

geography sustaining our world



Presentation Skills Workshop

What to do when they're looking at you!



Gary Kabet
ESRI Educational Services

Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

Presentation skills are important because, if you don't tell your story well, your audience won't understand it or remember it. Evaluations from the 2001 Users Conference indicate that most of the reported presentation problems are easily correctable. Simple presentation mistakes like the presenter not speaking loudly enough or failing to repeat questions spoiled the experience for quite a few audience members.

This workshop focuses on the basics. In it you will learn just enough for you to deliver your presentation without embarrassing yourself or wasting your audience's time. Your goal is to keep your personal habits from preventing effective communication with your audience.

You can learn presentation skills. Great presenters are not born with them, they learn them. Anyone can acquire and perfect these skills.

The tricks, devices and stage-craft you will learn are based on studies of human psychology, perception and adult learning behavior. (Don't worry - we won't discuss the theory). All are intended to help your audience understand, process and retain the information you are presenting. And yes, presenting is a lot like theater.



What you will learn

- How present yourself
- Where to stand
- What to do with your hands
- Where to look
- What to say
- How to manage it
- How to write it
- Q&A session



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

You will learn the basics of presenting yourself, of using the room space (where to stand), using body language to communicate (how to stand, what to do with your hands and where to look), mastering your material (what to say), the use of your voice (how to say it), and how to manage your session. And, you will even get some tips on how to write a presentation.



Do not be afraid!

- The audience *wants* ...
 - To hear your story
 - For you to succeed
 - For you to use their time well
- Fight fear with...
 - Your mental attitude
 - Practice! Practice! Practice!
 - The simple techniques we'll show you



The root cause of most presentation problems is nervousness on the part of the presenter. Nervousness effects your whole presentation. You tend to talk softer and faster, and have more fillers in your delivery (umm's, uhh's and the like). You tend to be a little scatter-brained, often losing your place and talking about your topics out of order or digressing into areas that have nothing to do with your presentation (babbling). Also, nervousness effects your sense of time – it *seems* to pass slower than normal – causing you to run out of time before you finish your presentation.

Fight fear with your mental attitude, preparedness and some simple techniques. The techniques are covered later, but here are the two key points:

- Don't be afraid of your audience! They really do want you to succeed! Not necessarily because they like you (most do), but because they want you to use their time well.
- Know your material and how you'll present it! Once your presentation is in its final form, study it over and over until you have a solid story to tell for each slide, and you know which slide comes next. Practice by presenting your material to your spouse or a friend a couple of times, taking notes on how much time you spend on each slide.



How to present yourself

- Your presence is the sum of:
 - Dress
 - Body language
 - Delivery style
 - Voice
 - Enthusiasm
 - Confidence!
- Be an authority figure
 - Helps audience retain information




Great presenters build a presence. It is the sum of their appearance, body language, style, voice and enthusiasm. There are certain “do’s” and “don’ts” that all good presenters follow, but within those constraints you will still have room to create your own unique stage presence.

Be authoritative! People listen more closely to authority figures and retain what they say longer. A key part of being authoritative is to be confident, and the key to confidence is in knowing your subject matter and your materials. The rest is in how you use your body language and voice – and these are techniques you can learn.

Don’t over do it. Being authoritative does *not* mean acting condescending toward your audience or conceited about your own abilities. Your goal is to communicate information to the audience, not to show off to them. It helps to think that there are audience members that know as much or more about your subject as you do (there probably are!).

