

# How to improve Young scientists presentation skills

*“A good speech should be like a woman’s skirt: long enough to cover the subject and short enough to create interest” – Winston Churchill*

# 1. How To Prepare For A Talk



# ✓ Don't Panic And Think Positive

1) If you prepare yourself well for a talk you'll be unstoppable.

2) If you are still overwhelmed by your task of 'holding a talk' make a plan and divide this big project into many smaller steps.



# ✓ Find a purpose for your talk

Your presentation might:

- Tell the audience about your topic.
- Raise awareness.
- Address important issues about your research field.
- Acknowledge someone's work.
- Be at a conference in a cool country.
- Improve your presentation skills.



# ✓ START YOUR PREPARATION

1) As a general rule, **the more time you have for preparing a talk the better it will be.** Try not to push everything until the very last minute. But don't over do it.

2) The best thing is to create specific times in your schedule for your talk preparation and stick to them. **You should aim to have your slides 95% finished 3 days before your talk.**



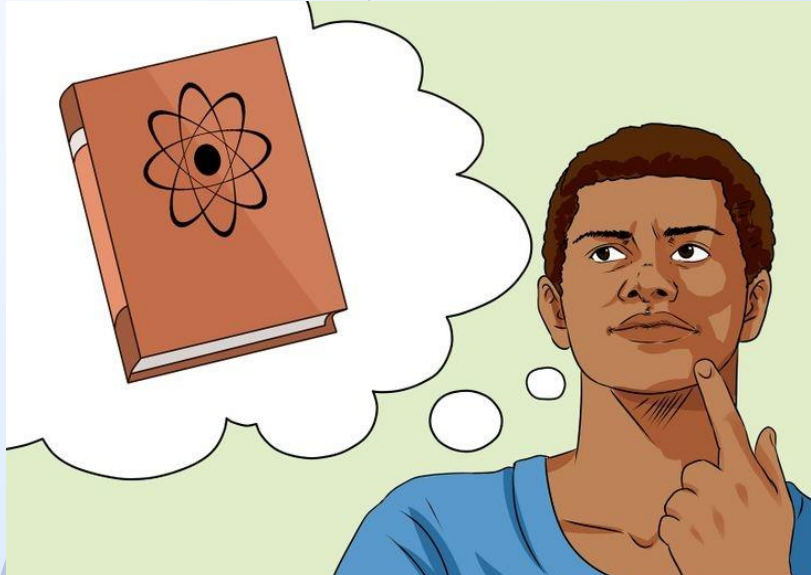


# Generating Ideas For Your Talk



1) Writing your ideas down often helps clarifying your thinking and **focuses you on your task.** In a normal state your mind is full of different emotions and thoughts so writing helps putting your thoughts into a right logical order. Don't worry if your ideas seem silly at the beginning.

# ✓ Generating Ideas For Your Talk



2) Try to capture everything that comes to your mind. Editing yourself is always easier than sitting in front of a blank page and trying to come up with perfect ideas.

The list will be endless if you keep an open mind. If you don't know exactly where to start just start anywhere. Additional ideas will follow later.

**The hardest step is the first step.**

# ✓ Know Your Audience

*'The success of your presentation will be judged not by the knowledge you send but by what the listener receives.'* – Lily Walters





