

Practical Tips for Giving Great Online Presentations

How to Take Your Virtual Presentation to the Next Level

1) Keep your slides simple

Design your slides to work well on a small screen. Do not use slides with lots of text because they are hard to read on a screen. Consider high-contrast slides.

2) Rehearse

Practice and polish your presentation. Videotape your presentation and watch the recording several times. You will notice an improvement.

3) Tell true stories

Consider brief case studies involving patients, family members, treating physicians or investigators.

4) Invest in good technical equipment

Use a good microphone and camera. The hardware already installed in your computer is often sufficient. Note: I use a webcam with a stereo microphone that I connect to the USB-port of my notebook. Ideally, have another laptop (or tablet or smart phone) at the ready in case you encounter a technical problem.

5) Ensure good internet connection

Use the most reliable internet connection you can find. A wired connection is often better than a wireless (WiFi) connection which is usually better than a mobile connection via cellular phone.

6) Background in the room

Use a neutral background behind you. Many presenters prefer a white background or a plain wall. A cluttered background will distract the audience.

7) Make sure they can hear you

You should be in a quiet room. Turn off your phone and computer notifications.

8) Ensure appropriate lighting

Have natural light or lamps lighting up your face. Prevent light coming from the back. Avoid sitting with a bright window behind you.

9) Your outfit: What to wear

Avoid bright white clothing. Avoid shiny fabrics and clothing with distracting patterns. Prefer colours like light beige, light grey or light blue.

10) Focus

Close any unnecessary applications such as downloading or uploading large files or instant file synchronizations.

11) Start

Be there at least 10 minutes in advance. Start on time.

12) Eye contact

Place your camera in such a way that you can look directly at the camera: The lens of your camera should be in your direct eye line. You may have to place a stack of books underneath your laptop. Angle the laptop screen so that you are centred in the frame, and that your head is not cut off. During an online conference, do not look at the people in the little boxes on your screen.

13) Non-verbal communication

Be energetic in your tone of voice and facial expression.

14) Make pauses

One or two seconds of silence before revealing something important can build anticipation. A pause at the end of a sentence can reinforce your message.

15) Questions and Answers

Leave time for questions. Just in case, bring one or two questions of your own. You have practiced the answers. Finish on time.