

see you. But you might want to consider a different layout so people don't have to move chairs to see you.

A "modified banquet" layout (**Figure 55.4**) improves the line of sight.

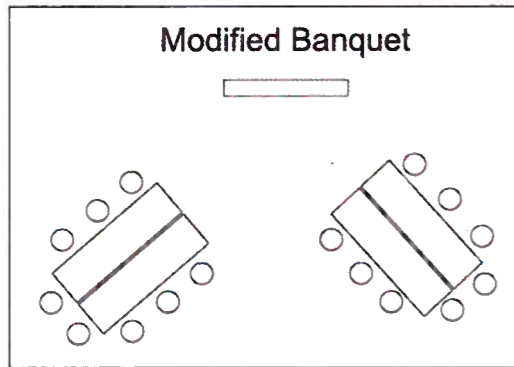


FIGURE 55.4 Modified banquet layout

You can send a diagram of your preferred layout ahead of time. But don't rely on the diagram. Even when I send a preferred layout ahead of time, more than half of the time the actual layout of the room is not what I sent in the diagram. Make sure you show up early so that you or the staff can change the setup before participants arrive.

Takeaways

- * Make sure your participants can easily see you.
- * Ask your host about the room and its seating arrangement.
- * If you have a preferred seating layout, send it ahead of time.
- * Arrive early and be prepared to modify the layout.

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PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED BY THE ARRANGEMENT OF FURNITURE

Furniture arrangement is not just important so that people can see you as the presenter. The arrangement of the furniture can affect unconscious expectations about the interactions between you and the participants, as well as about interactions between participants.

IS YOUR FURNITURE CONDUCTIVE TO COLLABORATION?

Some furniture and furniture layouts make it easier to interact and do activities. When participants walk into a room and find a seat at a table with five other chairs—and there are four other tables like that—it sends a message that the session might be interactive. They will be more likely to talk to others around them before the presentation starts. They will have a different experience than coming in to a room with chairs that are all facing the front. People will engage more with people they are facing than with people they are sitting next to.

If you have group activities, then you will need to be able to move around the room to see how the groups are doing and if they have any questions. Make sure the room layout allows you access to the different groups while they are working.

Takeaways

- * If you are planning to have group activities, then consider having several tables with four to eight people at a table rather than a classroom- or auditorium-style room.
- * If you have group activities, make sure there is enough room for you to move around and visit the groups during their activities.

IT'S EASY FOR PEOPLE TO LOSE INTEREST ONLINE

If you will be delivering your presentation online, then you have some additional challenging factors to deal with. The chapter “How People React to You” covers how people react to nonverbal communication. But many presentations these days take place online, often with only audio. This means that the participants don’t have any visual stimuli. In that environment, it’s easy for people to get distracted by things in their local environment—for example, email or an offline conversation.

If you are giving an online presentation, here are some things to consider:

- ★ If possible, use video. At least people will be able to see your facial expressions.
- ★ If you have only audio and no video, then you must rely on your voice to convey all of your nonverbal information.
- ★ Keep the presentation time short. An hour and a half is about as long as you want to go. If there is more material than that, then you will need to break the material up into shorter, multiple sessions.
- ★ Stop periodically and ask if there are questions or if everyone is OK. Since you can’t see your audience, you must ask for feedback as you go along.
- ★ You will have to change the activities you plan. Although some teleconferencing and teleclassroom tools let you have “break-outs,” that may be challenging to do. Think through carefully what exercises and activities will work online. You need to either have short activities that people can do by themselves or assign longer activities between sessions.
- ★ To grab and hold attention and keep interest, build in changes of topic, polls and quizzes, or discussion (if the group is small).
- ★ People tend to arrive late for online presentations (they tend to not give themselves enough time for logging into the meeting and calling the phone number). Assume that most people aren’t online until 10 minutes in. This means that if you say anything really important in the first 10 minutes, you will have to find a way to subtly repeat it later.

Takeaways

- * If you are giving an online presentation, consider that your audience will be easily distracted.
- * Build in polls, quizzes, and discussion, or at least ask often if there are questions or comments.
- * An online presentation may need to be shorter than the same presentation given in person.