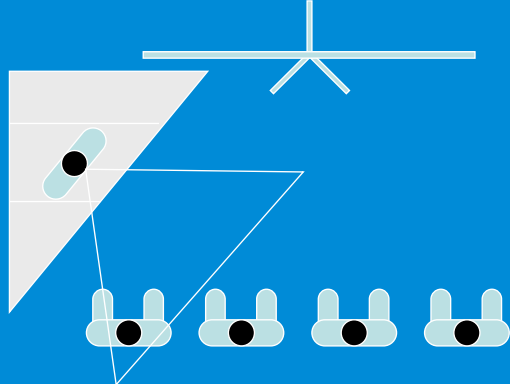
Create a learning environment. A pleasant environment helps your audience absorb and retain the information you give them. Be informal, but not too informal - adjust the formality of your presentation to accommodate the “corporate culture” of your audience. Smile to help set the tone of the presentation. Use seriousness to help emphasize the important parts.

geography sustaining our world



Where to stand

- Stand stage-left, mostly



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

Stage left is where you should spend most of your time. Most people read from left-to-right. If you are located to the audience's left, it is easier for them to move their eyes from you to your slides and back to you. Adjust your position so you don't block the audience's view of your slides. Also, you are in a better position to point to your graphics and to work with your media. In a long class you may periodically move to stage right to capture attention, but in a short presentation it is best to stay stage left.

Stand at an angle so you can see all of your audience. Square your body to the audience to emphasize a point or respond to a question. Return to the angle quickly - if you over use a device, it loses its effectiveness.

Move in the triangle. Stay centered in the triangle space shown in the graphic above during most of your presentation. Move toward the audience to emphasize a point or respond to questions. Move back to the screen to point.

Use the lectern if there is one. Hopefully, the lectern will be positioned properly.

If the room is dark and the audience can't see you, then none of these rules apply.



How to stand

- Face the audience
- Be comfortable, not stiff
 - Do not fidget
- Move with authority



Your stance and body language communicates your emotional state to the audience. Avoid stances that send the wrong signals.

Stand erect to communicate authority and confidence. Don't slouch.

Face the audience unless you absolutely must turn your back on them (writing on a flip chart or the board). When you turn your back, you lose eye contact with the audience, they can't hear you as well, and you can't use facial expressions.

The "at rest" position, with your hands at your sides, is your basic stance; it is a neutral position that does not distract from the presentation. Vary it by gesturing or by moving toward or away from the audience to help emphasize important points. You should stand casually erect to communicate confidence and authority.

Fidgeting communicates nervousness to the audience. They will focus more on your body movement than on what you're saying. Sometimes people "fidget" to relieve the body stress that comes from standing in one position. Relieve the stress by shifting your weight forward and back, not side to side. This is harder for the audience to see and less distracting.

Movement attracts attention. When you move, do so with authority and purpose to deliberately get the audience's attention. Or, use movement to help in a transition between topics. Keep within the triangle, mostly.



What to do with your hands

- DO
 - Use for gestures
 - Best use
 - Use for pointing
 - Also good
 - Otherwise...
 - Just keep at your side
- DO NOT
 - Hide them
 - In your pockets
 - Behind your back
 - Hold them
 - Play with things
 - Pointer
 - Pen
 - Change

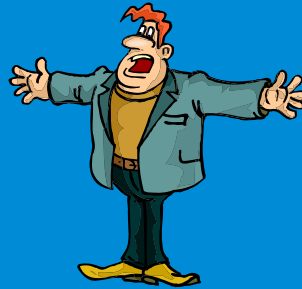
Your hands are a visual target for the audience. Use them to communicate or to get attention. They should be at your sides while you are in the “at rest” stance unless you are pointing or gesturing, which you should do frequently (and appropriately!). Yes, putting your hands at your side feels unnatural, but it *appears* natural, and that’s what counts!

Hiding or holding your hands, and playing with props like pointers and pens, is distracting. The audience starts watching what you are doing and stops listening to your message.



How to gesture

- Use to get attention
- Use to communicate
 - Non-verbal
- Big movement
 - Above waist
 - Audience must see



Gestures are a form of communication. Use them for effect. Make gestures “big” enough that the whole audience can see them. Don’t make gestures at or below waist height. Try to be natural (this may take practice unless you are naturally expressive).

geography sustaining our world



How to point

- Do not cross your body
 - Makes you face slide
 - Audience can not hear
 - Audience can not see
- Hold on target
 - Do not “wave”
 - Hold for two-count
 - Especially for laser!

Wrong!

Right!

Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

Point with your “open” arm so you do not turn your back on your audience. If you are facing the screen, then your audience can not hear you clearly or see your face. If you are standing stage-left, use your left arm to point. If you are standing stage-right, use your right arm.

Do not just wave at the graphic! Point to a specific target and hold on it for a second or two so the audience has a chance to look up from their notes.

If you use your hand, then your arm should be straight, with the palm of your hand facing the audience. Use big, dramatic movement to get attention.

Use a pointer if you cannot easily reach all of the graphic image. Avoid the temptation to play with the pointer when you are not using it.

Laser pointers are a special case; move the dot slowly over the graphic so the audience can track it, then stop it on the place of interest. Don’t wave it or move it quickly - the audience stops listening while they try to find the dot. You should practice using a laser pointer with both your left and right hands.



Where to look

- Look at people in your audience!
 - Scan, smile, move on
- Eye contact connects
 - Message is more personal
 - Gauge comprehension



Trouble meeting their eyes?

Look at their nose



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

People pay attention to you when you pay attention to them. The audience is more receptive if they think you care, and you demonstrate that you care by looking at them! If you're looking at the ceiling, at the floor, or over their heads, they don't listen to you as well as they might.

You judge the audiences understanding by their facial expressions. You may then modify your delivery as needed. You've got to look at them to do this.

Scan the audience with your eyes, settling on an individual for a moment or two and meeting their eyes. If they respond, smile at them, then move on to someone else. Try to look at all of the audience equally – it is easy to just look at one part of the room.

It is hard for many of us to look someone in the eye. Here's a little trick you can use - look at their nose! This is less intimate and will be easier for you. The person you're looking at can't really tell the difference.



What to say

- Introduce yourself
 - Establish credibility, authority
- Introduce your presentation
 - Give an overview of topics
- Present your material
 - Do not rewrite on-the-fly
 - *Explain* slides, do not read
 - Personal experience helps
 - Humor okay but dangerous



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

The introduction is especially important. It announces that the presentation is starting, it establishes you as an authority (you state your qualifications), and it lets the audience know what you'll be talking about. Start with a bang! Using a louder voice than normal, say something like this:

“Good morning! My name is Joe Blow, and for the next ninety minutes we will be talking about the mating habits of the python.”

Then go on to give your qualifications and an overview of the presentation.

Knowing your material is the most important part of a presentation. Your audience will forgive a minor slip or two, but will quickly lose interest if they *perceive* that you don't know what you're talking about.

Stick to your script! Your presentation should be in its final form. If you change it while you are presenting, you will probably run out of time before you are done and deliver an incoherent message.

Don't read your slides to the audience - they can do that. They need you to *explain* it to them and to bring the material to life! A quick glance at your notes should be enough to keep you oriented.

Personal experiences help most presentations by giving context to the material. But, keep your stories short and relevant!

A **little humor** helps the audience relax and become more receptive. But, only use humor if you can carry it off, and it can be topical.



How to say it

- Talk to the back of the room
 - Just loud enough, do not yell
- Say it clearly
 - No jargon
 - English as a second language
- Pace yourself
 - Talk slower, breathe
 - Use “phrase and pause” technique



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

Talk loud enough to fill the space. You should be talking to the people in the very last row so that everyone can hear you. But, do not shout.

Use the microphone if one is available. Check it before the presentation, and do a sound test so you know how loudly you must talk into it.

Pronounce your words. Even with good sound systems, words tend to distort in a large lecture hall. It helps to put a very slight pause between words.

Avoid jargon and acronyms. Industry-specific jargon won't come across to many in a mixed audience.

English is a second language for many in your audience. You need to help them understand you by speaking clearly and avoiding slang.

Avoid humor if you have an international audience because humor just does not translate well between cultures.

