Don’t Leave Home (to Speak at a Conference) Without It . . .

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If you are not already on your way to the airport to fly somewhere to speak at a conference, you may reduce your anxiety and promote the audience’s perception of you by using the following rules and tips.

RULE 1: PRESENTATION MATERIALS

NEVER put your speech, handouts, overhead transparencies, slides, or other presentation materials in checked baggage.

Tip 1: If you should ignore this advice or leave your briefcase in the air terminal, let me tell you that transparent plastic food storage bags work very well for transparencies and are easier to locate at convenience stores when stationery stores are closed at evening arrival time. The freezer type are even more sturdy.

RULE 2: OFFICE SUPPLIES

You can’t carry every office item for every emergency, but some things are more helpful than others.

Tip 2: Even if your transparencies are prepared before the presentation, you may wish to take several extra for a last minute thought.

Tip 2a: Take several transparency pens (probably the non-permanent type) in case you need them to make replacements, or to add or emphasize ready-made materials.

Tip 2b: You may wish to remove non-permanent pen markings with a moist towelette.

RULE 3: ORGANIZATION OF PRESENTATION

You may organize your materials in whatever manner fits your delivery style, but there are items to assist you, such as the new 3M Flip-Frames. These have an area next to the displayed portion on which you may make notations and they fit in a regular notebook.

Tip 3: A quick way to organize/remind yourself is to bring a few 3M Post-it Notes. Since these come in various colors (including the new brilliant neon), you may find them helpful for color coding.

RULE 4: HANDOUTS

Much could be said about handouts, but one suggestion would be to organize them in the order that they will be discussed, starting with the first to be used on the top. You may choose to prepare the packets by either paper clip or staple.

Tip 4: Having the handouts copied on different colors of paper enables you to refer to them quickly as “the purple one,” and so forth.

RULE 5: SLIDES

If you are using slides, the clear, polypropylene slide holders are very handy to store and transport your slides. These 8½” x 11”-sized pockets are like those in photo albums and are punched to fit standard three ring binders. The holders are available in stationery/office supply stores under such brand names as C-Line Archival Slide Holder (C-Line Products Inc., Des Plaines, Illinois) and SmartTrac Photo Page Set (KM®, Avery, Torrance, California).

Tip 5: To prevent leaving a slide in the projector, add a non-essential slide such as one of a cartoon or one that if you leave it behind in the projector, you won’t be losing one of your important diagrams.

RULE 6: HUMOR

Use it to work for you! Add humor for its value to add interest and to break the monotony.

Tip 6: Use a humorous caption on a slide or transparency and place it strategically within the series. The unexpected can be delightful!
RULE 7: VIDEO TAPES
If your tape would be difficult to make or replace, it is wise to make a copy and leave the original at home.

Tip 7: Some audiovisual departments will automatically copy the video, then use their copy and erase it immediately after use. If this is the operating procedure, you will need to deliver your copy earlier so they can make their copy rather than handing it to a projectionist on your way to the podium. If you have not planned for this, it will likely be necessary for you to show the video a bit later in your presentation than you had originally scheduled.

RULE 8: DOCUMENTATION OF SOURCES
Even if your memory is very good, you won’t recall the source of all material you’ve shown on the slide or the overhead (at least not the edition or some other detail). When you haven’t added it, someone is sure to ask for that information.

RULE 9: PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE
If your agency does not provide assistance in the preparation of attractive visuals, you may find it worth seeking professional help and paying for it, especially if the material will be used many times.

Tip 9: Generally, professionally prepared materials are better, but that doesn’t mean you can’t improve a “homemade” transparency. For example, using press-on letters, clip art, or some other “helper” can make non-professionally made transparencies more appealing.

RULE 10: ESSENTIAL ITEMS
If you’re one of those who is attached to some specific teaching tool, take it with you.

Tip 10: If a lighted pointer is a must for you, don’t plan on it being there unless it is standard (and that is defined variously by others). Even requesting specific items doesn’t always mean you’ll have them. This is your golden opportunity to demonstrate to yourself that you are indeed FLEXIBLE.

RULE 11: EARLY ARRIVAL
When you allow enough time, you generally find your way and things run smoothly, or so it seems. When you’re running late, everything happens to make you nervous and “almost” late, or so it feels.

Tip 11: Ask them to provide you with a map locating the room, building, or other location specifics.

RULE 12: RELAXATION
Help yourself to relax in whatever way suits your personality and the situation.

Tip 12: Some speech teachers suggest going into a room and making faces with or without a mirror. When you find a method that works for you—use it!

RULE 13: LABELING BRIEFCASE
As you scoop up your materials to depart, check carefully to be sure you don’t leave anything behind (slide, transparency, pointer, or whatever you want to take back) as you place them in your briefcase, which has your name in and on it.

Tip 13: A combination lock briefcase can be useful and may double as a place for items you would otherwise put in a purse—leaving you with fewer things to “keep track of.”

Bon Voyage! Enjoy the going, the giving, and the returning home!