# ✓ Know Your Audience

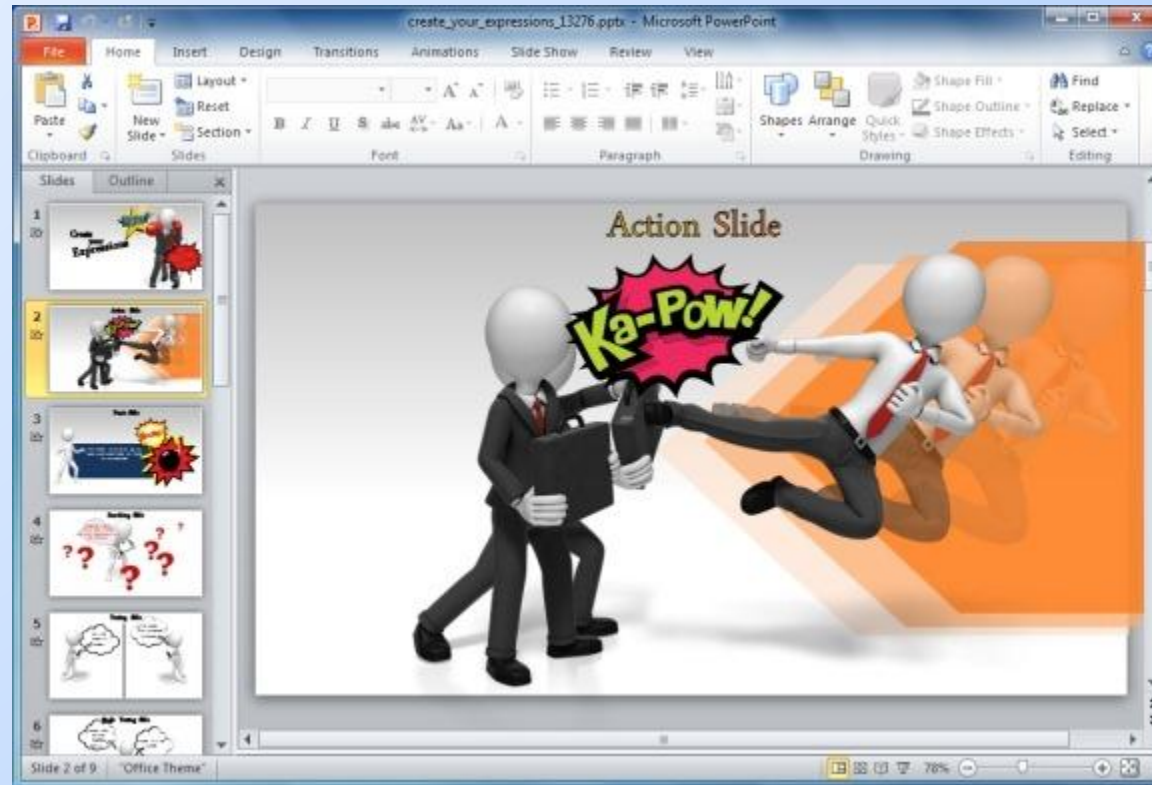
Knowing your audience and their background has a high impact on the quality and structure of your talk.

1) **If your audience comes from a broad range of backgrounds you will have to introduce your field of research saying what it is about and why it is important to do research in your field.** Don't take for granted that they know the techniques you used. Your audience will appreciate a basic description.

2) **If most of your audience consists of scientists in your field you can skip introducing it and spend more time on the novelty of your research.**



