

Presentations

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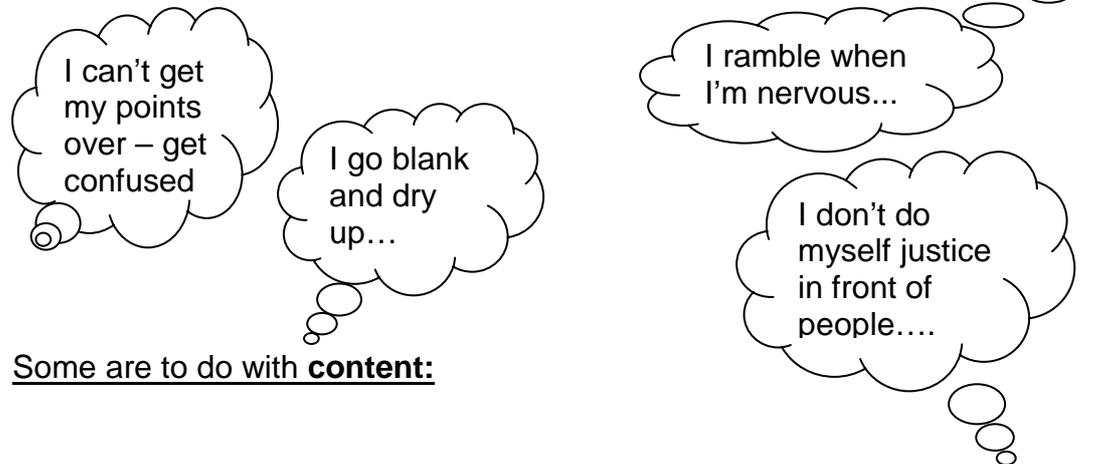
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Why give presentations?

- **You learn more.** Researching and presenting a subject usually results in better understanding and recall.
- **Presentations are very much part of the world of work.** Job interviews often involve presentations, and they are a common aspect of many jobs.
- **You can gain a lot of satisfaction** by preparing and delivering group presentations as part of team.
- **Presentations often stimulate useful discussion** with other class members – which helps your engagement with and understanding of the subject.

General concerns

Most are about **delivery** - standing up in front of people:



Some are to do with **content**:

"I'm not sure what to put in and what to leave out"

"I can never fit it all in"

"I'm not sure what I should be covering..."

Whatever your concerns, identify them so you can use this leaflet effectively. Identify your strengths as well – and think about how you can enhance them. Presentations should work **for** you – help you build skills and confidence to carry with you after your time as a student.

What makes an effective presentation?

You need to think about...

Research
Planning
Structure
Visual Aids

Research

This kind of research is about finding out exactly what you need to do in a particular presentation. It helps to consider some basic questions at the start:

- Why am I giving this presentation?
- What are the criteria?
- What essential content should I have in?
- What are the audience/tutors looking for?
- What do I not need/have any time for?
- How much time do I have?

Check what criteria will be used to assess your presentation.

In particular, be clear what the focus of the talk has to be, and what your argument (point of view) has to cover, and what kind of conclusions you need to draw.

Are you:

Explaining something?

Arguing a point of view?

Presenting the results of an experiment or study?

Outlining a process?

A bit of all these???

Check the type of information you need to cover, how much detail is required, and whether particular visuals are needed. These could be pictures, diagrams, charts etc.

Think about who will be in **the audience**. This affects the type of information, and the kind of language/visuals you use, as well as how you deliver your presentation.

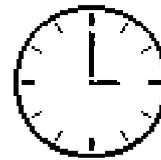
Think of **any aspect of the task that you are unsure about**, and approach a tutor, and/or fellow students for clarification.

Now you can get on with the planning and preparation with the confidence that you are on the right lines.

Planning

Allocating time

Plan how to use the time right at the start of your planning. This way, you have a realistic picture of how much you can cover. It's also much easier to start from a few main points and gradually expand your material, than start with everything you know and try to cut down.



Here's an example for a 10-minute talk:

- **1 min:** introduce self and topic
- **1 min:** clarify aims of presentation
- **7 min:** main body of talk (main points, information, analysis, examples)
- **1 min:** conclusion

- Divide your material into the **essential points** you definitely want to make, and the extra material you can use if there is time
- **Decide what you need** to back up the key points.
This could be partly information, partly analysis – be clear about the difference, or your presentation could provide a lot of information but not enough analysis. Start with the main points/analysis, and then think of the information/detail you need to support them.
- Be clear about the:
 - Content** of your presentation (information and examples) and what you want it to
 - Show** (ideas, analysis and conclusions)
- Spend time planning and simplifying your information and ideas. Think in terms of...**key point, explanations and examples**

Structure

The structure is about **how you put the presentation together**, and how you make this structure clear to the audience. The audience will soon get lost if you jump around and don't make the structure explicit.

