

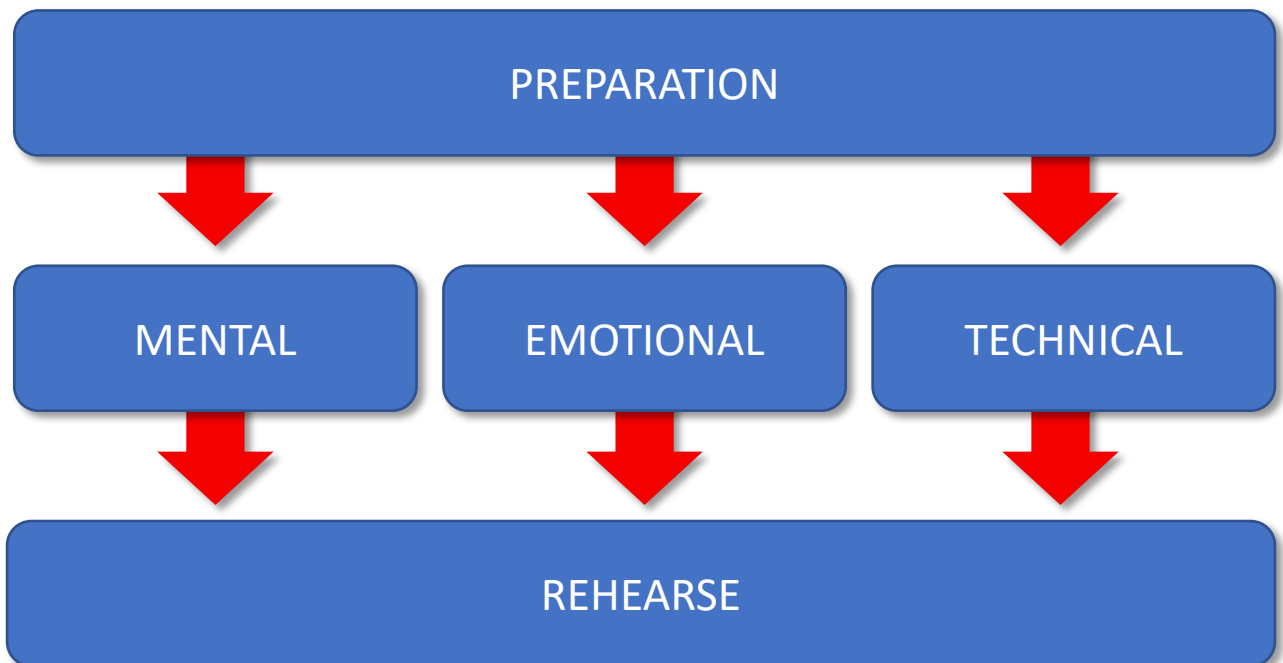


Preparation is key

There are many catchy variations for this one – from a surprising variety of sources..



However, it is the most obvious of all the presentation tips in the list.



We will take a look at each one. Standing up at a Preceptory meeting may have been daunting at the start, but all the experience you have gained in Craft, Royal Arch and within Knights Templar itself will stand you in good stead for this. One thing we all agree on is that we are generally better when we know what we are going to say and have already had a few run throughs – we can then concentrate a little more on how we say it.



Preparing mentally

The mental preparation comes, in the main, with the rehearsing. It is to do with learning the key indicators of your presentation. Knowing what to put on cards, or in your script, or on a slide – and then remembering something that helps you get the message across at the time you have to deliver it.

1. DO: Give yourself time

Preparation takes time, so make sure you are not leaving it all to the last minute. Get the list of “Items” you want to cover (Know your audience) and expand, The final list will also depend upon the time you have to give the talk. Then it comes down to how you want your notes set out so that they are of the most use.

2. DO: You can write it out in full and then read it

This method would ensure you will remain perfectly on track if you did for the presentation. However, by reading it out loud, you have all the same issues as reading a piece of ritual to a new candidate rather than delivering it to them. It can sound monotonous, it rarely connects yourself with the audience and it will definitely lack spontaneity. You tend to look down and project into the notes rather than the audience. It is, however, a useful tool to help you get used to the rhythm of the talk, to understand the order you will be covering things in, and it will help to remind you of the links between sections, so don't dismiss it as a first step. See 'Delivery is all' if you need to use a script method for your first time or so.

3. DO: Take the key points and put these on index cards

Perhaps a single key point on each card. These are often 'postcard' size and can be tucked into a pocket. This is where you know the story you want to tell, it may be about a part of your own experience at the Eye Hospital, a case study of a patient or even what you and members of your Preceptory have done in fundraising. You will only need the Index Card as a reminder or a prompt. **MAKE SURE YOU NUMBER THEM IN CASE THEY GO OUT OF ORDER.** It is always a worry when you look at the next card in your hand, and the only thing you know for sure is that it shouldn't be that topic next!