# 2. How To Prepare Slides For Your Talk

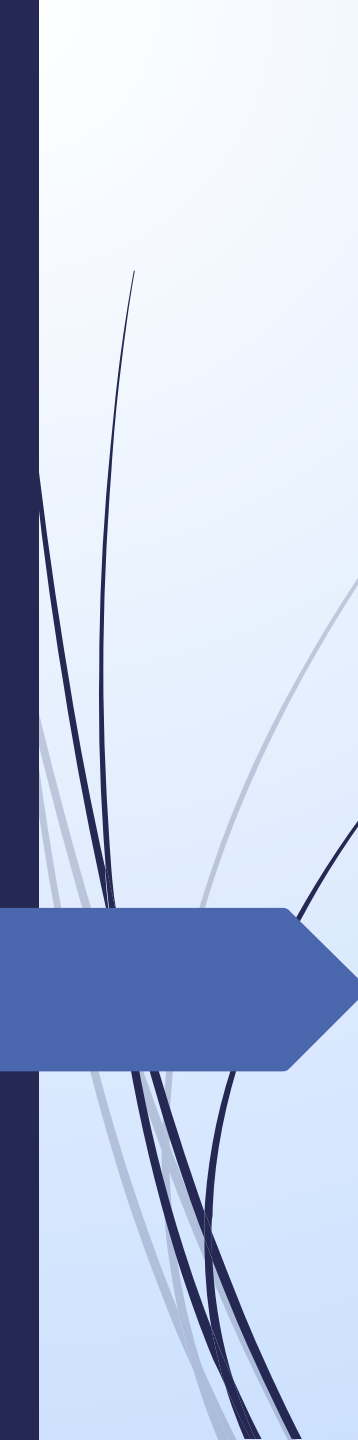


Collecting ideas in slides can produce a chaotic presentation. Do you want a more organized way to create your slides? Start from the end.

It goes like this:

First of all you need to think about the **main message of your talk**. If you had to sum up your talk in one or two sentences, what would you say?



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- Create the **acknowledgement** slide.
  - Create the **conclusions** slide. Create the slides with the images of your results.
  - Create the slides with the **methods** that people need to hear to understand how you reached your results.
  - Create the **introduction** slides.
  - Create the **title slide**

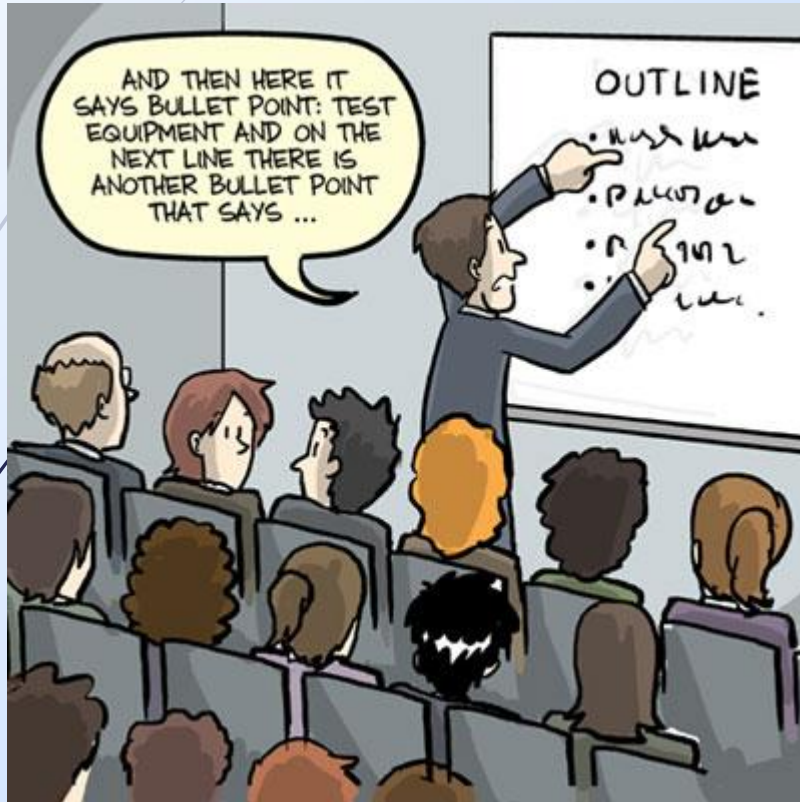
# ✓ Tips For Making Better Slides

It's easy to underestimate how important the very first slide is. However, the title page represents the first impression of you.

It's important to check the spelling and make sure you add some details apart from the title, **such as institution, your name, your email address and funding sources.**

**Put in your title as many keywords** as possible so people can guess what your talk is about. But make it short enough so people can remember most of it after they finished reading it.

