

# Presentation Skills

*Captivate and educate your audience*

Fourth Edition

**Steve Mandel**

***A Crisp Fifty-Minute™ Series Book***

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AXIOM PRESS

# Presentation Skills

*Captivate and educate your audience*

Fourth Edition

**Steve Mandel**

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**ISBN 10:** 1-4260-0487-7

**ISBN 13:** 978-1-4260-0487-2

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 08 07 06

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# Table of Contents

About the Author..... 1

To the Reader ..... 2

Preface..... 3

About the Crisp 50-Minute Series ..... 5

A Note to Instructors ..... 6

**Part 1: Assessing Your Skills 7**

Evaluating Yourself..... 9

Dealing with Anxiety ..... 12

Tips for Reducing Anxiety ..... 13

Turning Your Assessment into a Plan ..... 16

**Part 2: Planning Your Presentation 17**

Clarifying Your Strategy ..... 19

Six Steps to Planning Your Presentation..... 20

Some Thoughts on Using Handouts..... 30

Preparing For Your Next Presentation ..... 32

**Part 3: Using Slides and Other Visual Aids 33**

Using Slides and Visual Aids Effectively ..... 35

Designing Your Slides..... 37

Use Your Slides—Don’t Let Them Use You ..... 50

Part Summary..... 51

**Part 4: Preparing for Your Presentation 53**

Personal Appearance ..... 55

Controlling the Presentation Environment..... 57

When You Can’t Practice—Successful Impromptu Speaking ..... 59

Part Summary..... 61

**Part 5: Delivering Your Presentation with Energy and Composure 63**

Engaging Your Audience ..... 65

Putting Energy to Work..... 66

Maintaining Composure..... 69

Question-and-Answer Techniques ..... 71

Dealing with Hostile Questions ..... 74

Part Summary..... 75

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**Appendix**

Appendix to Part 3 ..... 77  
Additional Reading ..... 81

PREVIEW

## About the Author

Steve Mandel, founder of Mandel Communications, is a nationally known training consultant and lecturer specializing in presentation skills training. Since 1984, his company has trained salespeople, executives, engineers, and managers in the skills necessary to effectively present their ideas. Mandel Communications has delivered programs in more than 40 countries and provides workshops in numerous languages.

Mr. Mandel is the author of two Crisp Series books, *Great Presentations* (formerly *Effective Presentation Skills*) and *Technical Presentation Skills*, as well as numerous articles. He has been a featured speaker for organizations on the topic of management communication skills in the professional environment.

A two-day workshop based on the material in this book is available from Mandel Communications. For more information, please contact:

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### *Dedication*

This book is dedicated to those who helped make it happen and without whose support it would not exist: my wonderful wife, Carol, my children, Joe, Paul, and Alex, and all my colleagues at Mandel Communications.

## To the Reader

There is a myth that great speakers are “born, not made,” that certain individuals have the innate ability to stand in front of an audience with no anxiety and give a moving, dynamic speech. Well, that just isn’t so!

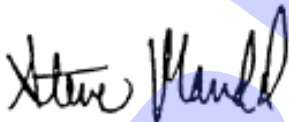
People we consider great speakers have usually spent years developing and practicing their craft. They had to start at the beginning and learn the basics of organization, preparation, delivery, and anxiety management. Once the basics were in hand, they needed to continue to build on their abilities.

Professional athletes constantly practice the basics because they know that without such practice, they will not excel. To an outsider, the thought of a professional golfer spending hour after hour practicing the basics might seem ridiculous. But to that professional, the continued mastery of those basic skills is the very foundation of success.

Learning to be a better speaker is similar to learning any activity. In the beginning, it can be frustrating. After a few lessons, in which you learn some theory and practice some of the basic techniques, skills usually improve. Learning to do anything well takes constant practice and mastery of the basics.

Speaking is no different. Before becoming comfortable as a speaker, you need to learn some basic skills and then actively seek opportunities to practice those skills. This might mean walking into your manager’s office and volunteering to give more presentations, or joining a speaking club that allows you to speak in an organized setting. The more experience you gain, the more proficient and comfortable you will become.

Good luck!



