You may not need all these things, but better to have them and not need them than need them and not have them.

- **Your laptop.** This may seem too obvious to put on a list, but if you’re list-oriented, include it. Don’t forget the power cord. And don’t leave your computer at security at the airport (it’s hard to believe that people really do this, but they do). And of course, make sure your slides are loaded on your computer if you’ll be showing slides.

- **An extension cord.** Don’t assume your computer’s power cord will reach the nearest outlet. Some meeting rooms are not designed for meetings. Go figure! If there is an A/V staff on-site, they can usually supply an extension cord. But why be dependent: bring your own.

- **An adapter.** If your computer uses, for example, a three-prong plug, don’t assume the outlets in the room you’ll be speaking in will accommodate it. Most will; a few won’t. For presentations in the US, I bring a three-prong to two-prong adapter. For presentations outside your country, determine what you’ll need in the way of plug adapters, power converters, or other electrical needs. Google: electrical requirements for [country].

- **Presentation notes.** If you’ve prepared notes as reminders for your presentation, take them with you if you’re sure you need them. You might find you do just fine even without your notes — and then you have one less thing to think about.

- **A printout of your slides** (if you’ll be using slides). That way, if you lose power or your computer bites the dust and there’s no backup, you can continue to present, using your printout as a reminder. The audience will be impressed that you can proceed even without them.

- **Flip chart markers.** If you use a flip chart (which is normally provided in presentation venues), don’t count on the markers to actually write. Some markers might be worn down. Some will be in colors that are impossible to see from a distance, or even close up. Besides, there are markers that feel right in your hand and markers that don’t. Bring your own so you’re sure of having markers that mark, and in the colors you prefer.

- **A timer.** I always use a small travel alarm that I can see from a distance to keep me on track. It’s best not to depend on your watch for timekeeping; repeatedly glancing at your watch suggests you’re unsure of your timing. Worse, glancing at your watch might suggest to the audience you can’t wait till the presentation is over. Which may be true, but if so, don’t let it be obvious.

- **A notebook or pad.** This will be handy for any ideas you want to record just before or after your presentation (or even during).
Several pens. Why several? Because they get up and walk away. I don’t know how. I never see them walk away. But they do. If you might want to jot down a note or two while you’re speaking, or when someone asks a question, you want to be sure you have at least one pen handy. Plus, amazingly, people often attend a presentation without their own pens. Before my presentation begins, someone often asks me if I have a pen handy that they can use. My answer is always yes.

A pad of sticky notes. They enable you to jot down quick reminders to yourself. I always write my ending time in large print on a sticky note because once I start, I sometimes can’t remember what time I’m supposed to end by. Often, just writing it down serves as a memory enhancer.

Tape. Bring whatever kind you’ll need for your intended use. For example, you might want masking tape if you’ll be posting flip chart sheets on the wall. Special types of masking tape are available that won’t leave a mark when removed.

A recording device, if you want to record your presentation. Some presenters record every presentation they give. If you’re a relatively inexperienced presenter, you’ll find it valuable to listen to your recordings afterwards to see what you can learn.

Your cell phone if you might want to call someone during your presentation. Yes, I’ve seen presenters do this. Don’t forget to leave it off when you’re not using it so you don’t get calls while you’re presenting.

A camera if it’s the sort of setting where you can, and might want to, take a photo (or a video) of the audience (or a giraffe that wanders by, or whatever). If you’re going to take photos of the audience, it’s best to ask their permission first — and always ask their permission before you post them online. Some people don’t like having their photos taken, and it’s best to respect this preference.

Your handouts. It may be that there’s an event or meeting organizer who is responsible for reproducing your handout material and having it on-site for you. But “responsible for” and “doing” are not always the same. For that reason, it’s a good idea to check in with this perhaps-responsible person in advance to make sure that you know precisely where you’ll find the material. Always bring at least one master copy with you that you can use to make copies, if worse comes to worse.

Any relevant supplementary material. This may include, for example, books you want to quote from or display, props you use in your presentation, and handouts that you don’t want to include in the main handout (because, for example, they include a surprise that you don’t want people to see ahead of time).

Backup eyeglasses. This may be overkill. Even being nearly blind without my glasses, I don’t usually have a backup pair with me except when I’m traveling, and even then, I don’t usually bring them to the presentation with me. But if you’re the sort of person who has things happen to you, such as taking your glasses off and having someone sit on them, a backup pair might be a smart idea.
☐ A CD or flash drive with a backup copy of your slides. If your laptop misbehaves and you have to use someone else’s at the last minute, having a backup copy of your slides will be a life saver. The especially paranoid (like me) may also want to upload your slide deck to a website as an additional backup. If your copy gets clobbered and your CD or flash drive don’t work, you can download it.

☐ A snack. No, not so you can munch during your presentation. But if your flight (or your previous meeting) runs late, and you miss a meal, you won’t starve to death before (and while) you speak. Bring a piece of fruit, a protein bar, or whatever works for you. I’m not in the nutrition business, I just know that speaking while hungry isn’t fun. And a growling stomach may not be the best of sound effects

☐ Water. Speaking at length generates thirst, and speaking while thirsty is uncomfortable. Many meeting rooms and conference facilities have water available at each table or at a station in the room, so it’s easy enough to keep a glass of water handy while you’re speaking. But don’t count on someone to keep you watered. Bring your own.

☐ Tissues. Don’t let that unexpected sneeze catch you unprepared. Achoo!

What would you add to this list? What have you forgotten and wished you had remembered? What did you have handy that you never imagined you’d need?

I welcome your ideas. Please contact me at naomi@nkarten.com or via www.nkarten.com. Thanks!

Naomi Karten