# Quick Presentation Skills Tips

## ATTENTION-GAINING DEVICES by Tom Antion

Attention spans are short. Here is the "Wake 'em Up" way to keep the audience with you. After you have created your talk, go through it and make sure that every two to four minutes you use some kind of attention-gaining device.

You could increase your voice inflection, show a visual, or hold up a prop. Move around the room, tell a story, throw out a one-liner, write on a flip chart, or show a picture of your kids if you want to. Just make sure that no more than a few minutes go by between attention-gaining devices. The audience won't know you are using a technique on them, but at the end they will say, "Wow! That time sure went by fast."

## Think of Your Listeners
- Listening is much more difficult than reading
- "Listeners" **listen** somewhere between 25% and 50% of the time
- Information must be taken in "on the fly" with no backtracking
- Short-term **memory** holds only 5 to 7 points
- People **remember** only 10% of what they hear versus 50% of what they read
- If your audience only listens only part of the time and remembers only 10% of what they hear, then *your "window" of communication is around 2.5% to 5.0% of your total presentation time!*

## Design to Help People Listen
1. **Organize** - provide structure and framework for the data you will present
2. **Illustrate** - help listeners to visualize - convert data to information by painting a picture, telling a story and making comparisons
3. **Repeat** - improve audience reception of data.

**Visuals Should...**
* Support your communication objective
* Enhance your verbal message, not detract from it
* Set tone and emotional content of verbal message with the use of colors and images

**Good Visuals Are...**
* **Visible** - You have to be able to see it to believe it
Visuals should be legible to most distant viewer. Minimum legibility standards: *one inch letter height on screen per 30 feet viewing distance*

* **Clear** - Instantly recognizable in context to your verbal message
Focus on *one idea* per visual
Directly relate to communication objective

Complement verbal message
Add impact or tone to message
Provide overview or "whole picture"

**\* Simple**
Eliminate extraneous information and clutter
Visually simplify using design, color, or overlays

**Ways of Adding Variety**
- Combine both left and right brain sensory channels: *Left brain:* words, sentences, symbols and *Right brain*: graphs, charts, symbols, pictures, etc.
- Add color for emphasis, but beware of color connotations
- Use movement with transparency pens, overlays, slide dissolves, etc.
- Change backgrounds to change pace or introduce new topic

# QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

## USE OF QUESTIONS
- Ask "friendly" questions - don't use questions to embarrass or badger; avoid known "sore spots"
- Avoid asking risky questions - that is, questions that may imply lack of knowledge or intelligence
- Make the interchange a mutually satisfying experience; give respondents time to think and phrase their answer; help people save face by summarizing what they have said so far and asking if anyone else has something to add
- Don't let respondent wander or attempt to take control of the presentation; a polite "thank you, that's what I was looking for" can get you back on track
- If extensive audience discussion is desired, avoid isolated one-on-one dialogues with specific individuals
- When challenged, be candid and firm but avoid over responding
- Maintain control of the session
- Be firm and assertive without being aggressive or defensive
- Don't let interruptions disrupt your composure
- Avoid circumstances that require an apology
- Anticipate questions and prepare responses; rehearse answers to difficult questions
- If necessary, offer to obtain additional information and follow up
- Use questions to strengthen your main arguments-answer questions candidly but positively link objections to attractive features
- Avoid rhetorical questions - ask interesting questions that are thought provoking but not too difficult to answer
- Ask some open-ended question with no right or wrong answers - encourage sharing experiences, feelings, and opinions
- Put "you" elements into questions - make them relevant to the audience's personal experience

- Prepare key questions prior to the presentation; it is difficult to think of good questions on your feet


**Guideline for Answering Questions**
- Anticipate Questions: think of the ten most likely questions and plan out your answer
- Understand the Question: paraphrase it if necessary; repeat it if needed
- Plan the Answer: particularly if you anticipated the question
- Do Not Digress
- Be Honest: if you can't answer the question, say so
- Reinterpret Loaded Questions: if attacked try to show the similarity to other situations
- Control Interchanges: if a questioner becomes a heckler try to enlist the audience; if a questioner digresses, try to remind the audience of the goal of the presentation
- Use the Last Question to Summarize


# PUBLIC SPEAKING TIP: RUINING YOUR SPEECH

Ten Things That Will Ruin Your Speech

1) Reading from notes
   Do not read, do not memorize; learn. Know your material intimately. Practice, not the words, but the ideas, and the points. Become the message.

2) Fidgeting
   Nothing is more distracting than a speaker, who constantly fidgets, paces, fumbles with papers, microphones, etc. Do more than practice your words; rehearse delivery.

3) Avoiding eye contact
   Eye contact is one of the most important things you can do. Looking up, down, and all around is very distracting and shows a lack of preparation and regard for your audience.

4) Being monotone
   Ugh, that guy just droned on and on. All great orators are married to their words through emotion. If you cannot get excited enough about your message that emotion comes naturally, change your subject.

5) Standing behind a lectern
   Lecterns have a purpose. Traditionally they are used to hold/conceal notes and support a microphone. This is okay for presidents and ministers. However, if you truly wish to engage an audience (a must if you intend to sell them something), venture out away from the lectern from time to time.

6) Misplaced, misguided, or inappropriate humor
   Humor is not mandatory. Moreover, I have never liked jokes from the podium. Funny stories that illustrate a point can be powerful. But humor for humor's sake can backfire.  Off-color, sexist, or inflammatory remarks can get you mugged.

7) Having a poor or nonexistent introduction
   Prepare a compelling, provocative intro and have the person doing the intro practice it a few times while you critique.

8) Ignoring your allotted amount of time
   You were asked to fill a certain time frame, so stick to it. Besides, people will turn you off as soon as dinner is served or tee times approach.

9) Poor use of props
   FAR too many presenters have become prop dependent. Props should serve to give impact to your points, to offer visual confirmation. They should never be used as a substitute. Use props to engage your listeners, to offer evidence. But never allow them to get in the way of you.

10) Having "off days"
    All speakers have off days. However, that should be the exception. You have no right to have an "off day" all the time. If people are willing to give you one hour of their time, you must give them a minimum of ten hours of your time in terms of preparation.