# Preface

The study of how to give effective speeches dates back to ancient Greece. Around 350 BC, Aristotle wrote his famous *Rhetoric*, now considered to be one of the finest formal books on the subject. Now, 2300 years later, we are still struggling with the same problems that the Greeks encountered and that speakers have grappled with throughout the ages.

The advent of technology has both complicated and simplified the task of the speaker. For example, today it is possible to produce complex graphs on a computer, display them digitally with a projector, and present them via the Internet. But how much information should be put on that graph? And most important, where does that graph fit into the organizational plan (if there is one) of the presentation as a whole?

This book answers the fundamental questions of how to prepare and deliver a great presentation. Proven techniques are provided to help readers learn the skills needed to give more confident, enthusiastic, and persuasive presentations. Topics covered include how to use body language effectively, how to organize ideas and data for maximum impact, how to develop and use slides and other visuals, and (of course) how to deliver what you have prepared.

This book provides some theory, but more often presents simple and practical suggestions on giving more effective presentations. In this fourth edition, I have added more information on how to best organize a presentation, and I have updated the material on technology and the use of slides.

## *Definitions*

The terms “speech” and “presentation” are often used interchangeably. For our purposes, it is useful to understand the difference.

A presentation is a type of speech. Typically, when we think of a speech, we think of a dedication speech, a political speech, a speech of tribute, or some similar event that is more public in nature than a presentation might be.

Presentations are speeches that are usually given in a business, technical, professional, or scientific environment. The audience is likely to be more specialized than the audience attending a typical speech event.

This book leans toward helping those who give presentations. Because a presentation is a type of speech, however, there are ideas and skills in this book that will also be helpful to any speech-maker.

## *Learning Objectives*

Complete this book, and you'll know how to:

- 1) Evaluate your skill and build confidence as a speaker
- 2) Prepare the content of a successful presentation
- 3) Use presentation technology to your advantage
- 4) Prepare yourself and the room for a successful presentation
- 5) Deliver a presentation well

## *Workplace and Management Competencies Mapping*

For over 30 years, business and industry have used competency models to select employees. The trend toward using competency-based approaches in the education, training, assessment, and development of workers has emerged more recently within the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), a division of the United States Department of Labor.

The ETA's General Competency Model Framework spans a wide array of competencies, from the more basic ones, such as reading and writing, to more advanced occupation-specific competencies. The Crisp Series finds its home in what the ETA refers to as the Workplace Competencies and the Management Competencies.

*Presentation Skills* covers information vital to mastering the following competencies:

### **Workplace Competencies:**

- ▶ Planning and Organizing
- ▶ Working with Tools and Technology

### **Management Competencies:**

- ▶ Informing

For a comprehensive mapping of Crisp Series titles to the Workplace and Management competencies, visit [www.CrispSeries.com](http://www.CrispSeries.com).

# About the Crisp 50-Minute Series

The Crisp 50-Minute Series was designed to cover critical business and professional development topics in the shortest possible time. Our easy-to-read, easy-to-understand format can be used for self-study or for classroom training. With a wealth of hands-on exercises, the 50-Minute books keep you engaged and help you retain critical skills.

## *What You Need to Know*

We designed the Crisp 50-Minute Series to be as self-explanatory as possible. But there are a few things you should know before you begin the book.

### **Exercises**

Exercises look like this:



**EXERCISE TITLE**

Questions and other information would be here.

Keep a pencil handy. Any time you see an exercise, you should try to complete it. If the exercise has specific answers, an answer key will be provided in the appendix. (Some exercises ask you to think about your own opinions or situation; these types of exercises will not have answer keys.)

### **Forms**

A heading like this means that the rest of the page is a form:

---

## FORMHEAD

Forms are meant to be reusable. You might want to make a photocopy of a form before you fill it out, so that you can use it again later.

# A Note to Instructors

We've tried to make the Crisp 50-Minute Series books as useful as possible as classroom training manuals. Here are some of the features we provide for instructors:

- ▶ PowerPoint presentations
- ▶ Answer keys
- ▶ Assessments
- ▶ Customization

## PowerPoint Presentations

You can download a PowerPoint presentation for this book from our Web site at [www.CrispSeries.com](http://www.CrispSeries.com).

## Answer keys

If an exercise has specific answers, an answer key will be provided in the appendix. (Some exercises ask you to think about your own opinions or situation; these types of exercises will not have answer keys.)

