

Here are questions that 621 students asked. The answers that groups brainstormed in class follow. - Jennifer Lynn Craig.

1. What ARE .62x faculty looking for in this talk? What is the goal?

- The syllabus spells out the objectives of the oral presentation.
- The HOS is the driving force. Everything in this presentation goes into explaining the parts of the HOS and the way time and money will be used to accomplish the project.

2. How should we organize all this information?

- The key concepts of the design proposal should be listed in bullet points while the presenters give details.

3. How much detail is enough detail?

- A clear description of the technical approach is important. The 62X staff needs to know WHAT you propose to do.
- Remember that you are the “expert” on this project now, but there will be people in the audience who know very little about it. Be sure you give them enough background to follow along.

4. Do we have to give a lot of technical and theoretical material or is an overview enough?

- It’s probably a good idea to provide both. The overview gives the big picture, but technical detail will show that you know your material and that the project is a sound one.

5. What is considered too much text for a slide in a 621 talk?

- An audience member should be able to read the slide from the back row. If there is “too much” text on a slide, the font may be too small for the audience to read.
- If there are paragraphs of text on a slide, the listeners are busy reading it and not listening.

6. How do I use Powerpoint appropriately?

- Some transitions are OK, but don’t use excessive animation, sounds, transitions, or too much color.
- Powerpoint is a great visual organizer and shows graphic well. Take advantage of it for this purpose.
- Keep things simple. It’s not the convention in this department to decorate the slides with images or to use fancy templates.

7. Should I put most of the detail on the slide and speak generally or should I put very succinct material on the slide and explain in detail?
 - There should be enough detail for the slide to stand alone with only a little explanation.
 - However, you are the presenter---not just someone showing a slide show. The slide should hold the key points, but you are the one who should present in detail.

8. Do I cite references on the slide?
 - You can but it's probably more effective to write "source: etc. and etc." in small font on the slide.

9. How many slides should we have in a 13 minutes presentation?
 - It varies. Some slides can be understood in a few seconds while others carry such complex information that it will take you several minutes to discuss those points or show those graphics.
 - The only way to know this for sure is to practice. What you say to yourself in your head is not necessarily the amount of time it will take in the presentation.

10. How detailed does the schedule have to be? How specific does the budget have to be?
 - Schedules should show as much as you can but probably not by the day. Week by week is better. Leave space in the schedule for unforeseen occurrences.
 - Budgets should be itemized, but don't include every nut and bolt. Line figures up on the decimal point, and provide a place for the total.

11. What about graphics? Should we have a lot?
 - Don't put in graphics just for the sake of decoration. Be sure each graphic has content.
 - Remember that graphics help the audience understand complex information.

12. Is it OK to use metaphors and jokes to explain ideas or does everything have to be strictly technical?
 - You have to know your audience. Metaphors can be easy to understand, but remember that they may not convey the same meaning from one culture to the next.
 - Humor shows you are relaxed and approachable, but it can be misunderstood. It can make you look as though you are too casual. Also remember that humor often is specific to the culture it's in. Others may not see what's funny.
 - A professional presentation is not a place to tell jokes.

13. Should I begin by thanking the audience for its presence?
 - In some presentations this might be too formal, but it's fine to introduce at the beginning and, at the end, thank them for their presence.

14. Is it possible to be overdressed? How dressed up is “business casual”? Should presenters coordinate attire?

- Very formal or fancy or expensive clothing and jewelry would seem overdone. Lots of makeup and perfume would be inappropriate, too.

- Business casual usually means a plain suit or a sport jacket and slacks for men (with appropriate shirt and maybe a tie). Sometimes a nice sweater worn with a shirt and tie and nice slacks has the same professional effect. For women, business casual means a sweater and skirt, or a suit or a simple dress. It is definitely NOT a t-shirt or fleece and jeans. It’s not necessary to have expensive clothing, though.

- Generally presenters remove tongue studs or facial piercing for professional presentations.

- It is not necessary for presenters to coordinate attire.

15. Should I repeat a question before I answer it?

- Yes; the people may not have heard what the listener asked you.

- Yes; you want to be sure you understand the question before you begin to answer.

16. Should I gesture or are gestures distracting?

- Gestures are OK if they reinforce content.

- Try not to fidget or wave the pointer around or pace or . . .

17. Can we read from slides or notes?

- Sometimes if slides and words agree. But generally reading forces a canned sort of style that is difficult to listen to.

18. How do I grab the attention of the audience?

- Probably by speaking clearly and loudly and moving right into the content of your talk.

19. Are 2-person presentations different from a single presenter style? How do you balance it so that one person doesn’t seem more knowledgeable or answer more of the questions? Is there a rule about switching presenters?

- Two-person presentations require planning. Try to divide the work evenly.

- Switching back and forth too much can distract the audience?

- Practice some possible answers to possible questions. During the Q and A period, look at your partner and don’t just grab all the questions to answer.

20. How do you introduce a presentation? How long should an introduction be?

- Say, “ I am _____, and this is my partner _____. Our project is the _____

- As for the introduction to the project, it should be sufficient to give the audience some context so that they understand the background as well as the significance of this project. But remember they probably came to hear the technical substance!

21. Do you recommend passing around a prop?

- Passing around a prop can distract audience and break continuity.
- Probably it is OK during discussion.
- It might be especially useful during 622.

22. Where should I put my hands?

- You can gesture mildly. Put them on the podium. Hold pointer. Hold some notes. Put your hands together.
- Putting them in pockets can seem too casual. Folding them across your chest or putting them on your hips can seem confrontational.

23. How many seconds do I spend on each slide?

- Spend enough time so that the audience understands the content. If you look at your audience, you'll be able to tell if they understand it or not.
- Practice.

24. If I make a mistake or mispronounce something, do I correct myself?

- If it is a mistake that gives misleading information, you should correct that right away.
- If it is a mispronunciation, it's probably more distracting to go back and draw attention to it.

25. How do we handle questions or interruptions?

- If an audience member interrupts you during your talk, decide whether or not this question has to be answered at that moment. If it is a very short, simple answer, perhaps it is easiest just to answer it. If it is more complicated, you may decide to wait until the end. You could say *"that's a very interesting question. I'd like to hold that to the discussion period so that I can devote some attention to it."*
- If it is a confrontational question, try not to get drawn into an argument or discussion during your talk.
- You'll open the floor for questions at the end. It's a good idea to practice answers to some questions that are likely to be asked. Between the two of you, you and your partner can probably foresee what some people will press you on.
- Try not to be defensive or snap at your questioner. It makes you look bad. Stay courteous and composed. It's OK to say, *"I don't know, but you raise a good point. I'll look into that."*
- If the questioning goes on at length, it's OK to say *"I think we're out of time (or I'd like to make time for some other questions, too), but perhaps we could discuss this more in depth after the talk."*