Talk a little slower than normal because of the sound system and language issues we've just cited. Most presenters use a “phrase and pause” approach to public speaking – that is, speak a phrase, hesitate briefly, then speak your next phrase. The benefits are:

- You have time to compose your next sentence in your head.
- You have time to breathe (very important).
- Your audience has time to process what you've just said.

geography sustaining our world



How to use your voice

- Modulate for interest
 - Change volume
 - Change pitch
 - Change pace
- Be enthusiastic!
 - Gives right modulation
- Avoid fillers – umm, uhh...
 - Distracting
 - Fight with “phrase and pause”



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

13

Your voice is your most effective tool. It is more important to use it well while presenting than in conversation. Modulate your voice to give interest and impact to your presentation:

- **Volume** can be used to add emphasis to a point. Minor changes are effective.
- **Pitch** (the highness or lowness of a sound, not volume but musical key) adds interest to your voice.
- **Pace** (speed of talking) controls the tempo of the presentation. Also, varying pace helps add interest.

Natural enthusiasm in your subject usually puts the correct volume, pitch and pace into your voice, but you can practice it. Avoid speaking in a monotone, unless you want to put your audience to sleep!

Talk a little slower than normal. Time seems to speed up when you are presenting and the natural desire is to speak faster. Don't! Give the audience a chance to digest what you're saying by talking a little slower than normal.

Fillers are an unconscious vocalization that we make to cover our thinking time. They are distracting, sometimes amusing (the wrong kind of amusing!) and often very annoying. A common filler is “okay”, as though the presenter is asking permission to continue. Avoid fillers!

A nice benefit from “phrase and pause” is that it virtually eliminates fillers!



How to manage it

- It is your story - manage it!
 - The audience wants you to
- Manage your time - critical
 - Start on time, finish on time
- Rehearse to establish:
 - Time per slide
 - About 2 minutes each
 - Time for demos
 - Time for Q&A



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

You're in charge of your presentation. You must manage its flow and tempo. The audience expects you to manage the presentation effectively so that it is a good use of their time.

Start on time. Don't penalize people who showed up on time.

Stop on time. Don't "steal" time from the next presenter - that's very rude!

Time management is crucial. Fill your time, but don't go over. Time each slide when you practice, and drop or add material as needed. Mostly, you'll need to drop or condense material. Leave time for demos and the Q&A period. Put your watch on the lectern so you can time yourself as you present.


Time your presentation elements. Remember that your session is only ninety minutes long. In that ninety minutes, you must do the introduction, present your slide show, perform your demo, and conduct a question and answer session.

Your schedule might look like this:

- Introduction – 5 minutes (allow time for the audience to settle down)
- Slide show – 55 minutes (@ 2min/slide \cong 28 slides)
- Demo – 20 minutes
- Q&A – 10 minutes


Don't digress - You need to cover all your topics, or you wouldn't have included them. Or, program in a little extra time to allow digressions.

geography sustaining our world



How to write it

- Determine purpose
 - Instructional or informative
- Develop content
 - Brain-storm a list of topics
 - Organize into subjects (outline)
- Write the slides
 - One or more per subject
- Storyboard the slides
 - Finalize flow, determine timing



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

Your writing style depends on the purpose of the presentation. If it is instructional, like this one, then bullet text should start with verbs (e.g., “Storyboard the slides”). If the presentation is informational, then bullets may start with nouns (e.g., “Toolbar contains edit tools”).

Brain-storm your content. Use a text editor and just start listing the topics you want to talk about in any order.

Organize your content, grouping topics into subjects with an outline. Have an opening, body and closing (summary).


Write your slides based on your outline, with one or more slides for each major subject (the title) and the topics that address the subject as bullets. Do not waste time on graphics or note pages yet.

Do a storyboard to help build a smooth story. That is, print all your slides in miniature and tape them to the wall. Have a colleague review them with you, and explain to him or her what you will say about each slide. Reorganize the slides and slide content to make a smooth, logical story.

Don’t try to do too much. Be willing to throw away a lot of material or condense it as needed – you only have ninety minutes to tell your story!

Polish the presentation by revising bullet text and adding graphics to the slides. Write your notes pages last, if you need them.

