

# 1

## **What Makes Some Presentations Good?**

Key concepts in this chapter:

- Types of presentations.
- What do you think contributes to good presentation?
- What others think contributes to good presentation.
- Five categories to work with.
- Content, structure, self-presentation, interaction and presentation aids.
- Subject- and place-differences in expectations.
- Some people appear to break all of the rules.
- What contributes to bad presentations?

This chapter encourages us to think about what makes presentations good, and then follows this with an analysis of what many others have suggested. The chapter will also consider what tends to be viewed as bad presentation and what most often goes wrong in presentations. Three case studies and additional content will illustrate how the subject, venue and circumstances influence acceptable practice. A central aim of this chapter is to demystify the essential elements of what makes some presentations good, particularly to encourage those new to presenting. Most people agree on what makes presentations good and the characteristics of good presentations are not particularly surprising. Good content, understandable structure, interactions between presenter and audience, reasonable self-presentation and helpful use of presentation aids are all elements of good practice. There are subject differences in expectation, but new presenters should be able to research what is acceptable in their own discipline. It is rare for presenters to do everything 'right' and there is a lot of scope for individual self-expression.

As we explore the characteristics of good presentations, we should also have in our minds the range of possible presentations. New presenters are often asked to undertake research project presentations as their first experience, either individually or in small groups. At a later stage in their career they may give a departmental seminar or a short conference presentation. Alternatively they may prepare for a poster presentation. Most researchers find themselves contributing to a research group presentation at some stage. More experienced professionals will be thinking about contributing to a panel presentation or to a symposium. Researchers at the peak of their career may be enticed to offer a keynote presentation to a large international conference. Although the range is significant all of these presentation-types have much in common.

## Brainstorming the issues: what makes presentations good?

Let's start with your views on what makes a good presentation. I do not think that it would be possible, or desirable, to impose a fixed external model of a good presentation on to everyone. For one thing, it would not work as it ignores our own individual strengths and weaknesses that we really do need to address. For another, it would result, if successful, in very dull conferences and meetings! So, let's start with your views.

**Think about the last really good presentation that you went to: a lecture, a conference presentation, a sales pitch or, as a last resort, a television presentation. Write down six things that you thought were good about the presentation.**

Use a blank piece of paper for this, you need to keep the list for future reference. If possible, please do this task before you read on or look at the figures in this chapter.

## What others say

### Common responses

When I facilitate staff development workshops on 'Presenting your Research at Conferences' I ask participants to do this task before attending the workshop.

I am confident that generally they do. I also use the task as an initial activity for pairs of participants in the early stages of the workshop. Participants at this stage are still apprehensive about the workshop. They do not know other participants and it is important that they rapidly feel at ease with them and with me. They need an activity that they feel comfortable with, that they can contribute to and will make them feel that they have something in common with other participants. If the task produced too many differences it would not work in this way. If each participant identified particular aspects of a presentation that were good for them but not for others, then this initial group activity would be more divisive than community-building. So here is the point: **Generally people from academic backgrounds, from all subject areas that I have experience of, have common views on what makes presentations good.** This applies to experienced academics and young postgraduate students alike. Of course there are individual differences and subject differences and I will describe these later. Naturally much of the detail emerges with differences of opinion, later; but generally people agree on a whole range of key issues. As I watch and listen to pairs or small groups of participants describe their experiences of good presentations I see and hear the surprise and relief that their views are commonly held views and that they do have things in common with other participants. It is at this stage that I see people relax into the workshop and start to really get involved.

Within the workshop I usually record the views of individuals and small groups on a flip chart. I ask each pair to identify one aspect of a presentation that they think is good. Sometimes individuals within the pair modify the phrase used by the spokesperson, but generally members of the pair reach a consensus on the statement. We then briefly discuss the statement in the wider group and it is unusual for the statement to be radically different from that on the lists of all other pairs. Then I ask another group to identify another aspect, and so on. A typical flip chart, after this activity, looks something like Figure 1.1 (this is not a reproduction from any particular workshop but a synthesis from many).