4. DON'T: Try and remember the whole thing!

You are not delivering the Traditional History or a 2nd Degree Tracing Board. This is your opportunity to talk with passion, feeling and enthusiasm. Also, you may well have to adjust timings on the fly – (see Get the timing right).



5. DO: Play to your strengths

It is all about confidence, so think about all the times you have spoken in public, performed ritual, given or responded to toasts etc. – what did you like best?

6. DO: Break the presentation up into sections

Make them equal in size and try and keep them reasonably small. You can then get to grips with each part separately if that helps you to understand it. If you find you are running out of time, you can drop a section rather than try and trim 2 or 3 of them down a little. Often, each index card will have the heading and key points on it as a reminder.

They need to be clear and easy to read if they are placed on a table and you are standing up. You don't want the writing to be so small you have to keep lifting it up to read. Your eye contact needs to be with the audience, not with the piece of Rymans stationery.

SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS - 2022

14.

142,876 patients across **6** centres

6,900 major surgeries

260 staff employed across Palestine

6. DO: Then rehearse

Start with a full script, and transferring each part to cards as you get more and more proficient. Then cut the words on the cards down – **you don't want to have to read them instead!**



Preparing emotionally

This relates to confidence, and confidence helps with delivery (see Delivery is all). However, there is a great deal you can do to get yourself in the right frame of mind if you need to.

Remember: You will be nervous
You are expected to be nervous
Your audience expects you to be nervous
Your nerves will provide adrenaline
Your adrenaline fires your enthusiasm and passion
Your adrenaline makes you personable
Your adrenaline helps you to be you
Your audience wants it to be you that speaks to them
Be nervous..... just not too much!

1. DO: You can always let the practice take over

When the nerves kick in, it is the time for the practice and rehearsed part of your presentation to take over. There are ways to clear your mind and then you can restart with the section that you have rehearsed time and time again. It's like muscle memory for your brain!

2. DO: Things that make you feel confident and reassured

To help get a degree of confidence before you start, visit things that make you feel good – listen to a favourite piece of music, wear your best suit or tie, or talk to someone who is there, perhaps the host who invited you, they are likely to be excited too.

3. DO: Nerves are good but so is staying calm

It's a difficult balance – ultimately you know when it feels right. You are in control when you know what you are saying, and you know what you are going to say next. Anything that helps you focus is good once the presentation is underway. Taking a pause and a slow deep breath will help you move on with confidence.



4. **DO: It's a spiral, make it go the way you want it too**

When you feel you are going well in the presentation, the audience are engaged, you sense it and it gives you confidence. It helps you to relax as you know that what you are wanting to say is being well received. This helps you to think more about the next point and then you feel you get more time and so on and so on.

Conversely if you feel you are losing the attention of your audience, you become a little more nervous, you speak faster to add more things in, in case something you add might suddenly spark their attention. However, they turn of even more and your mouth starts to dry, and you begin to panic a little and so on and so on. At this point, adrenaline is not your friend.

5. **Dealing with the nerves that affect your confidence**

There are however, a few things you can do to stop a downward spiral. Understanding that this can happen but knowing that if it does, that you can deal with it, will help your confidence return.

Pause, take a deep breath, look at your audience and find a couple of faces that you have noticed before and make eye contact. Smile.

If you start to get a dry mouth – drinking lots of water straight away isn't always the best answer. **Don't immediately lift up a glass of water**, or drink from a bottle, your hands are likely to be **shaking a little** and you start to become aware that you might spill something. You will also believe the shaking hands will be noticeable by absolutely everyone and you then become even more nervous as your confidence drops! The spiral continues downwards. So, pause and do the things above whilst you gently **bite the side of your tongue**. This will create saliva, and that will stay moist in your mouth. It will provide the lubrication to take away the dryness and it has the bonus of stopping you speaking for a moment.

Say an important sentence, or a key point, a little more slowly and concentrate on emphasising it with **small hand gestures**

Quieten your movements, so stop moving about for a moment and add a little calm.

All of these pointers need to be practiced, so you are emotionally prepared to deal with them if, and when, they happen for real.



Preparing technically

If talking to your own Preceptory between the meeting and dinner for example, there may well be little in the way of technology being used - no projectors or slide machines. At other times, you may well take along handouts, or a brochure, or even have a presentation given on slides to show. We will take a look at a few of these, however, the subject of the use of the handouts and slide presentations can be found in the Pointer - Aids and Handouts. There still remain a few points to consider:

1. Where you are speaking from

It may be a familiar temple after a meeting, but consider whether you need to re-arrange chairs so that you are not spinning around all the time to talk to some of those behind you. If this is going to be the case, make sure that you know whether there is a semi-circle or in rows, can they all see a screen if you are using one. What you don't want to be doing in the run-up, is trying to find chairs.

