



# Making Powerful Presentations

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## Introduction

Thank you for taking on a very important job! Participants at the annual Town Officers' Education Conferences (TOEC's), the employees and elected officials of Vermont's towns, villages, and cities, are dedicated to government service and to their jobs. They come from large cities and small villages. They differ greatly in experience, age and background but they are all eager to learn what you have to share.

The planning committee wants your experience as a presenter/facilitator to be a positive one. These guidelines provide some general tips and advice on preparing successful presentations. Please use them to the extent they are useful and appropriate to your presentation.

## Guidelines for Powerful Presentations

- Start and end your session promptly.
- Remember to leave time for questions and discussion.
- Organize your presentation to include a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Do include examples whenever possible.
- Do *not* use slang, profanity, inappropriate humor or stories.
- Practice the presentation to make sure it fits in the time allotted.
- Arrive early enough to become familiar with the room and equipment.
- Decide early what type of presentation equipment you'll need and get that information to the conference coordinator.
- Identify 2 or 3 key points that you want people to remember- don't try to include too much.
- If you are preparing a PowerPoint presentation, a general rule of thumb is 1 slide per 3 minutes of the presentation (i.e. if your presentation is 45 minutes long you would try to limit your slides to 15).
- Make sure that the material on the screen is large enough to be readable (even to those in the back of the room). \*If you have complicated tables to share, include samples in your handouts and blow up a portion of the table to show on the screen.
- Do *not* read the material from your presentation- this is frustrating to participants. Instead, use the material on the screen as an outline. Insert pictures, charts or graphs along with key phrases to prompt your memory.
- Do offer the presentation as a handout and let the audience know that you will be doing so.
- Include as much practical information as possible- useful hints, shortcuts, money saving tips, etc.

### The Presenter's Ten Commandments

1. Prepare, prepare, prepare
2. Arrive early
3. Check your equipment
4. Have enough handouts
5. Begin and End on time
6. Use audio-visuals effectively
7. Encourage questions
8. If you don't know, say so
9. Summarize your main points
10. Respect your audience



## Guidelines for Facilitators of Roundtables and Forums

- Line up your speakers/panelists early and make sure they understand the expectations.
- Provide your panelists with a few questions/issues which they should address in their opening remarks.
- Start and end on time.
- Introduce the topic and the speakers to the audience.
- Let everyone know how much time each speaker is allotted and how you will be handling the timekeeping (e.g. “I’ll signal the speaker when they have 2 minutes left.”)
- Manage the time so that each speaker has equal time to speak and respond to questions.
- Don’t be timid about cutting off speakers or questioners if that becomes necessary—the audience will be mad at *you* if someone gets shortchanged.
- If the conversation gets off track, step in and lead everyone back to the topic at hand.
- Close by thanking both the speakers and the audience for their participation.

## Developing Effective Handouts

- Be certain that handouts are clearly written and easy to read. Check Spelling and grammar. Make sure that the copy quality is good and the font is large enough to be readable.
- Use common language and clear diagrams/illustrations.
- Designs hand illustrations add interest but avoid cluttering the document with unnecessary charts, numbers, etc.
- If you have a number of handouts, put them in order and make sure the pages are numbered.
- Do include a listing of key people, their organization, and contact information for further information and follow-up.
- If you intend to refer to the handouts during your presentation, then give them out prior to beginning your presentation. Otherwise you can wait until the end of your presentation to hand them out.

People retain...

10% of what they read,  
20% of what they hear,  
30% of what they see,  
50% of what they see and

hear,

70% of what they say,  
90% of what they say and do.

\*Remember to include opportunities for questions and discussion during your session—it will make the material much more memorable.

**Please remind individuals to complete their evaluations before leaving for the day!**