There follows a period of comparison, regrouping and consolidation. Some statements turn out to be quite similar to others and can be combined. Most importantly we try to group statements so as to reduce the number of variables that we will work on in the remaining workshop. Subdivision in this way is useful if it identifies clear elements of our own practice that we can work on to improve. It is clear from Figure 1.1 that some statements are about the presentation itself (e.g. 'The presentation had a logical structure'), while others

FIGURE 1.1

**A typical flip chart record of workshop participants' views on what aspect of a presentation they think as good.**

Uses good examples		Good timing
Its level was right for the audience	The presentation had a logical structure	The central ideas were summarized at the end
Appropriate use of data	I could take useful notes	I knew where the presentation was going
To the point; not much waffle	She looked at the audience	She knew her subject well
He handled the questions well	It seemed honest	Did not read from a script
	Fluent speaker	He asked the audience some questions and got answers
She had a professional appearance	Good use of English	She had charisma
He engaged with the audience from the start	She looked relaxed	The slides were clear and useful
She spoke to the audience	She was enthusiastic	He did not just read his PowerPoint bullet points

are more about the presenter (e.g. 'She looked at the audience'). This is one useful subdivision. Perhaps you can look at your own list and decide how easy it would be to apply this subdivision.

There are other fairly natural divisions. In relation to the presentation, it is useful to separate its structure from its content. Indeed, in Chapter 4, this is an important design feature that we will examine in depth. One other division is possibly less intuitive but I think that it provides a sound basis for further analysis and improvement. In relation to the presenter, rather than the presentation, I think that it is useful to divide aspects of how the presenter interacts with the audience from how the presenter 'presents' her- or himself.

This analysis gives us four major subdivisions: Structure, Content, Interaction and Self-Presentation. In my experience of many workshops, dividing the statements of what makes presentations good into these four categories proves to be relatively easy and occurs without controversy.

There is one other category that is important to us, and groups differ in how they want to work with it. Many presentations, but certainly not all, make substantial use of audio-visual or presentation aids. Workshop participants have suggested almost universally that the way the presenter works with audio-visual

aids is a substantial factor in deciding whether a presentation is good or bad; but the precise details of what is good or bad practice in their use varies considerably. It is arguable that presentation aids and their use actually form part of the content of a presentation, influence and describe its structure, provide a mechanism for interacting with the audience and provide a platform for the presenter's self-presentation. On this basis no separate category for the use of audio-visual aids is needed. I sometimes make this argument but invariably lose it. The workshop participants value the adoption of a separate category for presentation aids, so we shall maintain it here and discuss the issue further; both below and in Chapter 3.

Figure 1.2 provides my attempt to categorize the statements provided in Figure 1.1. Can you undertake the same categorization of your statements? Do you have a list that includes completely different statements? Do you have views about what makes a good presentation that are similar to the views of others or are your views different?

### **Odd responses?**

There will always be a variety of views. Academic staff at universities and colleges are perhaps a particularly diverse group, drawn together only by a common desire to research and teach, and often with very little else in common. There is no reason why everyone in this group should hold the same views on presentation style and every reason why there should be some individuals with different views.