The different sections should follow logically, and you should have a clear introduction and conclusion – but these should only be brief!

- Decide the **best and most logical order** for your points
- Select **information and evidence** to support them
- Decide where the '**visuals**' will go
- **Clarify the main points** for your introduction and conclusion

The PowerPoint or OHP slides you use should help make the structure clear. They should normally include:

- Title of talk
- Brief list of sections (2,3 or 4 headings)
- A slide for each section, with any appropriate diagram/graph if needed
- Concluding slide
- Bibliography slide – not too long, but same referencing as an essay

As part of the structure, you need to work on

Visual aids

It is hard just to listen to someone talk, and keeps pressure on the speaker. It also helps for the audience to have 'prompts' to refer to on a screen.

Think about what would be effective – clear handouts? OHPs? Slides/PowerPoint? Flip charts?

You could equally well prepare a large poster or diagram if it gets your message across effectively and enhances what you are saying.

Whatever visual aids you decide to use, make sure they are relevant and clearly presented – or they can become a distraction from the main message.

.Again, check to see if there is a preferred format you should be using for visual aids before you spend time preparing materials.

If you use PowerPoint:

- Use a large font-size – about 32-point is good
- Be consistent with font, format etc.
- Times and Arial are both good clear fonts to use.
- Be careful with the size of font – anything smaller than 24 could be hard to read on a slide,

Arial 32

Times 32

Arial 28

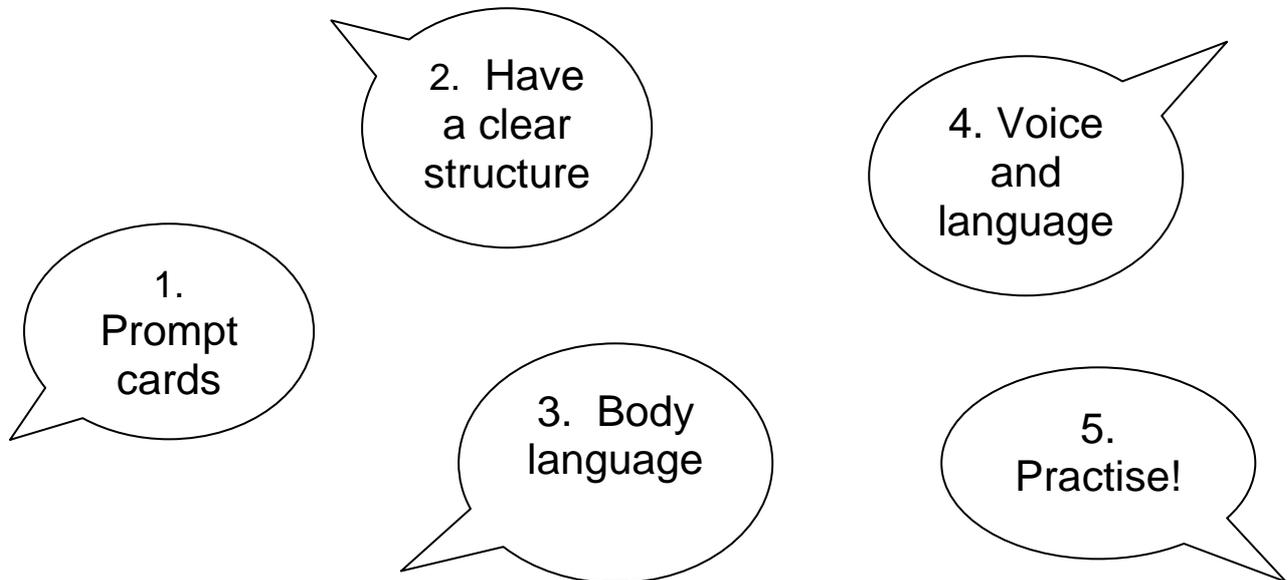
Times 28

Arial 20

Times 20

- **Don't use too much text** – just the main points
- **30 words are about the maximum** you should put on a slide – any more, and the audience concentrate on reading rather than listening!
- About **3 or 4 short headings** is enough for one slide
- **Don't cram in** too many pages – one page for every 2-3 minutes of talk is fine
- **Keep diagrams and graphs simple** – use labelling that helps clarify your point and no more
- **Avoid flashy sound effects** and graphics, unless they are really essential!
- **Copy your pages** onto acetates so you can use them on an OHP if the PowerPoint technology lets you down! (It happens...)

Effective delivery



Prompt cards

Try using **index cards** for delivering the talk.

These can contain key points, facts, statistics that you want to mention in connection with each slide or overhead.