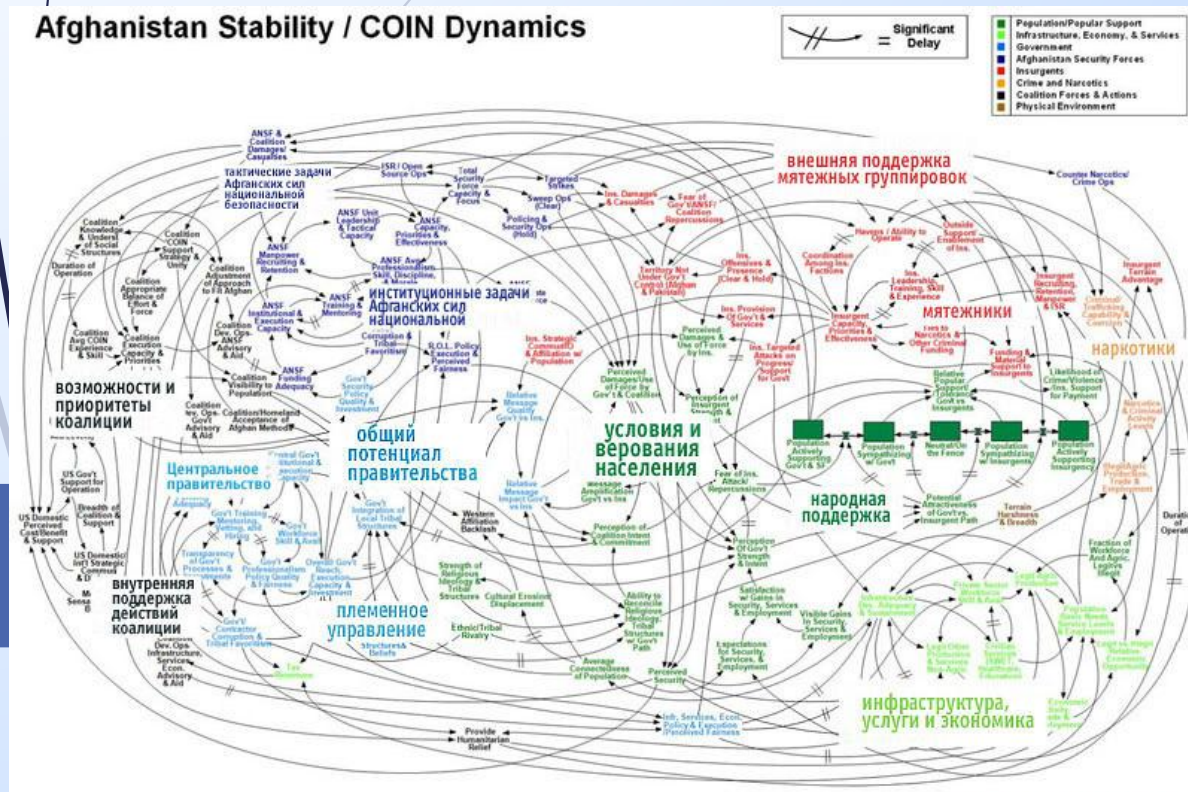
# ✓ Tips For Making Better Slides



You might be able to understand your data easily but for the audience you are often the expert in your field. Even a scientific audience can get overwhelmed by your data very quickly.

# ✓ Tips For Making Better Slides

1. Avoid having too many lines of text that you will read out loud.
2. Put only facts on your slides you want to mention during your talk.
3. It's best to avoid repetitions.
4. Make the graphs and charts simple and not too detailed.
5. As general estimate of time used for a talk: 1 slide = 1 minute of your talk.
6. Avoid using abbreviations.



# ✓ Tips For Making Better Slides

7. If necessary raise rhetorical questions or **ask questions to keep your audience concentrated.**

8. The more complex your topic is the more important is the use of analogies and metaphors instead of jargon definitions. Therefore, it's again very crucial to **know your audience members and their background** knowledge.