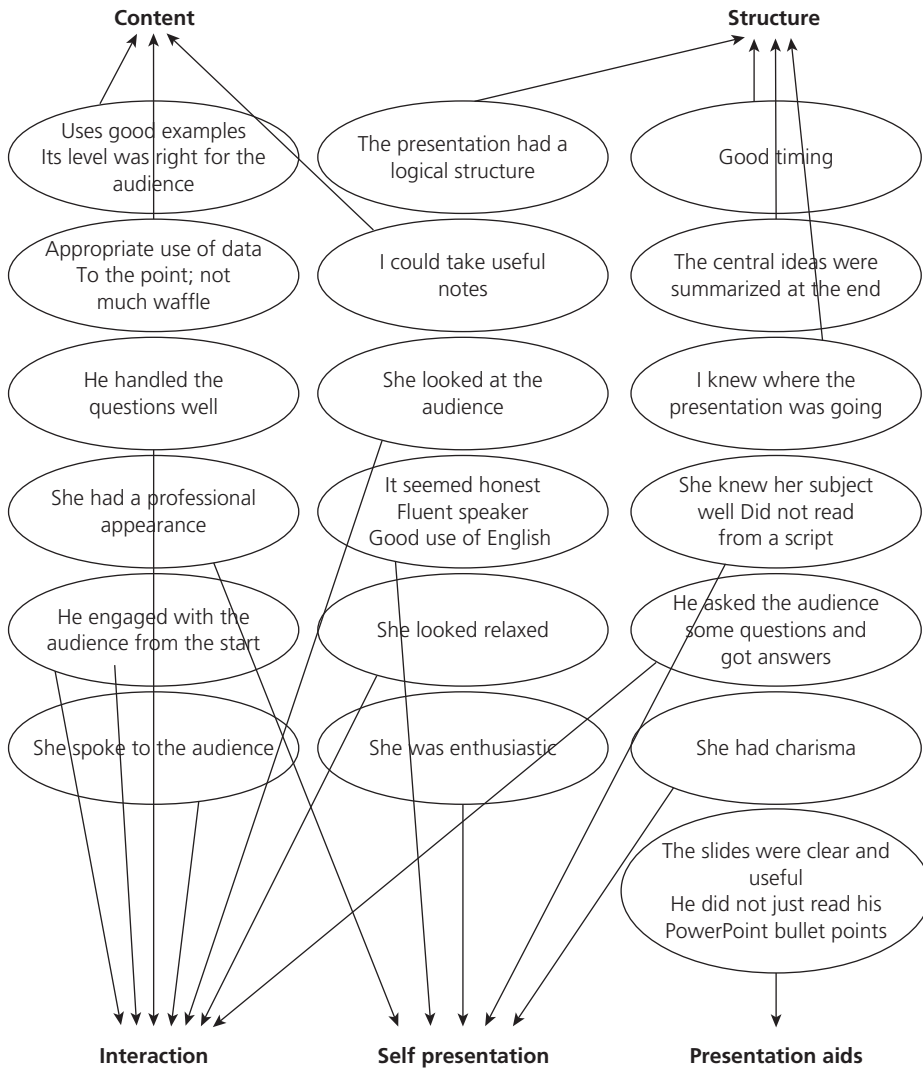
What surprises me most, however, is that it is very rare for individuals to have markedly different views at this stage. Participants may feel that they personally cannot achieve the standards expressed in the group activity and this may influence their expression of their views. I have also encountered individuals who feel unable to say what they think makes a good presentation, but who are perfectly able to express what makes a bad presentation. There is presumably some individual-difference psychology here that I am not experienced in interpreting (but I do have my own ideas about this!).

Perhaps your statements, about what makes a presentation good, are particularly different from those provided in Figure 1.1. Is that a problem? Figure 1.1 represents the best combination of preferences that I can generate, based on the views of numerous workshop participants over several years. They are also fairly self-evident. Generally speaking, no one would expect a

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FIGURE 1.2

The same record as in Figure 1.1 but here categorized as views on content, structure, self-presentation, interaction and presentation aids.



presentation lacking in structure to be particularly good, or a presenter who uses no examples of relevance to the audience to be particularly engaging. Most of this is fairly down-to-earth. But then consider the experiences of most academics. They attend lectures, conferences and seminars, mostly in their own subject areas

and mostly given by people that they know. Does this fit with your own experience? Add to this the fact that, for most of us, many presentations that we attend are 'not that good'. Very few would ever exemplify all of the positive attributes listed in Figure 1.1. If we are lucky, some of them would display some of these positive attributes. Figure 1.1 is therefore a wish-list, synthesized from the wishes of many, rather than an expectation. Your wish-list might be different from Figure 1.1, but that does not make it less desirable for you.

There is another factor. Most of the key statements in Figure 1.1 are rather broad. 'She knew her subject well' is not particularly precise. It represents an impression given by the presenter to the audience. It could have been achieved in a variety of ways; some of which may have been illusory, rather than real. The statement provides a broad aim but not enough detail to enable us to determine how this particular feat was done. Hidden in this breadth could have been any number of precise statements. Perhaps your statements do not match those in Figure 1.1 because you chose to address the issue at a different level.

For now we must address the five key considerations described in Figure 1.2

## Some conclusions: five key considerations

For much of the rest of this book we will work with five categories of statements about what makes presentations good. These are now described.

### **Content**

This is the core of what is said in a presentation and in many respects the easiest thing for a presenter to change or adapt. Audiences tend to appreciate content that matches the presentation's title and delivered at a pace and level to suit the audience.

### **Structure**

Audiences acknowledge that structures can take many forms but generally they appreciate some indication of the major subdivisions of the presentation and other details such as how long it is likely to last and whether, or not, questions and answers form part of the presenter's plans.

