

WoVAs Demo Tips

Plan

Plan a demonstration that takes 30 to 50 minutes. It should be active – do something – make a bowl, turn a candlestick or show a sharpening technique.

Plan for one person to do the demonstration unless you are willing to practice with others 3 to 5 times to get the timing and sequencing spot-on.

Plan to include safety tips and cautions throughout the demonstration.

Plan to prepare things ahead of time, like rough out blanks, turn spigots, and prepare jigs and jam chucks. This way you can talk about them, but not waste time on common tasks that may bore the audience.

Write down the purpose of the demonstration, the scope (what will be included – what won't), and the sequence of steps you will follow in the demonstration. Use and refine these descriptions as you develop and improve the demonstration.

Develop

Organize the demonstration – steps, wood choices and orientation, tools, accessories, smoothing techniques, finishing techniques.

Select essential parts of the demonstration – “must see” versus “nice to see”.

Prepare samples of “must see” steps to pass around for the audience to inspect and to show design variations. Describe what makes them unique; form, details, finish, or special features.

Make sure all the steps are described. Even something you consider trivial may be new or misunderstood by some of the audience. For example, proper stance and tool presentation are often overlooked.

Prepare backup materials. Have replacement pieces ready should something fail. Usually there is not enough time to go through a full finishing process, so show examples of the final product.

The club has Powermatic 3520B, Delta 40-460, Jet 1221 VS and Jet 1014 VS lathes with chucks and normal accessories. Figure out what other tools and accessories you need to bring for the demonstration.

Prepare visual aids and models to illustrate details that may be hard to see or difficult to grasp. Use a white board and bold markers to engage the audience from a different perspective.

Practice

Conduct the demonstration with friends to improve sequences, timing, and narration. It may take several sessions to work out a flow that keeps you relaxed. Always time the practice sessions and make adjustments to leave time for comments and questions. Use questions asked during practice to refine the presentation.

Practice several times out loud before you finalize the demonstration. Most folks speak faster than they think when talking to an audience. Speak slowly and clearly. Pause to

emphasize a critical stem or operation. Ask the audience questions to evaluate their understanding of the ideas you are trying to communicate. Develop the notes you need to cover the material. Memorize your narrative. Do not read to the audience but do not forget what to say either.

IDEA: Use a magnet to attach notes to the lathe headstock for handy reference. You might set up a hand-out with marginal notes and numbered "steps" that correspond to numbers on the pieces being "passed around." That gives the audience a ready reference to the handout. Have specific "must see" pieces turned to different stages/steps in the process, so that the audience can see what is happening by looking at the piece being passed around. Try out different ideas during practice sessions. Use what works for you.

Prepare for questions, comments and jests. In our lively group, someone will inevitably poke fun at something or make a provoking comment.

Deliver

Prepare early on the day of the demonstration:

Check out lathe and other provided tools. Make sure that there is a table set up for you next to the lathe. Lay out all of your tools and whatever else you'll be using. (Watching the demonstrator bending down digging in a tool bag isn't interesting.) Sharpen all the tools you plan to use the night before. Not having to grind during a demo makes it go faster and cuts down on the noise level.

Make sure there is no dead time during the demo. That is the worst mistake many demonstrators make. Have sharp tools, spares, and extras if possible to prevent dead time while turning.

Locate and align the visual aids, lighting, sound equipment, and camera operators to best support your demonstration. Tell camera operators up front when you want them to zoom into certain places or focus on a visual aid. The only people who can see your work are usually in the front row. Most of the others see through the cameras.

If you normally wear a face mask, use safety glasses for the demo to keep your voice from being muffled or put the microphone under the face mask. Remember to keep talking. If people hear clearly what you are doing, they think more clearly about what they saw and better remember your ideas.

Ensure safety guards, a first aid kit and other safety items are in place and ready to use.

Face the audience when speaking and explaining steps. Refrain from speaking unless you are facing the audience. Whatever you do, make sure everybody hears you even the folks in the back row. (If they do not hear you they will start their own conversation.)

Sound systems, even portable ones, make a huge improvement in the success of a demonstration.

Remember three things:

- 1) You are the expert in this situation. You may not feel like it, but you are. The people are there to listen to you, and they want you to do well.

- 2) Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" to something you don't know. Leave out a lengthy explanation or apology. Just say "that's a good question and I will try to find out

the answer for you." You don't have to know everything about everything.

3) Be careful not to let too many questions distract you from your main purpose for being there - to demo a skill. You may feel you are helping the person who asks a long, involved question, but the rest of the group will get bored. Offer to talk with the person after the demo or during a break.

Begin:

Introduce the topic and establish rapport with the audience. Tell them what you are going to tell them.

Tell the audience what you are doing. Talk a lot. Make sure the audience knows what you are doing, how and why. Use examples of your work to augment the demo. The entire audience may not be able to see every move so narrate what's going on "behind the scenes."

Pass things around as you finish them. This will give the audience a chance to physically process what you have just done and it will stick in their minds a bit better.

Answer questions only after repeating the question so everybody understands the context of your answer. You may need to clarify or rephrase the question to understand how to best answer. Try to figure out the unasked question and answer it during your reply.

Periodically ask for feedback from the audience. Ask for it when transitioning from step to step.

Finish:

Tell them what you have done – all the steps – highlight what is unique and unusual.

Above all have fun. Turning is fun partly because we share. Turners like to see and hear about turning. If you finesse that final or hollow that lid and bring joy to your demonstration, the club will be happy and may ask you for another demo. Enjoy sharing and others will respond likewise. Turners love to see someone succeed. Make a mistake? Great! Proves you are a turner.

Learn to love making mistakes. Everyone finds them entertaining. Learn to act embarrassed and claim that it had never happened before, or that it was only the third time a mistake like that had ever been made. The truth is - if it can go wrong it will go wrong during a demonstration so you may as well have fun with it.

Get Feedback

Before the presentation ask some "trusted agents" to write down three good things they liked about the presentation and three questions they had that were unanswered. Also ask them for specific suggestions about how to improve the demonstration. Avoid the temptation to judge how the audience received your presentation. Refrain from self-critique – just enjoy giving your presentation.

The next day or later, evaluate your presentation based on your notes about what you expected to demonstrate versus the feedback from "trusted agents." Figure out what worked and what didn't and how to make the demonstration more entertaining and "fun for all." There is always room for improvement.