

MADE in SC

Materials Assembly and Design Excellence in South Carolina (MADE in SC)

Remember the purpose. You are speaking at an event to stimulate a public discussion of science in a friendly, casual way. This is not a scientific seminar.

Tailor your talk to your audience. For the most part, the audience is made up of interested, generally well-educated people who are probably not scientists and certainly not experts in your field. Avoid giving a presentation as if it is a verbal version of an academic paper.

Avoid jargon. It's a great idea to ask someone outside of your field what your jargon is. You'd be amazed at how many people don't know they're using jargon! If you absolutely must use jargon, be sure to define it.

What you're saying is important, but so is how you say it. The best presentations are clear, concise, reasonably jargon-free and tell the story of your research. Be easy to understand. Slow down and enunciate. Be friendly and informal.

Have a "hook." Have something to spark your audience's attention right away. This could be a news story, something that occurred recently that the audience can connect with and makes them want to listen to the rest of what you say.

Tell a story. A good story typically has three parts: a beginning, a middle, and an end. Somewhere there's conflict/tension and then there's resolution. For example, in part 1, tell the story of how you got interested in your research topic and why it is important; in part 2, describe the snags you (or the field) has hit along the way, and in part 3, describe the happy or surprise ending.

Don't try to say too much. Plan your remarks to not fill the time allowed. Leave plenty of time for questions. Simplify and stick to no more than three main points. People will ask questions if they want more details.



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SPEAKER TIPS

Tips on talking to a non-technical audience



Interact with the audience. Look at them, rather than your slides. Ask them questions and get them involved. They're there because they're interested. Let them know you appreciate that. Use them to drive your talk.

Use the microphone if offered. You are not as easy to hear as you might think – especially when you face the slides.

Visuals are very important. Use easy-to-read slides, videos and/or props. Make your visuals easily relatable to your audience.

Deal with difficult or off-topic questions. Maintain your cool and use strategies such as humor, sideling ("come and talk to me after the presentation"), bouncing the question back to the questioner or redirect. Admit you don't know the answer and explain why or make an educated guess. Always avoid being negative or defensive.



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<http://scepsscoridea.org/MADEinSC>