## Self-presentation

Audiences like honest presenters, or at least presenters who appear to be honest. They also tend to like enthusiastic presenters but to dislike over-enthusiastic presenters. Most importantly they appreciate presenters who appear to know what they are talking about. Much of this depends on how audiences interpret what they see or hear.

## Interaction

Most audiences want to feel as if the presenter has noticed that they are there. A presenter who talks to a whiteboard and fails to look at people in the audience is generally not appreciated.

## Audio-visuals or presentation aids

For presentations that make use of audio-visual aids this often is the 'big one'. Well-used aids can contribute positively to all four categories above. Badly-used aids generally just get labelled as badly-used.

## Subject differences, place differences and humour

Consider the following statement:

**Everyone knows that academics tend to display tribal characteristics. The tribes relate most strongly to the subject or discipline. Of course we should avoid stereotyping this diverse profession but aspects of clothing, speech and body language do often indicate whether the professor in front of us specializes in modern history, business studies or computer science.**

Actually, in my experience, this is nonsense. Certainly if I had to guess someone's academic subject from their clothing, speech or body language, I think I would fail dismally. People in academia are just too diverse for this. However, I would have a better chance if I saw their presentation style. Despite what is recorded above about academics' (from all subjects) views on what makes presentations



good, when it actually comes to presenting there are subject differences. It is almost as if people have their own views on what makes the best presentations but that their discipline imposes constraints on how they actually present.

One of the clearest expressions of this is how acceptable it is for a presenter to read from a script. Almost universally, academic staff tell me that the appearance of spontaneous speaking makes for a better presentation than reading from a script. But many academic staff from the humanities then go on to tell me that this is fine for others, but for them, in their subject setting, at their particular conferences, seminars and meetings, they will be expected to prepare a script, to have it in front of them and to stick to it. Some go so far as to say that they are expected to remember it verbatim, so that they can speak to the audience without appearing to read the script. These academic staff tell me that the words in their presentation have to be carefully crafted and that there is no room for improvisation. Given that a script is necessary, they either have to learn it word for word or they must read from the script. Most of these presenters probably do something in between. The consequences of this imperative, along with other subject-related design factors, will be addressed in Chapter 4.

How people perceive the good and bad in presentations is also greatly dependent on factors that relate to place and related circumstances. Presentations can easily be viewed as too formal or too informal, depending on where they are given and the circumstances. Keynote presentations are expected to provide something different from the run of the mill presentations that follow. Presentations for a departmental seminar are generally longer and less formal than those for a major international conference. But how can you judge just what will be appropriate and what will not? The key here is really to anticipate what the audience expects, or will cope with, and this requires a degree of audience-research.

Humour is perhaps the toughest of all attributes to identify as good or bad. Participants on my workshops give mixed messages here. Some like humour in a presentation and some do not. Figure 1.1 does not include a reference to humour; although many individuals include it on their lists of good aspects of presentations, many do not and have voiced opposition to its inclusion. I have not found a particular correlation to subject, gender or age here. Readers of this book will know that there are other sources of guidance for presenting at conferences, seminars and meetings (some of them are listed in the Bibliography). Many of these recommend the use of humour in presentations. Lenn Millbower, as one of many proponents, has written an article for Presenter's

University, a website devoted to presentation skills. Lenn's article, 'Laugh and learn', suggests that:

**Laughter is an important component in any presentation. Even when (the) presenter ignores humor, the attendees find it, sometimes at the presenter's expense. The need for laughter is so strong that participants seek out opportunities to laugh throughout every seminar. They do so with good reason. It is natural and appropriate to use humor in learning situations. It is, for a number of reasons, also demonstrative of solid instructional design. (Millbower, 2003)**

The article is persuasive and I do agree with much of it, but I still have reservations. Perhaps the issue is primarily about audience expectations. Generally, I like to make people laugh in informal presentations, for example at departmental seminars, because at heart I do agree with much of what Lenn Millbower says. (Naturally, I want them to laugh with me, not at me.) But I tend not to attempt to make people laugh in formal presentations, for example, at major conferences. Partly this is because I am not brave enough; partly it is because I do not know the audience well enough to be sure about what will be seen as humorous and what will not; but mostly it is because participants at the important conferences that I go to do not expect me to be funny. They might expect other, better known, presenters to be funny, but not me. Perhaps I need to practise being humorous more. Perhaps we all do, so that humour becomes more universally acceptable at conferences. But in the meantime, humour remains a highly personal aspect of good or bad presentations.

