



Ten Top Tips for Perfect Pathology Presentations

Adapted from *Top ten mistakes made by researchers when presenting to young people* by Paul McCrory www.think-differently.co.uk. These apply to all types of interaction with the public, from demonstrations and workshops to talks and presentations.

1

Don't assume that the audience is more interested in your topic than they are in you as a person. Specialists tend to be passionate about their subject, and can be surprised to find that their audience is more interested in them than their work. People are more interested in people than anything else. Take advantage of this universal human trait - share personal stories; explain why you are so passionate about your subject; let your personality show. Get them to like you as a person. **Smile.**

2

Don't offend or embarrass the audience or be judgmental. Teenage audiences, in particular, can be very sensitive to any possibility of being embarrassed or patronised. You need to win their trust quickly and treat them with respect at all times. Take account of the age and knowledge of the audience and avoid any inappropriate language or content. Although topics should be relevant to the age of the audience, e.g. smoking or STIs for a group of teenagers, try to present the facts in a non-judgmental way.

3

Remember to **be interactive**. People are more likely to pay attention if they are involved in some way. Ask lots of questions, bring volunteers up to help you, encourage people to ask questions (unless they are very young in which case you'll get myriad enquiries unrelated to your subject), and get the audience to raise their hands to have collective votes on issues. However, do make it clear, particularly to teenage audiences, that you're not going to pick on individuals.

4

Don't try to be cool. Again this may seem obvious, but if you're not 16 years old, don't act as if you are. You don't need to change your dress style or adopt their slang - just share your interests with them in a conversational and relaxed manner. Making references to popular culture to help you connect with them can be helpful, but if you do, make sure you research your references properly. Celebrity trends, music, and technology change very quickly in the world of a teenager.

5

Make your presentation relevant to your audience. Self-interest is a very strong motivator. Search for interesting examples and applications of your subject that the students can relate to in their everyday lives. These connections will help to bring your topic alive for the audience. An effective way to keep the audience's attention is to introduce 'hooks' throughout your talk, creating curiosity, uncertainty, anticipation, surprise, amusement, amazement and wonder to stimulate the audience's imagination.

6

Don't forget that you are "cursed by knowledge." As an expert it is very hard to appreciate what it was like before you had this deep level of understanding. The greater your expertise, the more "cursed" your explanations can become. You therefore need to think very carefully about all your explanations – introduce jargon alongside other more accessible phrases, break down your explanations into smaller steps and give time for new information to be absorbed. Judging the correct level to pitch your ideas at is difficult, particularly with school students. So make it easy for yourself – ask questions during the talk to get immediate feedback about their understanding and talk to the teacher before the visit about how much they may already know about the subject.

7

Don't try to do too much. This is an easy mistake to make. Less is often more. With younger audiences it is particularly important to identify a couple of key messages and concentrate on conveying these in a variety of different ways. You should be able to sum up your central point in a single sentence.

8

Try not to show fear. Unlike most adults, children and young people have not learnt (or choose not) to disguise their feelings of boredom. They also tend to be more unpredictable in their behaviour. Try not to let these concerns show when you present to them. Remember that the audience almost always wants you to succeed - your insecurities will just make them uncomfortable too. Adopt confident body language, slow your delivery down, and use strong eye contact.

9

Remember to ask for feedback. If you obtain feedback from every audience you talk to you will receive valuable information about how successfully you pitched your presentation to that particular audience. Be flexible – take account of feedback and adapt your presentation in future to make it more user-friendly.

10

Consider further training. Communication skills are essential in all aspects of our work and social lives. There are numerous general and specialised communication skills courses available. If you do a lot of work with the public, particularly school children, consider undergoing training to help you get the most out of the experience.

Remember to relax and enjoy yourself and hopefully your audience will as well!