## Assessments

For each 50-Minute Series book, we have developed a 35- to 50-item assessment. The assessment for this book is available at [www.CrispSeries.com](http://www.CrispSeries.com). *Assessments should not be used in any employee-selection process.*

## Customization

Crisp books can be quickly and easily customized to meet your needs—from adding your logo to developing proprietary content. Crisp books are available in print and electronic form. For more information on customization, see [www.CrispSeries.com](http://www.CrispSeries.com).

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*P A R T*

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# Assessing Your Skills

“*Honesty is an active verb, not a passive noun. Go out of your way to be truthful, beginning with the things that you say to yourself.*”

—Joe Tye, Values Coach America

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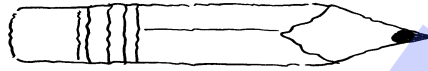
*In this part:*

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- ▶ Evaluating Yourself
- ▶ Dealing with Anxiety
- ▶ Tips for Reducing Anxiety
- ▶ Turning Your Assessment into a Plan

# Evaluating Yourself

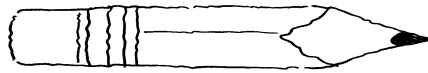
To be a more effective presenter, you'll find it useful to examine your current skills. The following exercises can help you determine which areas to focus on to increase your confidence and competence as a presenter.



## ASSESS YOUR COMFORT LEVEL

Check the category that best describes you as a speaker:

- Avoider**      An avoider does everything possible to steer clear of having to get in front of an audience. Avoiders might even seek careers that do not involve making presentations.
- Resister**      A resister has fear when asked to speak. This fear may be strong. Resisters might not be able to avoid speaking as part of their jobs, but they never encourage it. When they do speak, they do so with great reluctance and considerable pain.
- Acceptor**      The accepter will give presentations as part of the job but doesn't seek those opportunities. Accepters occasionally give a presentation and feel as though they did a good job. They even find that once in a while, they are quite persuasive and enjoy speaking in front of a group.
- Seeker**      A seeker looks for opportunities to speak. The seeker understands that anxiety can be a stimulant which fuels enthusiasm during a presentation. Seekers work at building their professional communication skills and self-confidence by speaking often.



## ASSESS YOUR CURRENT PRESENTATION SKILLS

Please read each statement and circle the number that best describes you: 5 represents “Always” and 1 means “Never.” Then add the circled numbers to discover your overall score. During the rest of this book, concentrate on those items you marked 1, 2, or 3.

Statements	Always – Never
1. I thoroughly analyze my audience.	5 4 3 2 1
2. I determine the key objectives before planning a presentation.	5 4 3 2 1
3. I write down my core message first in order to build a presentation around it.	5 4 3 2 1
4. I incorporate both a preview and a review of the main ideas as I organize my presentation.	5 4 3 2 1
5. I develop my core message so that it will catch the attention of my audience and still provide the necessary background information.	5 4 3 2 1
6. My conclusion refers to my core message and contains a call to action.	5 4 3 2 1
7. The visual and graphics I use are carefully prepared, simple, and easy to read and have impact.	5 4 3 2 1
8. The number of visuals and graphics I use will enhance, not detract, from my presentation.	5 4 3 2 1
9. I use both energy and composure in delivering a presentation.	5 4 3 2 1
10. I ensure that the benefits suggested to my audience are clear and compelling.	5 4 3 2 1
11. I communicate ideas with enthusiasm.	5 4 3 2 1
12. I rehearse so there is a minimum focus on notes and maximum attention paid to my audience.	5 4 3 2 1
13. My notes contain only key words, so I avoid reading from a manuscript or technical paper.	5 4 3 2 1

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. My presentations are rehearsed standing up and using my visuals.                             | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. I prepare answers to anticipated questions, and practice responding to them.                 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. I arrange seating (if appropriate) and check audio-visual equipment before the presentation. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. I maintain good eye contact with the audience at all times.                                  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. My gestures are natural and not constrained by anxiety.                                      | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. My voice is strong and clear and is not a monotone.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**TOTAL SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Set Your Goals

If your total score in this exercise was:

- 90–95      You have the qualities of an excellent presenter.  
 70–89      You are above average but could improve in some areas.  
 Below 69    This course should help you.

