

## HOW TO GIVE A GREAT PRESENTATION

A quick caveat: Author events are unpredictable and attendance can vary widely from event to event given the weather, competing events, the amount of advance promotion conducted and the audience interest. Sometimes you present to a full house and other times you may have just a few interested readers. The best authors take this in stride.

The good news is that in addition to attendance there are intangibles associated with staging an event including increased book promotions and awareness, store merchandising and stocking in advance of the event, and handselling and recommending of the book by bookstore staff after the event.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when planning an author event:

1. **Pre-Event Preparations:** Site visits are optional, but can be helpful. Bookstore staff can spend 10-15 minutes walking you through their onsite set-up for the event. If this isn't an option because you're touring, don't sweat it. This is strictly optional. On the day of the event, arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start time to set up and familiarize yourself with the setting.
2. **Technical requirements:** Most authors present using a computer-based slide presentation such as Powerpoint. Most venues will have a projector or screen for the author to use. If you are presenting a slideshow, you'll want to ask the venue about their tech set up and figure out in advance if you're presenting from a flash drive, or from your laptop. We always recommend that you always have a back-up of you presentation in some form such as on a flash drive. Depending on the venue's set up, you may need to coordinate to make sure that you have the proper HDMI and or VGA cords to connect your Mac or PC to the projector!
3. **Author Introduction:** It's important to have a warm, informative, but brief introduction about you and your work. A good introduction is about 3-4 minutes long provides the context and relevancy of you and your work for the audience. Bookstore manager, event sponsor or someone with experience or credibility in the subject area are all good candidates to deliver your introduction. Provide them with a bio and background info on you and your book in advance. Feel free to share with them 3-5 talking points about what they might want to share.
4. **Presentation.** Author book presentations generally last 35-40 minutes. Any longer then audience members start to get fidgety. Presenting a combination of slides and readings is a good formula.
  - Include the book cover art on the beginning and ending slide
  - Thank the bookstore and any sponsors for hosting the event. Include them or their logos on the opening and closing slides
  - Slides should be image-oriented; minimal use of text is encouraged
  - Have prepared notes
  - For narrative authors: In addition to a slide presentation authors will want to incorporate about three 2-3 minute readings from your book. Provide the context for why you chose the reading and knowledge they need to better understand the larger work.

5. **Q&A.** Traditionally the Q&A portion of the event lasts about 15 minutes. Try to keep the Q&A to this time limit. If there seems to be more questions than time available tell the audience that you'll answer questions during or after the signing. Sometimes people are shy and don't want to be the first to ask a question. Have an icebreaker question planted in the audience by a friend, store clerk or even yourself.
6. **Signing.** Once the presentation and Q&A are over, you'll want to move quickly into the preparations for the signing. Bring a good signing pen or two. We recommend a sharpie finepoint. Signing is an art between spending time with fans and not keeping the rest of the line waiting.
7. **Book sales:** In most retail locations the store will handle the books sales for you. Make sure to let Mountaineers Books know when you have an event coming up though, and put us in touch with the coordinator to make sure they place an order well in advance of the day-of.

In most non-retail locations you sell the book directly to the customer. It's best to have a trusted friend or associate from the organizations help you with this so that you as the author is free to sign books.

- Know who is selling the books! Is it the bookstore? Great! Check in with them to make sure they have ordered your books in advance. If you're selling your own books, bring a friend along to be in charge of the book sales so you can focus on meeting people and signing books.
  - Provide an opt-in list where people can sign up to join your mailing list or find you on social networks.
  - Make it clear on your book sales table the book price, local sales tax, and payment methods you accept. If you accept personal checks, make sure you have a sign who to make them out to. Don't forget to bring change too.
  - Have extra books. You would hate to run out of books so even if you leave a box in your car you know you have them.
  - Give readers a bookmark, business card or postcard to remember you and your book. Smile! Let people know how glad you are they came to your event.
8. **Say Thank You.** After your event is over, take a deep breath, but don't stop there. Offer to sign additional copies the bookstore may have purchased. Write personal notes to everyone who helped you – your friends who sold books, a reporter who interviewed you and the venue host or hostess. Anyone and everyone who assisted you before and during your event should receive a thank you note and/or appropriate gift. You want to leave a good impression and hopefully receive a return invitation.
  9. **Social media** – Take pictures or have a friend or store rep take pictures on your behalf. A few key images to post after the event on social media is great continued promotion for the book and future events. **Protip:** Take a selfie with the audience in the background. It's great when you have a nice sized crowd of smiling faces behind you.

Following these steps does not guarantee that your event will be a tremendous success, especially if it is your first and you are not a bestselling author (yet!). But, by taking matters into your own hands you do have some control over how your event can go. Being prepared for whatever may come and staying calm under pressure will let your readers know you have confidence.