9. You might also use humor to explain a problem. However, **stay away from making fun of anything else than yourself!** Otherwise you might experience the depressing, long awkward silence after a bad joke.



# ✓ Pictures

It's always good to use some pictures to attract your audience.

Use pictures while explaining a difficult topic: *A picture is often worth a thousand words.*

If you are presenting pictures or figures that are not yours please **make sure you cite the source.**

As a tip: If you want to present data from a paper have a closer look on the website that published the paper. There, you can often download the specific picture as PowerPoint slide (with references already included).

**It's convenient to test your slides with a projector and not only on your computer screen.**



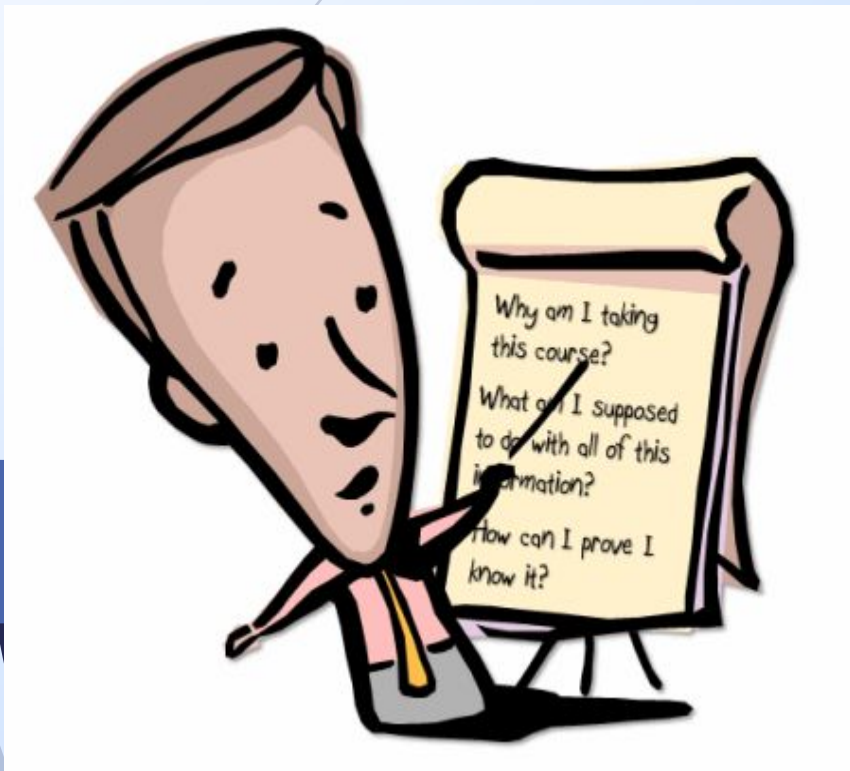
# ✓ Summaries

You should summaries or repeat some data if necessary.

If your data is excessive give a summary for each main chapter in between.

**Keeping your summaries short also prevents you from overdoing repetitions** which might make your presentation boring.

At the end of your presentation **you should present you 'take-away' message** for your audience. This message can take up to 2 slides. During your summary **try to avoid repeating too many results and generalize** as much as possible.



# ✓ Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements are important as they show your audience that you don't take more credit than you should.

- Again, as we love pictures, a group photo would be nice.
- Otherwise, tell the audience full names of contributors and what they shared.

This doesn't have to take up too much time and one short sentence for each person is plenty. It's often enough to say: *'I would like to thank x for providing/ contributing to the x data'*.