### What Do You Want to Achieve?

Using the information from this exercise, check those boxes that indicate goals you would like to achieve.

#### I hope to:

- Understand the anxiety I feel before a presentation and learn how to use it constructively during my presentation.
- Learn how to organize my thoughts and data in a logical and concise manner.
- Develop the skills necessary to communicate enthusiasm about the ideas I present, and develop a more dynamic presentation style.
- Transform question-and-answer sessions into an enjoyable and productive part of the presentation process.
- Construct visual aids that have impact, and use them effectively during my presentation.

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# Dealing with Anxiety

Anxiety is a natural state that occurs any time we are placed under stress. For most people, giving a presentation causes some degree of stress! When this type of stress occurs, physiological changes take place that may cause symptoms such as:

- ▶ A nervous stomach
- ▶ Sweating
- ▶ Tremors in the hands and legs
- ▶ Accelerated breathing
- ▶ Increased heart rate

Don't worry! If you have any of these symptoms before or during a presentation, you are normal. If none of these things happen, you are one in a million. Almost everyone experiences some stress before presentations, even when the task is something simple like, "tell the group something about yourself." The trick is to make your excess energy work for you.

When you learn to make stress work for you, it can be the fuel for a more enthusiastic and dynamic presentation. The next few pages will teach you how to recycle your stress in a positive form that will help you become a better presenter.

As someone once said, "The trick is to get those butterflies in your stomach to fly in one direction!"

## Paul

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Paul is an engineer with a robotics company. In two weeks, he has to deliver a major presentation to managers from several divisions in his company, on a project he is proposing. He knows his topic, but his audience will be examining his proposal very closely, and Paul is certain he will receive some very tough questions. Every time Paul thinks about planning what to say, he gets too nervous to begin work.

---

If Paul's problem of anxiety before a presentation sounds familiar, then the following tips may help.

# Tips for Reducing Anxiety

## *Organize*

Lack of organization is one of the major causes of anxiety. Later in this book, you will learn a simple process for organizing your presentation. Knowing that your thoughts are well organized will give you more confidence, which will allow you to focus your energy on your presentation.

## *Visualize*

Imagine walking into a room, being introduced, delivering your presentation with enthusiasm, fielding questions with confidence, and leaving the room knowing you did a great job. Mentally rehearse this sequence with all the details of your particular situation, and it will help you focus on what you need to do to be successful.

## *Practice*

Many speakers rehearse a presentation mentally or with just their lips. Instead, you should practice standing up, as if an audience were in front of you, and use your visual aids (if you have them). At least two dress rehearsals are recommended. If possible, have somebody critique the first one and/or have it videotaped. Watch the playback, listen to the critique, and incorporate any changes you think are required before your final practice session. There is no better preparation than this.

## Carol

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Carol is an account executive with a children's book publisher. She has been asked to present the sales figures for her region at the company's national sales meeting. Her colleague Nancy is finishing her remarks, and in two minutes, Carol will have to stand up and make her presentation. She is experiencing extreme anxiety at a time when she needs to be focused and collected.

---

Carol's situation is quite common. If you experience anxiety immediately before speaking, try some of the following exercises next time you're waiting for your turn to stand up and speak.

### *Breathe*

When your muscles tighten and you feel nervous, you might not be breathing deeply enough. The first thing to do is to sit up, erect but relaxed, and inhale deeply a number of times.

### *Focus on Relaxing*

Instead of thinking about the tension, focus on relaxing. As you breathe, tell yourself on the inhale, "I am," and on the exhale, "relaxed." Try to clear your mind of everything except the repetition of the "I am...relaxed" statement, and continue this exercise for several minutes.

### *Release Tension*

As tension increases and your muscles tighten, nervous energy can get locked into the limbs. This unreleased energy may cause your hands and legs to shake. Before you stand up to give a presentation, it's a good idea to try to release some of this pent-up tension by doing a simple, unobtrusive isometric exercise.

Starting with your toes and calf muscles, and moving up through your body, tighten your muscles, finally making a fist (i.e., toes, feet, calves, thighs, stomach, chest, shoulders, arms, and fingers). Immediately release all of the tension and take a deep breath. Repeat this exercise until you feel the tension start to drain away.

Remember, this exercise is to be done quietly so that no one knows you're relaxing!