Many of these issues will re-emerge in later chapters.

## Three case studies

These three case studies consider near extremes in presentation style and they are included to encourage readers to consider alternative views on what makes presentations good.

Not all lecturers display characteristics of the 'absent-minded professor' but some do and there does appear to be room in academic settings for amiable, avuncular but (apparently) poorly organized presenters. Cast your mind back to your last conference. Did you spot one? Maybe you even have one in your department? What are their characteristics? Perhaps a shoelace is frequently undone. Perhaps their hair is untidy, their tie has a stain on it or is even

tucked into their trousers? Perhaps they approach the podium with an armful of unruly papers, stumbling on the way. Do they have a wild look in their eyes? Do they carry an overflowing handbag? Do they have a spelling problem? But do they always have some interesting things to say, possibly said with humour? Do they give the sort of presentation that you remember? Are they, perhaps, actually, good presenters in an odd sort of way? Not that you would want to mimic them of course, but let's not be too dismissive of variety (Case study 1.1).

At the other extreme we should consider the outright professional. Is there still a place for the presenter who presents in the same way as they (allegedly) did in the Royal Institution in 1900? In my own subject areas I think that presentations like this are the exception rather than the rule, but this is not necessarily so in other subject areas. I know that colleagues in history and English departments often do still admire, perhaps even expect, this level of professionalism. In some respects we aim for the *appearance* of this professionalism in a range of other settings. Broadcasters, for example, often give extraordinarily good presentations (with the illusion of spontaneity and the precision of the prepared text) but they also benefit from the autocue, direction, rehearsals and retakes (Case study 1.2).

The notion of careful use of presentation aids is then considered in our third case as we experience a struggling undergraduate student who produced a presentation that impressed her peers (Case Study 1.3).

## **CASE STUDY 1.1**

### **The disorganized lecturer**

Simon carried an armful of papers and overhead transparencies to the podium, thanking the Chairman on the way. He spent some time sorting out his aids and testing the overhead projector (OHP) before he looked at the audience and introduced his presentation. He had no notes in front of him and there was no indication that his presentation was remembered word for word; sentences seemed to be lacking in some aspects of grammar and there were quite a few *ers* and *ums* as Simon thought about how to express particular concepts. The introduction seemed to lack organization, some important aspects were given as if an afterthought, but I was

in no doubt about where the presentation was going and what I was expected to get out of it. He moved to the OHP quite quickly after his introduction and placed a transparency on it. He turned to check that the slide was in focus and that it could be seen, but did not appear to notice that it was not straight with respect to the screen. While Simon spoke about aspects of the figure he pointed sometimes to the figure on the OHP with his finger and sometimes to the projected image, again with his finger (either he had not noticed that a laser pointer had been provided or he had decided not to use it). He looked everywhere, and at everyone, but also took some time out to look at his figures as if he was trying to interpret them himself, there and then. As he did so he spoke his thoughts out aloud, debating the possible interpretations himself. He had quite a few figures to show us and certainly some were just flashed before our eyes while others were quite possibly lost in the pile. They were not really necessary, he explained. Simon ran out of time and the Chairman had to stand to indicate that it was time to move on. This seemed to prompt Simon, not to leave, but to summarize his presentation. This he did with clarity in perhaps 30 seconds. He left us with a list of questions that were to form the basis of his research, and perhaps that of others, until the next conference.

This presentation probably does not conform to many of the statements of what makes presentations good, listed in Figure 1.1. In relation to our five key considerations, a 'critical friend' might make the following observations:

*Content:* of significant interest to the audience and at about the right level.

*Structure:* appeared to lack structure but all of the intended outcomes described early on were achieved.

*Self-presentation:* unorthodox but clearly enthusiastic and committed.

*Interaction:* useful examples, good eye contact, engaging – we were left with some interesting questions to think about.

*Presentation aids:* unorthodox, tending to sloppy, but some visual aids were completely integrated into the presentation.

Was it a bad presentation? I think that, actually, it was a good presentation. I had seen Simon present before so I knew his style. I knew what Simon was going to talk about from the first few minutes. I felt engaged by the presentation and I enjoyed being part of his apparent exploration of the issues. I remember aspects of this presentation far more than any other in that conference. I would not try to mimic it because I know that I could not; nor would I advise others to use Simon as their role model.

