

Tips for Presenting and Speaking at Meetings

Know the audience. Consult with the meeting organizer in advance to familiarize yourself with who will be in attendance; classification breakdowns, gender and equity representation, accessibility needs, work environments and particular issues at the workplace that may affect discussion at the meeting. Tailor your presentation to the group of members you will be talking with. Use language, examples and stories that make sense to your listeners. Know what level of experience they have with your topic. Relate your topic to what they care about.

Know your material. What do you want to accomplish by speaking to this group? What key information do you want to provide? Decide on a few main points you want people to remember. Repeat them often. Say them in different ways. If you use numbers or statistics, interpret them or make them part of a story so that they are meaningful.

Organize your speaking materials in point form. Make sure there are clear spaces between each point, and that your written materials are in large print so you can find your place after looking up to engage with participants. Have all support documents copied in advance and organized for distribution or display.

Practice your presentation so you are not dependent on your notes all the time.

Know the room. Be familiar with the place in which you will speak. Arrive early, ensure it is set-up so that everyone can easily see and hear you, and where possible, each other. Make yourself accessible to the people you are speaking to. If applicable, set up a table with support materials in advance of the meeting and put posters up that reinforce your topic.

Build democracy into your presentation. You are there to share important information with a group of members. Focus on the points you want to make not how you look making them. Allow time for questions and discussion. Acknowledge and address concerns raised by participants, where possible. Try to integrate membership input into your concluding statements so they know they have been heard. Don't take offence, and always remain calm and in control of your emotions.

Know your limitations. If you are asked to answer a question or explain something you are not sure of, be honest. You can follow-up after the meeting. If the question/issue is not related to your presentation, let people know where they might be able to go for assistance – don't get caught up in non-related issues.

