

Tips for Virtual Speakers

INSTRUCTIONAL TIPS

Clothing

Dress appropriately to the audience and season. You may be virtual, but you should dress as you would for a session you would be giving face-to-face. Respect your audience.

Be yourself

You are the expert in the subject, but you aren't expected to know everything. Be confident but approachable and friendly. If you don't know the answer to a question, ask others if they know or ask your co-facilitator if available. Offer to find the answer and reach out later with that information, and then be sure you do follow up.

Keep the presentation as informal and relaxed as possible—for you and the participants.

Make sure to smile! Convey enthusiasm and interest in the subject. Use inflections in your voice to indicate when you are asking a question, emphasizing something of significance, or transitioning to a new topic.

Introductions

Introduce yourself before speaking, even if someone else has already done so. Use a personal story or anecdote to build trust with the audience and engage with them early using questions or polls. This can be especially important in the virtual world as you cannot see the attendees in most cases.

How to begin

Begin strong. One way to begin strong and focus participants is to introduce your main points. Speak clearly and directly to the audience, beginning your lecture with the key points. Mention two or three learning objectives. Use an example or two with a good picture or simple bullet points.



Learning objectives

Adults will be motivated by concrete examples of how an idea or suggestion will succeed for them. State your learning objectives clearly and obviously using action words. Learning objectives must be identifiable and measurable. Examples include:

- After this training, you will be able to **choose** ...
- We will explore practical tips that enable you to **arrange** ...
- There are three ways you can **select** ...

Nevada LTAP can provide a list of action words—just ask!

How to end

Summarize your main points. You can do this with one brief slide or a series of questions. This can be a good way to measure mastery of learning outcomes. Your last slide should show your name, organization, phone number, and email. Leave it visible as you ask for final comments and questions.

Evaluation

One of the most important ways to become a better presenter is to evaluate yourself. Ask your host about their evaluation procedures. Get constructive comments to make your next presentation better.

Rehearse

Always rehearse your presentation. Time yourself to be sure your material is adequate for the allotted time. Prepare to be flexible. You may have less time for your presentation if earlier presenters run over schedule. It is better to be done slightly early than run over.

Ask someone to listen to you in an online setting and critique your performance, especially if you have not done an online session before. Practice helps instill confidence and alleviate speaking anxiety.

Make sure you are familiar with the delivery platform (e.g., Zoom, Connect, WebEx) so you know what type of engaging activities you can use. If a host from the agency is available to assist, run through the presentation and interaction opportunities with the host before the session. If you are responsible for running the delivery platform yourself, practice using all the features several times so your presentation will be smooth.

Questions

Questions are a way to keep the audience involved and to make sure they understand the material. Create polls, online questions and answer tools, or other means to get audience interaction. Let the audience know during the introduction when (and how) they should ask questions.

Humor

Humor should be in good taste and appropriate. Do not make a joke at the expense of others.

Planning

Thorough preparation includes planning, developing an outline, researching and identifying resources, and practicing. Make a checklist to include the following:



- Keep lessons short and concise with targeted interactions that support the lesson or allow participants to practice something they've just learned.
- Prepare any handouts or visual aid needs in advance (at least two weeks if possible).
- Check the time and log in early to make sure your computer tools are ready to go.
- Select a title that describes your topic and promotes interest, not merely identifies it. For example, *Job Site Safety Techniques for Training your Employees* rather than *Safety Workshop*.

AUDIOVISUAL AIDS

For a face-to-face session, the best visual aid you have is YOU. In a virtual world, the visual aids are the primary item the audience sees. Add pictures and other visual aids to enhance and supplement a presentation, not replace your expertise. Make the audience remember the message, not the media. Virtual presentations use a software package such as PowerPoint along with online tools such as Zoom and WebEx. Learn the tools you will be using!

Common items that you may want to have available when giving your presentation include:

- **Headphones with a microphone** improve sound quality and helps the audience hear.
- **Webcam** allows you to be seen on screen.

These additional visual aids can enhance your presentation.

- **Embedded video.** Assume no sound unless you check with the host ahead of time.
- **Whiteboard.** Many online tools have a whiteboard feature.
- **Handouts.** A prepared set of notes can be more useful than just the slides. Send out ahead of time or have a link on screen.
- **References.** Include links in the handouts or highlight on screen.

When deciding which visual aid to use, remember to:

- **Keep it legible.** No one will complain if the font size is too large.
- **Keep it simple.** Show only the important items that be read quickly. If there is too much detail, the audience will spend too much time trying to read and not enough listening. Could an illustration, picture, or graph show the same information?
- **Keep it short.** Less text and fewer lines will have more impact.

SLIDE RULES

- Use high contrast colors, such as a dark background with light text or a white background with dark text.
- Do not write your entire presentation on slides.
- Use slides to remind you and your audience of your presentation points.
- As a rule, use no more than six bullet items on each slide and no more than six words in each bullet item.
- Use no more than two different fonts on one page.
- As a general rule for virtual presentations,



each slide will take about 45 seconds. If the presentation is 30 minutes long, you should have about 40 slides. You will not need as many slides if you have a highly interactive presentation. Remember that you to allow time for participants to answer a poll or come up with answers.

- Lean back in your chair and look at the slides on your computer. If you can read it comfortable, people will be able to read it. If not, make the font larger.
- Use 40–44 point font size for titles.
- Use 24–36 point font size for text.
- Set up the computer screen so you are looking at it while presenting. This way you face the audience on your webcam. Check to make sure your face is well lit and centered on-screen. Some eyeglasses can cause reflections that obscure your eyes.
- Reproducing directly from a book results in inadequate visuals that cannot be seen clearly.
- Use graphics sparingly. Use photos when possible.
- Avoid or use sound cues sparingly. Assume no sound is available in most cases.
- Use a single background or presentation theme.
- Use simple transitions between and within slides.