If you think that this is 'you' then I do advise you to seek feedback from trusted colleagues. When the comedian Jimmy Tarbuck was interviewed on the radio programme *Desert Island Discs*, he said that veteran comedian Eric Morecambe had once given Jimmy some feedback on his highly individual style as a comic. Eric has apparently commented that Jimmy had something special and he recommended that Jimmy should never attempt to analyse it. I might offer the same advice to Simon, if I were asked, but I suspect that Simon already has confidence in his ability to present, his way.

## **CASE STUDY 1.2**

### **The organized professional**

James was the outgoing President of a learned society. His duty was to present the Presidential Address at the Society's annual conference in a neighbouring country. Preparing this presentation was his preoccupation for months before the conference. James had also been the Chairman of the academic department in which I was a postdoctoral research fellow. I saw the work that he put into his presentation. I saw the 'lights on late' in the department's lecture theatre. I heard small samples of the presentation being practised and revised as I walked past his door. I was also giving a presentation at the conference but I must admit that I did nowhere near as much preparation.

Near the end of the conference, everyone gathered in the largest lecture room available. The audience was hushed. James was introduced by the conference convener and he walked to the lectern. James was dressed impeccably. He

looked at ease and in command. He had a typed script in his hand but laid this firmly on the lectern. He knew exactly where the controls for the lights and audio-visual aids were and he used them faultlessly. Clearly he had practised in this room as well as in our lecture theatre at home. James spoke fluently to everyone in the room. I noticed that he looked at me for a time before he turned his attention to others in the room. His presentation was on his own research topic but was designed to be of interest to a wide range of listeners. There was something in it for just about everyone, including a number of well-chosen examples to enable lay-members of the audience to stay involved. He used well-chosen slides to illustrate points and avoided the use of technical terms. Where these were necessary he defined them and illustrated their use with the slides. James used a pointer to identify important areas of his slides. James had provided an introduction to his presentation so that we could follow its structure as it took place. The conference programme had also provided clear times for its start and finish. It started on time. It also finished on time; exactly. Clearly much of James's preparations had involved practice to ensure that the presentation finished on time. I think that it was memorized, word for word.

The audience applauded. They knew that they had experienced a professional academic's professional presentation. It might not have been the presentation that everyone would have given (there was, for example, no humour in it and I doubt that many in the audience would have been capable of such faultless timing) but I am confident that everyone in the room admired its professionalism.

In my own subject areas I think that presentations like this are rare exceptions; but this is not so in other subject areas. In relation to our five key considerations, another 'critical friend' might make the following observations:

*Content:* perfect for the occasion and delivered at a level appropriate to the full range of delegates.

*Structure:* impeccable; easily understood by all in the audience.

*Self-presentation:* totally professional.

*Interaction:* good examples, good eye contact, possibly a little 'remote' but perfect for the occasion.

*Presentation aids:* high quality visual aids used to illustrate points very well.

### **CASE STUDY 1.3**

#### **The undergraduate project presentation**

Clare was very worried about her project presentation and I was not surprised. She had not actually done as much work on her project as I had hoped. (She led a very active social life alongside her third-year undergraduate studies.) Nor was Clare a high-achiever in her academic assessments. She was, however, not shy. She could hold her own in any conversation or group activity. The presentation was not graded but it was compulsory. I think that Clare had anticipated her likely problems well. She thought that she would stand up in front of the group and forget what to say in exactly the same way that she forgets what to write in an examination. She admitted that she was not particularly interested in her project topic but didn't think that was the real problem. Even if she were asked to talk about her favourite pop group she would still find it difficult to maintain a structured presentation. The important points just didn't come to her mind at the right time. Clare knew that she could read from a script but also that she would be disappointed in herself if she resorted to this again. She wanted desperately to be congratulated by her peers for presenting well.

I suggested that she tried to use PowerPoint to add structure, and key information, to her presentation. This was in the mid-1990s. PowerPoint was not widely used for undergraduate presentations at that time and we did struggle to get everything

set up. (The facility was then offered to other students, several of whom did adopt it.) Clare initially agreed to use PowerPoint to prepare overhead transparencies, but after working with the software for a day or so, felt prepared to use PowerPoint itself to deliver the slides. She was glad that she did. The presentation worked wonderfully for her. Clare's natural confidence and ability to 'chat' around any topic was exactly complemented by PowerPoint's delivery of Clare's crisp bullet points and structure. Clare's peers were absolutely amazed, but I wasn't. With the right tools that girl could go far.

