As a Mayo Clinic Champion, you may choose to share your experience with a broader audience to make a bigger impact. To help you prepare, here are some top tips for presentations as a guide.

This top 10 list comes from “The Lecture: Tips to Make Your Next Presentation Go Better Than Your Last,” by co-author Scott Litin, M.D., General Internal Medicine, Mayo Clinic. Dr. Litin works with students on the art of teaching and presenting.

These words of advice apply to any presentation where your intent is to educate others:

10. Meet the needs of the audience.

The most important thing a speaker can do is to determine what the audience wants to know or needs to know about the topic being presented,” says Dr. Litin.

This focus on your audience needs will help you craft the delivery of your story. For example, is the audience newly diagnosed patients? Are they afraid, confused or frustrated? Think back to your experience in that early stage, and speak to their feelings. Or is the audience a group of administrators for a cancer nonprofit? You may customize your presentation to address points you can speak to, regardless of age or type of cancer.

9. Understand your goals for the presentation.

Dr. Litin emphasizes the importance of a lecturer being clear in his or her own mind about what he or she wants to accomplish to help stay on task. This may seem simple, but writing out your goals can help you cut out the clutter, especially if you are short on time. Sometimes, it helps to include your goals in the presentation. This can be a conversational approach, such as, “I’m here today to talk to you about what comprehensive care meant to me and what it can mean for you.”
8. **Hook them early.**

Connect with the audience right away to pull their attention into your presentation and shape your opening based on how you like to communicate. As Dr. Litin says, “The audience is probably thinking ‘What’s in it for me?’” Speaking to your passion and why you choose to share your experience pulls people in right away. It creates a personal connection.

7. **Keep it lean and interesting.**

“Many speakers overwhelm their audiences with fact after fact after fact,” says Dr. Litin. He advises that stories can have greater impact and be remembered. “Your audience will be much more likely to remember your stories.” If you are concerned about your experience representing everyone’s experience, remember that you share common themes — even if the details differ. Pull out themes your story that your audience can relate to in your story.

6. **Finish strong.**

Your closing should have a call to action or a “what’s next from here” for the audience. As Dr. Litin says, “The audience remembers your summary better than any other part of the presentation.” Your passion for why you share your experience is a great closing point. People will recognize your commitment and authenticity, and respond to that.

5. **Mind the clock.**

Practice your presentation beforehand — and out loud — Dr. Litin advises. Reading silently to yourself will not reflect your timing accurately. Speaking during a dress rehearsal also will help make you more comfortable at the presentation. You’ll fall into a rhythm.

4. **Meet the needs of the audience.**

“Your delivery makes the difference between a memorable or forgettable presentation,” says Dr. Litin. Practice can help you hit on the perfect type of delivery for you. Another piece of advice Dr. Litin gives is to use the pause. Brief silences to gather your thoughts and allow the audience to rest are OK.

3. **Don’t just talk; perform.**

Performance is about connecting with the audience and having passion for what you are here to talk about. It’s not about telling jokes. “One of the most important techniques is simply to smile,” says Dr. Litin. “Audiences want speakers to be successful, and they want to feel connected. Smiling at appropriate times during your presentation will help accomplish this. It is amazing how often speakers are concentrating so much on the details and facts in their presentation that they are actually frowning — not smiling.”
He also identifies the importance of stories and pictures as a universal audience love. An audience responds to the story and identifies with it. Pictures add visual interest and bring another human element to your story. Sometimes, a well-chosen picture can convey more than words.

Dr. Litin also advises watching a video of your presentation to learn how you come across to audiences. “While you may feel anxious just thinking about doing this, I assure you it can be one of the most meaningful learning experiences you will have.”

2. Learn how to handle nervousness.

“Public speaking is one of the greatest fears of human beings,” says Dr. Litin. “Therefore, most of us, if we are honest, admit to feeling nervous before a big presentation. What is important to remember is that most anxiety does not show.”

Your time spent practicing will serve you well, and, even with butterflies in your stomach, it’s likely the audience will never know. Focus on why you are passionate about sharing your story and the difference you can make for others.

1. Practice, practice, practice.

“The more you practice, the better your presentations,” says Dr. Litin. Your preparation will help build confidence. And, according to other Champions, meeting the people you helped after each presentation will build more confidence. Dr. Litin advises finding a trusted friend or colleague to listen to your presentation and provide constructive criticism to help you improve even more.

These tips should help you focus and polish your story for presentation. If you have some additional presentation advice, email champions@mayo.edu with your suggestions.