Practice the presentation in its final form to establish the time you need to spend on each slide and to reinforce the story you intend to tell.



geography sustaining our world

How to write a slide - wrong

- If you try to put too much information on a slide, then the audience cannot read it and you might as well not bother with the slide. Your slide should be an outline of what you intend to say. If you want to provide documentation, then put the extra text on the notes page or make another slide. Use sans-serif fonts for text.
- Bullets should have minimal text
 - Start with an active verb if possible
 - Ignore most grammar rules – not a novel
 - Limit to two indentation levels
 - Text is hard to read at deeper levels
- A slide should only have one major concept
 - Limit to four or five key bullet points
- Program code should be on a separate slide
 - Use courier font, large enough to read
 - Show key code only, not whole program
- White space and graphics make slides easier to read

Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

This is a bad slide. While the information it contains is valid and important, the message will be lost on the audience because they will be trying to read it and will not listen to your explanation.

When you change slides, your audience will immediately try to read it – this is normal behavior. But, while they are reading, they are not listening to you! If the slide is complicated, they are “off line” for a longer period of time.

Keep slides simple. The audience should be able to quickly scan the slide to pick up the key points. Then, they are ready to listen.

Give the audience time to scan a new slide. Be quiet for a second or two after you change slides.

See the next slide for an example of how this slide should have been written.



How to write a slide - right

- Limit slide content
 - One concept
 - Four or five 1st level bullets
 - Two levels, max
- Use short statements
 - Start with a verb (depends on style)
 - Ignore most grammar rules
- Use large, sans-serif text
- Use graphics



Your goal is to write slides that are easy for the audience to quickly read and understand. Here are some guidelines to follow when building your slides.

Limit the content – A slide should only address one major concept (the previous slide does three). The title should state the concept, and you should only use four or five bullets to expand on the concept. And, you should limit yourself to two levels of indentation (more is confusing to the eye, and the text gets hard to read).


Limit the text – The first bullet on the previous slide is a paragraph that is hard to read. A bullet should be a single sentence and should only be one line long so the audience can quickly scan it. The normal rules of grammar do not apply; get the vital information across in as few words as possible.

Use the right “voice”. This presentation provides instruction on how to do something. Each bullet should be an action statement that begins with an active verb. Informational presentations, like the technical sessions at the conference, may use the passive voice (start with a noun).

Make text easy to read. Sans-serif fonts like Arial are easier to read from a distance (the previous slide uses Times Roman, all others use Arial). You should use a point size of at least 30 for first level bullet text. Shadow text is hard to read (it looks fuzzy) and should be avoided.


Use graphics to add interest to your slides; large blocks of text are hard to digest. Make sure the graphic is relevant.

geography sustaining our world



How to conduct a demo

- Have a script
 - Practice it!
- Have an assistant
 - They work the computer
 - You talk to the audience
- Move the cursor **SLOWLY**
 - Do not use the cursor as pointer



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

Have a script to work from - it doesn't have to be too detailed if you and your assistant are familiar with the software and the demo scenario. You should know what you want to show; don't waste the audience's valuable time by floundering during the demo. **Practice** your demo script after you've developed it, and again just before your presentation. Make sure all the data you need is installed and that all the hardware (LCD projector, etc.) works.

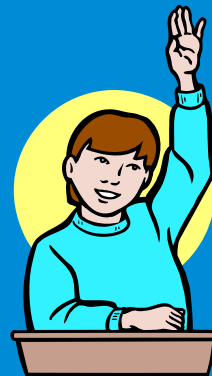
Have an assistant run the computer for you. The audience cannot see you or hear you if you are hiding behind a computer. Your role as the presenter is to explain what the audience is seeing, and that's hard to do if you're focused on running the computer. **Practice** with your assistant so the demo flows smoothly. Work out signals for slowing down, skipping sections, etc.

Do everything a lot slower than normal when moving the cursor, typing into text boxes, etc. If the audience can't follow along, they'll lose interest. If you show text or code, leave it on the screen long enough for the audience to scan it.