An important point here is that of anticipation. Clare and I knew what her problems were likely to be and found a tool that enabled her to gain maximum credit for her strengths while having her weaknesses supported. In relation to our five key considerations, Clare's 'critical friend' might make the following observations:

*Content:* of interest to the audience and at about the right level. We had heard about Clare's project in part, but it was good to see it all come together here.

*Structure:* clear structure, clearly presented using PowerPoint.

*Self-presentation:* Clare looked so confident and really spoke well about her project. We had no idea that she had taken it so seriously. She seems to know lots and did make it clear when there were areas that she did not cover in her project.

*Interaction:* Clare spoke to everyone in the audience as if we were her best friends. It was more like a chat about the topic than a formal presentation, but that got us all involved.

*Presentation aids:* Clare's slides were to the point. Perhaps some of the text was not necessary but it clearly helped Clare to keep on track.

## What makes some presentations bad?

This question paraphrases one that will be considered in depth in Chapter 8. What tends to go wrong? It is also possible to reverse most of the statements in Figure 1.1 to list aspects of presentations that most people consider to be bad. The list in Table 1.1 attempts to combine these two concepts by relating what most often goes wrong to characteristics of presentations most often considered to be undesirable. With the exception of arriving late at the conference or



TABLE 1.1

**This table describes aspects of presentations that often fail and relates these to commonly reported views on what makes presentations good and bad.**

<b>WHAT TENDS TO GO WRONG</b>	<b>WHAT MAKES PRESENTATIONS GOOD</b>	<b>WHAT MAKES PRESENTATIONS BAD</b>
Lack of content	Its level was right for the audience I could take useful notes To the point; not much waffle She knew her subject well	Level was wrong for the audience Audience cannot take notes Waffle Not knowing your subject well
Boring content	Did not read from a script She was enthusiastic She had charisma	Reading from a script Lacking enthusiasm Lacking charisma
Timing	Good timing	Poor timing
You lose the audience	The presentation had a logical structure The central ideas were summarized at the end I knew where the presentation was going	Lack of a logical structure Not providing a summary at the end Not identifying where the presentation is going at the start
Nerves	She looked relaxed Good use of English Fluent speaker	Not looking relaxed Not using good English or speaking fluently
Is it believable?	Appropriate use of data It seemed honest She had a professional appearance	Inappropriate use of data Appearing to be dishonest Having an unprofessional appearance
Inability to interact with the audience	Uses good examples She looked at the audience He engaged with the audience from the start She spoke to the audience	Not using good examples Not looking at the audience Not engaging with the audience from the start Not speaking to the audience
Questions and answers	He handled the questions well He asked the audience some questions and got answers	Handling questions badly Asking the audience some questions but not getting answers
Technology	He did not just read his PowerPoint bullet points The slides were clear and useful	Just reading your PowerPoint bullet points Slides neither clear nor useful

meeting, this table does illustrate most of the attributes of presentations that academic staff and postgraduate students most often express as poor.

## Summary

I hope that sections in this chapter illustrate that there are few strict rules in presentation. In general, not everyone will agree with generalizations all of the time. But Table 1.1 does give a reasonable guide to what most of us need to do, most of the time, to deliver good presentations. As we shall see, some things are easier to achieve than others!

## Reference

Millbower, L. (2003) 'Laugh and Learn'. Presenter's University <http://www.presentersuniversity.com/courses/content/laugh.php> (accessed 7 January 2003).

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## Encouragement for new presenters

Those new to presenting should take heart from the contents of this chapter.

- Most people agree on what makes presentations good.
- The characteristics of good presentations are not surprising: good content, understandable structure, interactions between presenter and audience, reasonable self-presentation and helpful use of presentation aids.
- There are subject differences in expectation, but you should be able to research what is acceptable in your subject.
- It is rare for a presenter to do everything 'right' and your own experience demonstrates that some presentations are very poor. You can do better than that. Much better.

This book aims to help you overcome your weaknesses and build on your strengths.

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