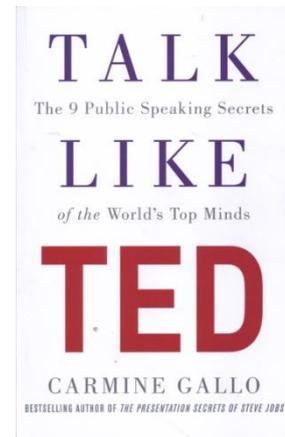


TALK LIKE TED

Would you like to present as well as a TED presenter?

These tips are going to help you do just that. Carmine Gallo wrote **'Talk like Ted'**. We turned it into 10 tips for a scholarly presentation.



1. Find your motivation

Show your passion with the subject. This is contagious. You cannot inspire others if you are not inspired yourself.



Brain scientist Jill Bolte Taylor suffered a severe brain attack and can tell a fascinating story about it. Her motto: tell a story and show your passion.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyyjU8fzEYU>

Fortunately, you don't have to have an accident to tell a story with heart and soul. In our trainings we use a simple questionnaire to get you on the right track:

- What made you excited to do this research?
- What part of your research do you enjoy the most?
- What important social result do you expect?
- What important scientific result do you expect?

2. Turn your presentation into a story

Stories are more easily picked up by the audience because they appeal not only to the mind, but also to people's feelings. A PowerPoint slide with words activates only the language processing area of the brain; stories can also address the sensory, visual and motor areas. Stories are data with a soul, says Brené Brown (professor of social work).



Brené Brown's introduction is wonderful because it is a personal anecdote, contains self-mockery and is very relatable to a scientific audience. Her story simultaneously confirms and debunks the apparent contradiction between science and storytelling:

'A couple of years ago, an event planner called me because I was going to do a speaking event. And she said, 'I am really struggling with how to write about you on the little flyer'. I asked what is the struggle, and she said I saw you speak and I was going to call you a researcher, I think. But I'm afraid that if I call you a researcher, no one will come because they'll

think you're boring and irrelevant. And I was like 'Okay.' And she said, 'But the thing I liked about your talk is that you are a storyteller, so I think what I will do is just call you a storyteller.' And of course the academic, insecure part of me was like 'You are going to call me a what?'

http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability?language=nl

Many people use PowerPoint slides that list topics, preceded by a bullet-point. With this, their story becomes a fragmented listing of small topics and loses its context. Don't do this!

3. Turn your presentation into a story 2

In the presentation training I give, I like to give scientists a useful framework for a story about scientific research. Forgive the sexist, role-affirming and anachronistic role reversal. It has become an old-fashioned fairy tale, but where you read king it may also be queen and where it says prince it may also read princess.



Once upon a time there was a kingdom and the king had a big problem (read scientific problem). Already many princes had come to the castle to solve the king's problem. But nothing worked. The king was distraught. As a last action, he concocted that the prince who could solve the problem would be allowed to marry his daughter, the beautiful Magdalene (read bring in big purse). One day, from a distant land, an unknown prince (read scientist) suddenly arrived on a white horse. He proposed a whole new method that had never been thought of before. Everyone at court came to watch as the prince set to work but unfortunately his first attempts came to nothing. And just when everyone had almost given up hope, the prince suddenly got a good result. And he solved the king's problem. He married Princess Magdalene (read published the research results in a top journal and received an ERC Grant) and they lived happily ever after.

www.toei-animation.co

4. Have a conversation with your audience

Many people lapse into formal language when making a presentation. This may be because they think that is part of a presentation or because they first wrote out the presentation and then memorized the written text. Research shows that the audience can follow your presentation better if you 'just talk' to them. Being unnecessarily difficult actually comes across as silly. Don't use difficult words where simple ones could suffice.



Gallo recommends practicing your presentation endlessly until you can give it as easily as if you were having a conversation with a friend. I think that as a scientist, you do need to practice your introduction and conclusion well because those are the parts that are best remembered, but otherwise you should rely precisely on your knowledge of the subject and your ability to spontaneously formulate good sentences.

On the other hand, I do agree with Richard Branson who says, 'Good speakers are not just lucky or talented, they work hard.' Everyone wants you to come across as relaxed and authentic, but paradoxically that requires quite a bit of preparation. After all, how can you be relaxed if you have never practiced your presentation out loud and therefore don't know how long it will take, don't know how exactly you are going to explain your charts or how your pictures will come across to the audience?

In short, prepare tremendously well, but don't lapse into a memorized text that you recite. Tell a story (see previous tips) in your own spoken language.

5. Fake it (fake it till you make it).

How we use our bodies affects how people see us. Social psychologist Amy Cuddy has shown that by changing our body expression we can also change how we see ourselves and how others see us. Having a powerful posture increases our testosterone levels and lowers our cortisol levels, making you feel more confident and superior. When you are nervous, you can adopt a powerful posture two minutes before your presentation. You will then not only appear more confident but also feel more confident.



http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are

Ways to control nerves:

- Make sure you are well prepared
- That means you've practiced all the parts a few times already
- Don't do awkward other things right before your presentation
- Do not consume coffee or alcohol immediately beforehand
- Do any breathing exercises half an hour before the presentation
- Visualize your own successful presentation
- Realize that everyone is nervous before a presentation
- Know that a little nervousness is just fine for giving a good presentation

6. Tell something new

Our brains are made to notice new, striking things. Of course, for a scientist, presenting something new is not difficult. Even if you don't have data from your research yet, at least your topic is new, or your view, or the way you are going to approach the research.