How to handle questions

- Do Q&A after presentation
 - State during introduction
- Respond to questions by:
 - Repeating them!
 - Giving concise answers
 - Talking to whole audience
- Do not make up answers!
 - Lose credibility
 - Just say “I don’t know”



Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference

Handling questions well is the mark of a great presenter. Always, always, *always* repeat the question – in paraphrase! The benefits are:

- Ensures that you understand the question
- Ensures that the whole audience heard the question
- Gives you time to think up your answer

This is one of the hardest parts of presenting and takes practice and discipline.

Have a Q&A session. In a short presentation you don’t have time to respond to questions as they arise. Let your audience know during your introduction that there will be a question and answer period after the presentation and ask them to defer their questions until then. In a classroom setting, handle questions as they come up.

Concise answers are best – you don’t have time to respond in depth. Address your answer to the whole audience - no private conversations.

Acknowledge questions with the students name in a classroom setting. Don’t bother in a large presentation, other than with a generic acknowledgement like “Good question”.

Don’t make up answers! You’ll lose the trust of your audience if you fib to them, because someone in your audience *will* know the correct answer! Just tell the audience that you don’t know. Never preface an answer with “I think...” – you either know the answer, or you don’t.



In summary...

- Be confident
 - Practice your material!
 - Dress well
- Be prepared
 - Show up early
 - Check equipment
- Speak loud and clear
- Repeat questions
- Have fun and be enthusiastic



Start preparing now! You have a lot of work to do, and the sooner you get started the better. Don't wait and don't wing it when you are on stage.

Know your material – Nothing can substitute for knowledge. The greatest materials won't do your presentation for you. Get to know your material and subject inside and out. By studying your material, you won't have to read your slides to the audience.

Practice your demos – Demos that crash or make the audience wait reflect on your presentation skills. Polished demos are a result of lots of practice.

Dress well – Wear proper, comfortable clothing. Make sure it's clean. And check your breath.

Check the room – Show up early. Stand in different parts of the room to check the audience's view of the stage. Test the microphone and do a sound check. Test the computer. Are your presentation materials there (PowerPoint show, software, data, and demo projects)? Know who to talk to if a problem occurs and how to contact them. Test the projector – with your slide show! Make sure there is a glass of water on the lectern (caffeine dries you out).

Talk loud and clear during your presentation. Your audience must hear you.

Repeat questions during the Q & A session and give clear, concise answers.

Have a great time!



Want to know more?

- Toastmasters
- Web sites
- Courses
- Suggested reading:
 - Kushner, M.L. (1996)
Successful presentations for dummies
 - Mandel, S. (1987)
Effective presentation skills
 - Jay, A. & Jay, R. (1996)
Effective presentation



We've ignored many aspects of a successful presentation – room setup, materials design and production, audio/visual devices, how to recover from disasters and a lot more. The Internet is a wonderful source of information on public speaking. Search for “presentation skills” and “public speaking” and you'll find dozens of references to speakers resources. Here are a few of them:

Toastmasters International - The best way to learn to speak is to speak! Visit the grand-daddy of 'em all, and join up.

<http://www.toastmasters.org>

National Speakers Association - A professional organization for public speakers. Subscribe to their magazine.

<http://www.nsaspeaker.org>

University of Kansas - Hosts a site with a “virtual presentation assistant” that is loaded with useful tips.

<http://www.ukans.edu/cwis/units/coms2/vpa/vpa.htm>

Presenting Solutions! - A commercial site with a very effective collection of presenters aids, tutorials and advice.

<http://www.presentingsolutions.com/effectivepresentations.html>

Many books are available about speaking and presentation skills. Search Amazon (www.Amazon.com) or Barnes & Noble (www.bn.com) for titles.



Thank you for coming

- Break a leg*



Stay relaxed and
enjoy your
presentation

* Theatrical term for “good luck”



geography sustaining our world

Copyright

This presentation is the intellectual property of ESRI and is used herein with permission of ESRI.

Copyright 2002 Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.

All rights reserved.

Twenty-Second Annual ESRI International User Conference