# 3. How To Be A Confident Presenter



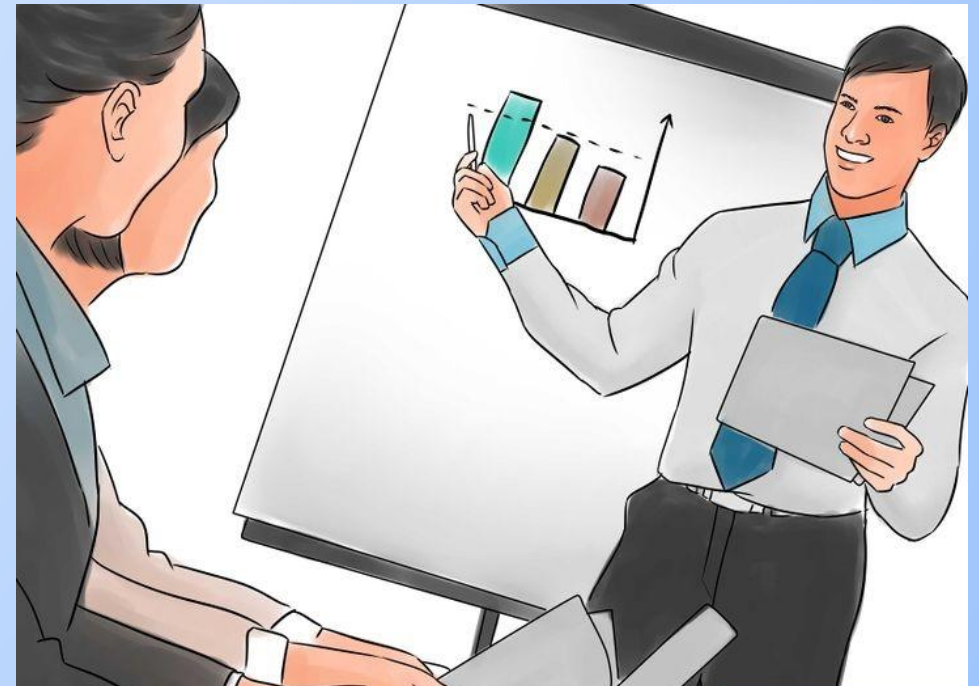


Luckily there are several things we can do to **gain confidence and become a comfortable speaker and to rock our scientific talks.**

Giving presentations is a stressful situation for most people because after all public speaking is NOT a talent but a learned skill (only practice makes perfect). To transform yourself into a confident speaker you should try to fake it until you finally become it.

## To achieve presentation nirvana there are 4 tips:

- Prepare and rehearse your presentation.
- Know what you are presenting.
- Talk to the audience.
- Improve your behavior.



# ✓ Practice Your Talk

- You should practice your talk on your own and with an audience.
- **Memorizing your talk as bullet points also gives your brain a chance to talk in a 'normal' way during your presentation.** If you prepare your slides wisely they will guide you through what you want to say and remind you to keep track.
- **Learning full sentences often ends up sounding like you are reading from a book** and if you forget only a few words you will panic.
- If you tend to lose track of time **practice your talk repeatedly with a timer.** On the day of your presentation simply keep a watch in front of you or near the projector.

# 4. How To Give A Talk





## ✓ **Arrive Early**

You should arrive **early to have enough time to talk with the chair of your session.**

**Introduce yourself to the chair and advise** on the pronunciation of your name and provide a short bio, so she/he can introduce you.

**Don't forget to hand over your slides.**

## ✓ Arrive Early

Also, arriving early will give you **a chance to get used to the room itself and its surroundings**. Go on stage and visualize yourself at the time of the presentation. Once you go up the stage for real, it will feel familiar and less intimidating.

You will also have a quiet moment **to find a place where you prefer to stay**. Everyone should see you, so don't hide behind the projector. Hiding also makes it more difficult for your audience to understand you clearly.

# ✓ Things To Bring To Your Presentation

1) The most important thing to bring along is of course **yourself**. Don't worry, your presentation will be over soon!

2) Take a **water bottle** with you, just in case.

3) **Your notes** but only BEFORE the talk.

Also, having your notes nearby will help in case of a total blackout.

4) The **laser pointer** enables you to point out things in detail.



