

# WRITING YOUR MESSAGE

*Successful presenters begin by understanding the ending.*

Successfully designed presentations are built around a central theme. When the presentation is over and the participants go home they should be able to tell others one or two key messages of ten words or less from the presentation that encapsulates your message.

The presentation's goal or 'take away message' can be supported in a variety of ways that will make it stand out to the audience and increase their ability to retain it. Scientific messages can be supported with research results, facts or quotes from notable experts in the field. Audiences will remember key messages which are presented with images that elicit emotional connections. Analogies enable audiences to think at an abstract level and increase the retention of new information. Humor is a double edged sword that should be used sparingly. Presenter should not attempt jokes or humor that they do not 'test' with others and naturally would be expected to use by people who know you. A picture is worth a thousand words and a successful presenter can paint very compelling images with the right words and ideas that make powerful pictures in the audience's mind. The power of the audience's mind can also be used to enhance retention of key messages by using personalization. Don't tell the audience what you think the subject of your address looks like. Ask them to imagine the last client or parent they talked to and then tell them you will help them work with that person better. Key phrases can be used to alert your audience to important messages and focus their attention if they have become distracted. Like a strong spice they should be used sparingly lest you spoil the dish. Phrases like "for example", "most importantly", never before have I seen' or "if you remember nothing else take this home with you" can verbally highlight your key messages.

Visual aids should be consistent with the words and order of your spoken presentation. Printed messages should be limited to 3 or 4 lines of ten words all about one idea per page. Colors in slide or handouts should be limited to 3 or 4 solid colors. Color schemes should remain consistent throughout the material. The repetition will help the audience feel familiar with the material and aid their retention. Some basic power point animation can eliminate the need for cumbersome pointers and enhance your audience's attention. Use animations, sounds and color with great restraint. You want the audience to remember your message not the show.