# Treat your presentation like a conversation

* Imagine you go out for a beer with friends. Imagine one of your friends is speaking. He’s talking word perfect. As if he’s reading from a script.
* As he talks you notice the pauses are unnatural or non-existent. What he’s saying sounds too rehearsed. The tone and associated body language just do not gel.
* This is what most presenters sound like.
* If your friend talked to you this way, it would not be too long before you excused yourself from the conversation. The same happens every day in business presentations… We excuse ourselves by switching off.
* Good presentations are natural and conversational in nature (watch any TED talk as proof) so don’t focus on perfection.
* Focus on knowing what you want to talk about and what you would like the audience to take away from your talk.
* Be conversational and you’ll be listened to.

# 2. Be yourself

* You know when you are talking to someone and something feels a bit off?
* Don’t try and be someone you’re not. Don’t act. Just be yourself.
* The audience will respond negatively to acting. The audience will respond positively when you just be yourself.

# 3. If you make a mistake, move on

* This is such a simple rule but such a difficult one for most people to follow.
* Everyone wants to be perfect.
* Mistake happens in your presentation, it can be tempting to over-apologise, restart sentences, and beg forgiveness.
* Most people won’t notice. And even if they do, they probably won’t care, just move on.

# 4. Decide where you are going

* Decide why you’re delivering your presentation before you do anything else.
* What do you want the audience to do? What do you want the audience to take away from your talk? If you don’t know the answers, then hang around the drawing board until you do.

# 5. Visual communication is everything

* It’s not the content.
* Well it is… But it’s not.
* Your content is important. How you say it is important too.
* But if your visual communication displays a lack of confidence and doesn’t inspire the audience to listen to you, then your content is irrelevant.
* Encourage the audience to listen to your great content by projecting credibility and confidence.
* You project credibility and confidence through an open body position; strong posture; eye contact; gestures; and purposeful, but limited, movement.

# 6. Empathy

* The ability to empathise with others is important in every area of life, including your presentation.
* If you do not care about the audience, they can tell.
* Show them you empathise by demonstrating you understand the challenges they face relative to your topic.
* If you’re asking them to take some action which will be bothersome, empathise with them and at least attempt to show them a better future as a result of the bother they must go to.

# 7. Your first words

* The audience will be quick to judge you. Make sure your first words count.
* Make a strong statement which intrigues them and displays your confidence.
* Avoid boring your audience with standard *“Good mornings”* and *“Thank yous”*.
* Fire them up with something which gives them a reason to listen, like *“From next week your administrative workload gets lighter.”*

# 8. Your final words

* Your audience will most easily remember the first and last things you say.
* In your final few words give them something positive to associate to your presentation.
* *“Together we can do this. Thank you.”* sounds nice, but this kind of positivity often feels hollow in business presentations.
* Try something like: *“Remember, all you need to do is make this small change when you get back to your desk. Next week, your workload become easier. Thank you.”*

# 9. Prepare your presentation in a specific order

* This one’s tough.
* It takes time. Because it goes against everything you are conditioned to think.

**Here goes. Prepare your presentation in the following order:**

1. Decide what the take-away is for the audience.
2. Draft out what points you need to cover to get the audience there.
3. Make a basic outline of your presentation (not a script).
4. If there is part of your presentation you are not sure about, start learning, start getting familiar with it.
5. Commence practice. Practice talking about each of the points in your presentation until you have a cohesive speech that you can deliver without prompts like notes and cue cards
6. Video-tape yourself and watch it back with a critical eye. Address only the two biggest problem areas you found, no more.
7. Time permitting, repeat step 6.
8. Build your slides. At this point use your latest video recording and only create slides which emphasize key points in your speech.
9. Practice your speech again with slides. At this stage your focus should be on not looking at the slides as you talk (this should be easy because you’ve already got your speech down).

# 10. Silence

If you take my advice in point 9, you’ll notice something during the video playback in step 6…

# Filler words.

1. The amount of *“umms”* and *“okays”* and other fillers in your speech will make you look unprepared, unpracticed, and unconfident (is that a word?)
2. Whenever you feel like you are not sure of what to say next, pause. Be silent.
3. Identify the times you use filler words and the feeling you have at that moment. Practice being silent instead.
4. Pauses are extremely effective in presentations and, counter-intuitively, make you look confident.
5. You’ll appear cool, calm, and collected because you’re not using filler words and you’re comfortable with moments of silence.

**HAVE FUN!!**

* Excellent opportunity to showcase your new, innovative and creative skills to prospective employers and fellow UWS colleagues.
* You can demonstrate that you are **U**niversal, **W**ork-ready and are going to have **S**uccessful new career.