At least the chairs tend to stay in the right place – it is your audience that tend to wander around. Is there a comfort break before you start, and are people expecting to change from regalia before you begin, it can be like herding cats! It will always feel that they are encroaching in on your time, so be prepared for this and encourage all to be seated for the time you want to start.

2. Sound and light

This both ways – can people hear you from where you are to the back of the room? And of course, can they see you? If you are speaking to a group that regularly has speakers at their meeting, they may well bring along a mic for you to wear. Get used to it, they do the job well so don't turn or look down to it and speak too loudly. If they give you one to hold, try to use it as much as you can beforehand, it will feel strange if you haven't used one before as it ties up one hand.

Check for feedback and audio issues. Be, conscious of the age of the audience, many may well be wearing hearing aids so do ask whether everyone can at least hear you.



4. Computers and IT

You will need all your leads **AND** make sure that you are aware as to what input their projector needs if you are using one. **Do they, or do you, have that connecting lead?** Then, does it work? There are no prizes for spotting that it is missing as you walk onto the platform to speak. Make sure that both are compatible.

Do you need wi-fi and does it work fast enough for your needs? Make sure you have already set up the password and connected before you start, particularly if it is in a hotel or conference centre, where they ask you to log in before you can begin.

5. Handouts

Part of your technical preparation applies to all the aids you may use, including brochures and handouts. The content and when to use of these can be found in 'Aids and Handouts' but from a preparation point of view, make sure they are available in a place where you can get at them when you want them to be distributed – NOT still in the big case you brought them along in from the hotel, nestled between your clean shirt and dirty underwear.

Make sure you have enough, are they going to keep them or hand them back at the end? After the talk, make sure you collect up any that have been left behind on chairs.



Rehearse

And rehearse again..... and then again.

You don't want to take it all too seriously, but you do want to give a good account of both yourself and the information of the Eye Hospital etc. So, to rehearse properly is important – or of course you can simply 'wing it'. Every once in a while, that works, this may not be that 'once'. **Get committed from the start.**

1. Allow time and start rehearsing early

As soon as you know you have been asked to talk, it is important that you start to plan. You don't have to wait until you have the planning completely finished before you begin to rehearse. Parts can be just an idea, but by rehearsing early you will hone them down and improve on what you are trying to say.

2. Refine and improve

Your rehearsal will help you address pace and the length of each section. It may feel to long, or it may lack emphasis. Rewrite, change the order, check out which gestures you think help to get the point across. It will always be your own style so try a few different approaches and see which you feel works better. You can only do this if you start rehearsing early!

3. Do it for real

Practice out loud and try to put yourself in the right type of place. If you are going to be standing up, then don't rehearse lines sitting in a chair. You will subconsciously start to move at certain points or phrases and these become part of your rhythm. Use this to help you practice, and they will become second nature.

If you are in the centre of a room for the final presentation with space around, practice where you might have a similar size to walk around so it doesn't feel like you suddenly have to use it all on the day. Close the door, speak out loud, with gestures and when you feel you need to make eye contact, do so with a picture, or a plant or the family watching you through the window!

4. Feedback

This can be difficult to get outside of a company environment, but if it is possible to rehearse in front of someone you trust, then do so. They need to be constructive and this isn't always easy if it is family.



5. Keep it enjoyable

It is only a presentation, so don't worry. The more you do them, the easier this part becomes. You are likely to be nervous every time, but you will have confidence the more you do it - whether that is for real, or for a full rehearsal – just like ritual.

With ritual, people tend to be more concerned with getting the exact words and how it sounds. In this type of presentation, exact words may not be quite the same, but now it is also about how you look and come across, so also practice in front of the mirror, or record yourself on a webcam or phone. If you enjoy it, and you look as though you are enjoying it, so will your audience.

6. Watch your movement

The first time you watch a playback of yourself presenting is a real 'moment'. It may be that you seem to continually move or exaggerate every tiny emphasis that it becomes really offputting, or maybe you look nailed to the floor and immobile. Either way, it is the rehearsal that will help you adjust this for the best you can be. (see Delivery is all).

7. Rehearsing makes it flow better

It's obvious but practicing what you want to say, means you pause because you want to, not because you don't remember the next part or are looking at your notes for 'what happens next'. When that happens, or if you pause to look at your notes, you can fill it with 'umms' and 'errrs'. Watch a playback – **COUNT THEM**. Rehearsal helps you to do away with these glitches and they will be fewer.

Equally, it may be that names or places can be unfamiliar and suddenly in the talk, become difficult to pronounce. Always practice what they are **NEVER** keep repeating to yourself – I must not say XYX.

8. Rehearsing helps you to keep going

If you stumble as to where you are, or there is an unexpected distraction, then your rehearsals really pay off. They tend to make sure that you keep going. A sentence or two later and you will be right back on track.

If you haven't rehearsed – best of luck!