



# PART 4—PRESENTATION SKILLS

Notes

Notes

## 4.8 Politically Correct

We all react negatively to improper or offensive personal comments so:

- Don't make a sarcastic reference to the city you're visiting if you do traveling seminars.
- Don't make a reference to an age group, gender, race, weight, dress code, religion, and so forth.
- Be aware of stereotypes.
- Never draw attention to poor performance no matter how worthy your intentions might be. Students are never lifted by words that identify them as losers, even though you intended to motivate them.
- Watch your language; what may be colorful and contemporary to you can easily be offensive to members of your audience. Don't try to "fit in" with your students by using inappropriate language or crude expressions.
- Don't "turn the tables" on a student. They can criticize *you*, but if you criticize *them*, you'll lose their respect and admiration.



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section *Your Presentation*  
*Skills* 4.8, 4.9, 4.10,  
4.11, Summary.

## 4.9 Presentation Duration

After years of presenting and teaching we've discovered that there's a 75:15-minute time ratio that works best when presenting to adults. The average adult can listen with understanding for 75 minutes and then need a 15-minute break. The simple act of having a set duration for teaching segments allows students to focus on learning rather than wondering when the next break will be.

Regular breaks maximize attention span. While it may seem difficult to incorporate this rule into technical training, it's important to be aware of the natural limitations of your students.

## 4.10 Talking Speed

Studies indicate that people speak at an average rate of 120 to 150 words per minute, but the brain can absorb the meaning of words when spoken at up to 300 words per minute. However, be sure you speak clearly and make sure your students are capable of understanding the subject if you speak at a fast rate. If you have a strong accent, or talk too softly consider taking voice lessons. Be sure you enunciate your words clearly; don't slur them.

Recognize the importance of silence or a pause in your presentation at appropriate times. Increasing your talking speed can be used to emphasize an area of passion and decreasing it can emphasize an extremely important point. A great instructor will couple talking speed, pitch, and inflection with eye contact and body language for more impact.

## 4.11 Voice

Your voice gives the students their first introduction to you and their first impression about you. It, along with your grammar, will communicate joy, nervousness, anticipation, authority, or boredom. Be sure your voice communicates authority and competence. Practice changing the pitch and intensity of your voice and don't speak in a monotone. Use changes of inflection and volume to add emphasis to key points.

Talk loudly enough to be clearly heard and emphasize key words. Employ a sound system where necessary. Pause between your thoughts. Practice out loud and record yourself. Ask yourself, "Will this tone of voice keep someone's interest?" Insert emotion into your voice when you talk.

Be careful not to overuse words such as “like,” “uh,” “um,” and so forth. It’s easy to overuse these words to gather your thoughts when you’re unprepared or nervous. The better your grammar, the more professional and authoritative you’ll sound. Perfection isn’t the goal because you may end up turning your students off. Do make every effort to avoid colloquialisms, slang, or trendy forms of speech or phrases.

**Author’s Comment:** A “colloquialism” is generally a local or regional dialect expression, such as the use of “y’all” rather than “you all,” or “gonna” rather than “going to.”

Recording yourself is one way to evaluate speech patterns and improve your presentation.

## 4.12 Summary

Eye contact is critical to the success of your presentation. Remember, the way you move your hands is part of your body language so be aware of what you do with them.

The proper use of humor makes any classroom setting more enjoyable for everyone, but be careful when using it because you must never be offensive.

Moving around the room helps your students remain focused and can reduce the amount of stress you might be feeling. Use your tone of voice and talking speed to add energy and passion to your presentation.

Notes