# ✓ Body Language

## Tips To Improve Body Language

- **Try to find a middle point** where you avoid overly dramatic hand gestures or keeping your arms as still as if they are dead. If you tend to get stiff try to loosen up a bit and if you are often overexcited make an effort to relax. After all, everything will be over soon anyway.
- **Take your time to breath properly** in between and don't rush through the talk as if it is a race.
- **Smile!** Be friendly while talking.
- **If you get shaky hands** avoid using a laser pointer. Instead you can use words like 'In the upper left corner of the figure we see...'

# ✓ Body Language

**Additional Tip For Women:** If you usually don't wear high heels avoid wearing them during your talk or make sure you practice walking in them for some days in advance. Otherwise you tend to lean your body too much forward, which looks awkward for the audience.



# ✓ Be Honest To Yourself And The Audience

Especially in stress situations like holding a presentation be true to yourself. **So don't try to copy someone** who is the opposite of you. Your audience will recognize this falseness and won't trust you and your competence very much.

It's also good **to know your minor faults**. If you know you usually talk too fast during talks make the conscious decision to speak slower than it might feel right for you.

# ✓ Should You Allow Questions During Your Talk?

You can say **if you prefer questions in between or at the end of your talk**. The decision fully depends on you and your preferences.

**If you are very nervous** it might be better to get the talk over and done with and leave the questions until the end.

Keep in mind that allowing questions during your talk will make your presentation last longer. If the chair of the session is strict with the time allotted to each talk you might find yourself out of time before you presented your most interesting findings.



# ✓ Nobody Is Perfect

Remember, it's ok to make some mistakes.





# ✓ Audience/Eye Contact

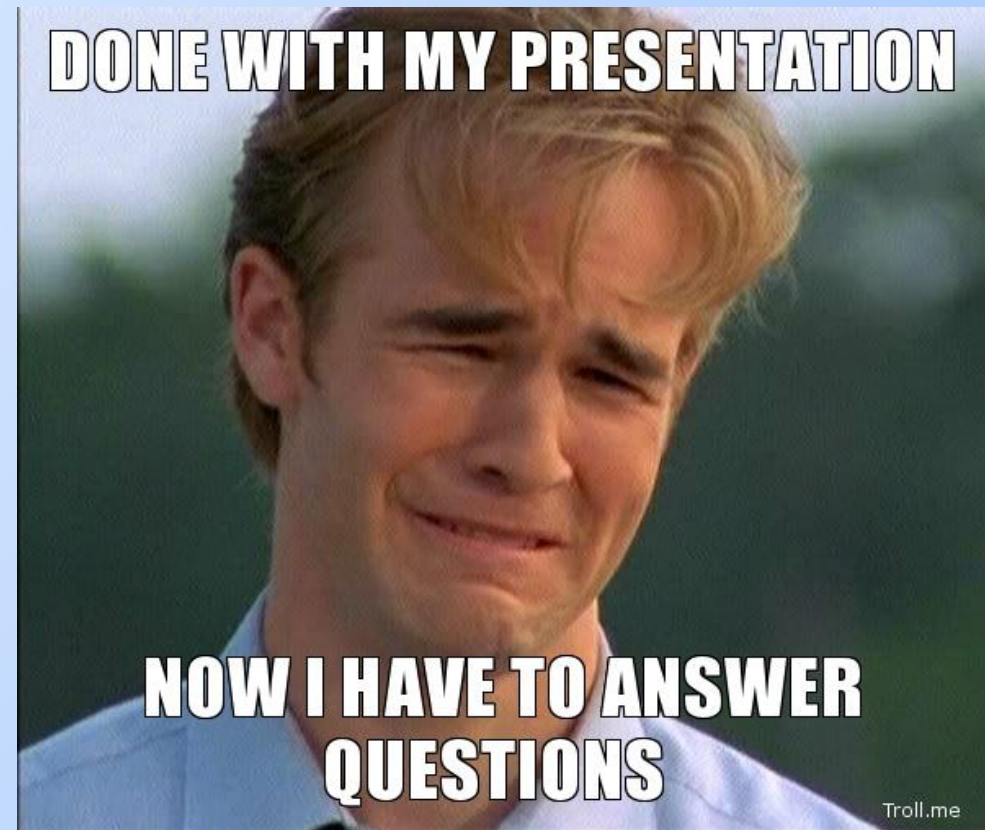
If you can't look at people directly during your **presentation you can look at the horizon line just above the heads.** OR better: **Look randomly at people without analysing their expressions.**

