (examples are problem/solution, chronological, cause and effect, topical); use transitions to move smoothly from one point to the next.

**Use supporting materials to flesh out main points**
- Use examples, statistics, expert opinions, anecdotes.

**Compose for the ear, not for the eye**
- Use simple words, simple sentences, markers, repetition, images, personal language (“You” and “I”).

**Create an effective conclusion**
- Summarize, set final image, provide closure; don’t trail off, don’t use trite phrases.
• Don’t just present data or summarized results and leave the audience to draw its own conclusions.
• You have had much more time to work with your information than your audience; share your insight and understanding and tell them what you’ve concluded from your work.

**Sound spontaneous, conversational, and enthusiastic**
• Use key phrases in your notes so you don’t have to read, use the overhead instead of notes.
• Vary volume, don’t be afraid of silence, and don’t use fillers like “um”...
• Practice, Practice, Practice.

**Use body language effectively**
• Use relaxed gestures, eye contact; don’t play with a pen or pointer.
• Don’t block visual aids.

**Use visual aids to enhance the message**
• You will probably need to use PowerPoint or overhead transparencies in your presentation but to be effective, they must be designed and used properly.
• Use visuals to reinforce and clarify, not overwhelm.
• Keep visual aids uncluttered; use titles to guide the audience.
• If you use audio or video, make sure the equipment is compatible.

**Analyze the environment**
• Check out size of room, placement of chairs, time of day, temperature, distractions.
• Check out AV equipment ahead of time; have a spare bulb.

**Cope with stage fright by remembering**
• It’s normal; it can be helpful, everyone feels it.