Presentation Advice
Gleaned from Reports on Instructional Session Observations

Getting Started
Choose title of presentation carefully – create the right expectations
Start with a few words of welcome. Introduce yourself.
A good Introduction provides
- a theme
- main points and objectives
- ground rules, so audience know what to expect and what you expect of them.
- context.

“Begin with the end in mind”
Greet audience individually
Use of info forms to get to know students (collect before starting) Use to tailor presentation. (A “sponge” activity)
If you can’t be there early, be sure to provide clues to audience that they are in the right place (signs on door, room already set up…)

Personal
- Good posture is important: don’t slouch!
- Don’t rock back and forth
- Don’t put hands in pockets & jingle change!
- Watch out for unconscious gestures (smoothing hair, touching chin…)
- Watch your grooming
- Swallow
- What you wear can have an impact (bright pink in a drab room)

Setting
Light – keep on until necessary to lower (for projection, etc.)
Setting should allow students to focus. Be aware of distractions (“noise”)
Audience comfort
Presentation

Voice: enunciate! project!
Face audience when speaking
Soft voice & no inflection = less authoritative
Make eye contact
Be aware of audience reaction
Be aware of the audience as a whole and as individuals
Repeat questions before answering
Don’t speak too fast
Interpret – jargon, language
No in-jokes
Content is very important and can sometimes overcome presentation limitations.

Stay on track. If you digress, make sure audience sees where your digression is going and how it fits with topic.

Be succinct, but not abrupt.
Get your message across but do not overstate.

Know your audience’s experience level. Make adjustments if necessary.

When teaching a database, providing background, scope, and what it can and can’t do in introduction is very important.

When doing a demo – go slowly to allow audience to see what you are doing and why. Even an “experienced” audience can get lost.

Demo with follow-along hands-on
Present information in “absorbable chunks”
Present concrete applications as well as concepts

Hands-on whenever appropriate and possible
Use humor if you are comfortable with it
Combine facts and stories
Use real-life examples

Preparation shows respect for audience
Where you stand is important
Walk around if possible

With active learning activities do what group is comfortable with
Use an outline to stay on track
Presentation: Timing

Being on time, ending on time shows respect for audience

Fit content to time. If you find yourself apologizing to audience for rushing or telling them they shouldn’t worry if it’s too much to absorb, think about cutting back the next time.

Don’t apologize for lack of time. Prepare for it!

Props

Powerpoint slides can help or can hinder
Pros & cons of using slides as “notes”
Make sure your technology is set up
Point to screen; don’t use cursor to point
Use dry erase or chalkboard when appropriate

Handouts are important esp. with demos when audience has to watch and take notes at the same time. Be sure to bring enough handouts!

You don’t always need to use a computer to teach computers

Ending

End in an organized way: summarize, review
Let audience know how to contact you
Don’t say “I’ll shut up now.” Don’t discredit yourself!
Good ending: “if I have one piece of advice....”

Miscellaneous

Classes (class sessions) where you are establishing a longer term relationship between presenter (instructor) and audience (students) = a different dynamic than a one-time presentation.

Have a backup plan
Summary of Comments on Five-Minute Presentations

Good Things

- Honesty & empathy
- Enthusiasm
- Using story to make a point
- Friendly "smiled a lot"
- Humor. Got the audience to chuckle at least once.
- Good descriptions, enabled audience to visualize
- Use of personal experience to demonstrate ideas, concepts
- Combination of theory and example
- Backed up thoughts with examples from life
- Audience participation
- Catchy introduction

Things to Improve

- Organization (introduction—body—conclusion)
- Do not let voice trail off at end of sentences
- Reduce use of “filler words” such as “like, um, you know”
- Use inflection; don’t speak in a monotone
- Don’t stand absolutely still, use gestures
- Control rocking & other “rhythmic fidgeting”
- Try to keep hands away from the face during a presentation
- Don’t talk too fast
- When sitting & speaking, do not talk into table
- Don’t talk to your notes
- When using a visual aid, do not talk to the aid, talk to the audience
- Do not let visual aids take you away from the audience
- Eye contact with entire audience, not just one particular person
- Don’t apologize when you make a mistake, it just draws attention to it
- If you make a claim, provide some evidence
- Try not to go off on tangents
- Present solutions or explanations
- Watch your grammar
Other Comments

- A concise speech preferred to a rambling one
- We decided that less is more -- that it is better to say what we have to say and end the talk early, rather than rambling on just to make it to the five-minute mark
- The conversational style lends itself to rambling if careful attention is not paid to staying focused
- Remember to breathe and try to relax. Slow down if you feel nervous.
- It is hard to keep track of what the rest of your body is doing when you are concentrating on your speech
- We liked the way they used "thank you" to end their presentations as opposed to "OK, that's all I have to say."
- Always introduce yourself
- Make sure that everyone in the audience can see you
- Be attentive when other panel members are speaking
- The more experience you get, the better you get
- Preparation (of content and organization) is important