



Profile your Audience

Presenting is an audience-centred sport, so it is important to consider their needs and expectations at the very start of the process. Of all the preparation that you can do, this is perhaps the most important to guarantee success.

You can profile your audience on a number of points including:



The audience may fall at one side of the continuum or the other, or be somewhere in the middle. The more that the audience falls towards to the left on the continuum, the easier the presentation will be to prepare and deliver.

For example...

High level of knowledge

You can give more detail, assume a certain level of understanding and use jargon.

Low level of knowledge

Assume no prior knowledge, explain facts in a meaningful way (what that means is...), use simple language and do not use jargon.

Interested

Share your enthusiasm, can give more detail ('like to know' as well as 'must know'), be animated.

Uninterested

Be more factual, focus on the 'must know', explain the benefits of taking the action you suggest or the consequences of not doing it.

Friendly

Use your personality, take a more relaxed approach, interact with the audience, use humour and associated stories with confidence, take questions as you go along.



Hostile	Stick to the key points, remain fairly formal, take a factual approach if possible, take questions at the end.
Like people	You can give more detail, assume a certain level of understanding and use jargon, demonstrate your knowledge of their area.
Mixed audience	Take care not to alienate everyone, explain facts in a meaningful way (“what that means is...”), use simple language and do not use jargon, use different tools to capture everyone’s attention.
Focussed	Get straight to the point, be brief, and leave lots of time to take questions.
Distraacted	Grab attention, keep the audience involved, make sure you cover everything you need to in the presentation, leave little time for questions.
Small group	Adopt a more relaxed style, perhaps sit down, try to appeal to each person individually, take questions as you go, and be adaptable.
Large group	Adopt a more formal style, stand up, stick to your plan, (and leave questions to the end).

Exercise

Consider a presentation that you do or may have to make in the future. Profile your audience on the scales below.



What does this tell you about things to take into account when preparing your presentation?