Make sure you look at every 'section' of the room from time to time (e.g. left side/ middle/right side). **So no one within your audience feels left out.**

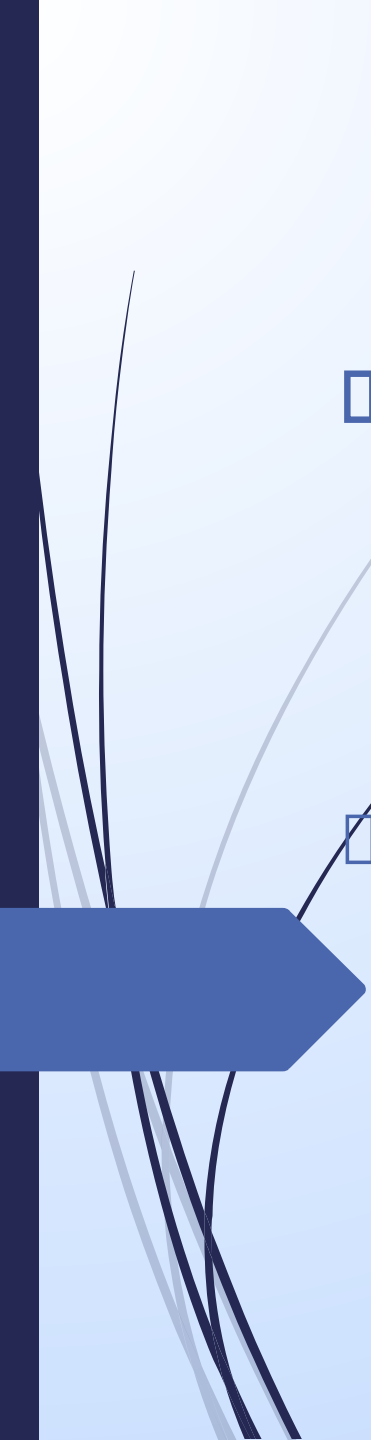
# 5. Questions & Answers Time



Depending on the audience, leave at least 10 minutes for questions at the end of your talk.



- The best advice for answering questions is **to understand them in first place.**
- **If you don't understand** a question double-check before talking about something the person didn't want to know. In that case you may be very blunt by asking: *'Do you mean....? Are you asking about this or that....?'*. These questions might also give you some additional time to think about your answer.
- It's good **to repeat the question even if you understand it.** In this way everybody in the audience can hear it and you double-check that you understood it.

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- **Don't take questions too personal.** Even if it seems they make your research look silly. Even if the tone and attitude of who is asking seems too aggressive. Stay cool. Be polite. You don't want to start a cat fight in front of the audience.
  - Most of the times people don't mean anything bad with their questions. There is nothing some minutes of clarification after your talk can't smooth.


# 6. After your talk

**After giving your presentation to the class**



# WHAT AFTER?





✓ **But your work is not over yet. There are a few things you must do after your presentation:**

□ The first thing you should do is **to relax.**

□ **People might come up to you** in person and have extra questions.

□ The time after your talk offers you a good chance to do networking by exchanging contact details, discuss experimental settings or setting up possible collaborations. **Have some business cards at hand!**

□ Find a moment of quiet and **analyze yourself.**



Be yourself, be who you are and your audience will feel comfortable.

**The end!**