In doing so, make use of the **Upside down principle**.

By this I mean: first tell what is new, exciting, remarkable about your research, method or results. That seems like giving away your conclusion, which is actually true, but it also ensures that your audience is on the edge of their seats right away. Then you can slowly explain to them how you got there. And that's something your audience wants to know.

Gallo recommends coming up with a Twitter-friendly headline for above your presentation:

What do you want your audience to know at the end of your presentation. Write that down in no more than 140 characters. Another way to arrive at a core message of your story is to complete these sentences:

In this presentation, I want to convince you that

In this presentation, I want to show you that

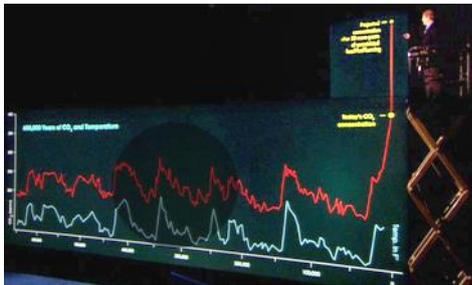
If you remember just one thing from this presentation, I hope.....



7. Provide 'open-mouth' moments

When you present something that evokes emotions, it makes people remember what is presented better. This is not obvious in a scientific context but it works well, for example, when you can zoom out from your topic to an important social problem. In medical research, for example, you can show the cure for which disease you want to contribute, how bad living with this disease is and how many people worldwide suffer from it. In environmental research, it is often not difficult to show the disastrous effects of human actions on nature. The documentary 'An Inconvenient Truth' about global warming presented by Al Gore is a good example. Gore does not shy away from any theatrical effect. He uses beautiful nature photos and makes the grim consequences of (further) global warming vivid. Famous is his graph of the increase in temperature and CO₂ concentration in which he sits on an elevated platform to show the gigantic rise.

At the same time, there is often humor in his presentation. For example in his introduction in which he refers to the fact that he once lost the presidential election: 'Hi I am Al Gore, I used to be the next president of America'.



The video of 'An Inconvenient Truth' is highly recommended. A snippet from a similar presentation can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-SV13UQXdk>

8. Don't be so serious

Gallo advises not to make yourself or your presentation too serious because our brains really like humor. My research showed that, in addition to presentation content, scientists especially like presenters who are relaxed, have vision and humor. Humor makes the audience less defensive and more open to your message. Audiences find a presenter with humor nicer and are more likely to want to do business with you than someone who is too serious.



But you certainly don't have to be funny or crack jokes to use humor.

Ask your friends when they find you funny. Is it because you are ad rem, can imitate others, have a nice facial expression, can tell tastefully about what went wrong? For example, if you can have fun recounting how in the run-up to your research all sorts of things didn't go as planned, that can be very relatable and come across as funny.

Finally, you can also use funny pictures in a presentation, but be careful with them. A scientific audience is not waiting for non-functional humor. Brené Brown's introduction (number 2 in this series) is a good example of a successful humorous introduction.

9. Stick to the 18-minute rule

Ted presentations last a maximum of 18 minutes, which is the ideal length for a presentation. It is long enough to be taken seriously and short enough for the audience to keep their attention. It also ensures that, as a presenter, you focus on the most important topics.

This is convenient because many scientific presentations (for example, at a conference) are also only 20 minutes long.



By the way, it is not easy to summarize a study in 20 minutes. It takes you more preparation time than if you are allowed to fill three quarters of an hour. You have to make choices in what exactly you want to tell (i.e., also what you are going to delete) and often you have to explain your research more simply than you really want to. Remember here that presentations are primarily suited to getting your audience excited about your research. To ensure that the audience looks you up after the presentation to talk about it further or that they are inspired to start reading your article. In the article, you can describe your results in much more detail. A presentation is not suitable for giving a lot of figures and details. The motto is: keep it short and simple.

10. Theater

To present is to perform in a theater.

In the Netherlands we know Professor Robbert Dijkgraaf, a master presenter who has taken to the theater for his public lectures. Here we see no PowerPoint slides, but an eloquent speaker who uses his facial expressions and hands to tell stories with amusing anecdotes. His passion for science shines through in his voice. His stage has fantastic sets and he uses objects to illustrate his story. For example, watch this video and start at 8 minutes:



http://www.npo.nl/dwdd-university-presenteert-het-allerkleinste-door-robbert-dijkgraaf/06-12-2013/VARA_101338307

Here Dijkgraaf tells a great story about Anthony van Leeuwenhoek and his very small microscope:

A very small magnifying glass (surprise in his voice).... And through it he saw things that no one had ever seen before

He looked at a drop of ditch water and saw tiny critters swarming.

He looked at his own blood (looks at his finger) and saw blood cells.

He looked at the semen of someone with venereal disease and saw all swarming critters. Terrible.

Let's take a look at a modern incarnation of those little beasts starring Woody Allen.

And then follows the famous scene from Woody Allen's Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex with sperm about to be launched. From 2.33.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djQ7WZlb140>