- Have one card for each image
- Use for key information only
- Keep minimal – no sentences...
- Use colour, stars, highlighter to help you glance quickly
- Glance, don't read! (use your thumb to mark the spot so you can find it again for the next glance)
- Fasten together in one corner and number them

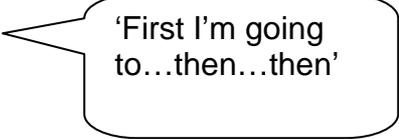
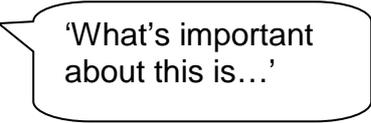
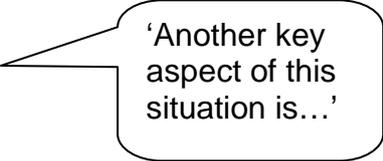
It can also be useful to note **good 'link' words** at the bottom of each card, that help you introduce the next slide smoothly, such as:

'an **alternative** view is...'

'we should also **consider**...'

'an **additional** area to look at is...'

Making the structure clear

- Use the introduction to frame the structure 
- Indicate the sections/stages as you progress 
- Emphasise the key ideas 
- Briefly sum up the main points as you go
- Use other 'signposts' 

Body language

This is where you need to **practise** in front of friends and/or family:

Ask for feedback on:

Eye contact, position (best to stand on the left of any screen/projector), hands, feet (best to stand firmly on both feet – it looks and feels more confident).

You don't have to change your personality to give a presentation, but it can help to tone down any exaggerated hand movements or habits like fiddling with your hair, rings etc.

Voice and language

Speak to the back of the group or room

Speak more **slowly** than you think you should

Use **short sentences** – visualise full stops

Keep language simple where possible – long words only where necessary

Allow **pauses** – between slides, points...let the audience take it in

Be true to yourself – don't imitate a style that isn't yours



Practice

- It makes a big difference if you **practise your talk several times**. Take it slowly and time yourself.
- Prepare a **strong opening sentence**, so that you sound confident at the start. Prepare a **strong final sentence** as well... it's fine simply to say 'That concludes my presentation, thank you for listening. Does anyone have any questions?' or 'I'm happy to try and answer any questions.'
- Practise **glancing at the prompt cards** then looking up to speak – Reading everything from notes can sound lifeless.
- **Find a friend**...and ask them to listen to you run it through. Ask them to comment on specific things: body language, tone of voice, speed of delivery – it's hard to judge these things yourself.
- **Make small changes** and rehearse it with a 'small' audience again – it can be surprisingly nerve-wracking even with one person watching – so you can get over some of the initial nerves this way.

Dealing with nerves

Everyone feels nervous when they speak in public, and in many ways this can help your 'performance'. However, nerves can also undermine confidence unless you have thought ahead and worked out how to deal with them.

Effective ways of building confidence are:

Preparation

Remind yourself you have practised and prepared as much as you can, then you won't have a nagging feeling that you have missed something out.

Anticipation

Thinking about your own 'triggers' for nerves and planning how to deal with these can put you more in control and help build confidence in your own coping skills.

Tips for dealing with nerves

Put time aside to think about these:

- Identify your **'triggers' for nerves** (starting late? Missing out a point?)
- Get used to **pauses** in your presentation – practise pausing
- Plan a **strategy for 'blanks'** – what will you do?
- **Don't apologise** unnecessarily
- If you are running over time, **keep going** as planned until the last minute, then cut to the conclusion – don't try to 'rush' through everything or edit as you go along
- **Apologise boldly** if things go wrong
keep the audience informed and say what is happening... 'I'll just have to check my notes here... I'm sorry, I'll just take a minute to think about my next point....' That way **you keep in control** of the situation.
- **Smile!** Not fixedly all the time – but at the start of a slide or a point – it relaxes your throat, helps breathing and makes you look more confident.

Anticipation

Think about how you would deal with these...they happen!

- Equipment fails
 - Omitting key facts
 - Noise
 - Dry throat – (have a glass of water..)
 - Losing the thread
 - Time running out
 - People come in late
 - Nobody smiles...(they don't have to...but it helps when they do)

Ask other students what they do...plan strategies that will work for you.

Dealing with questions

Repeat the question to clarify. That way, you make sure everyone else has heard the question, and you give yourself more time to think.

When you answer questions, it is OK to say simply "I'm afraid I don't know the answer to that question..." and maybe suggest where the answer might be found. **Don't try to bluff** your way through a tough question – be honest!

Look at the questioner – it helps you to stick to answering the question rather than going off at a tangent.

The day before



It sounds obvious, but **check the basics:**

- Room?
- Time of talk?
- Equipment ordered?
- Clock, glass of water sorted out?
- Anything else?

On the day

Arrive early

This gives you time to make sure the equipment is working, sort out your prompt cards – and it feels better than walking into a room full of faces...

Take a few deep breaths

Remind yourself to speak slowly

Wait until everyone is settled

Introduce your talk clearly at the beginning – state the topic and the things you will be covering

During the talk, **look up and make firm eye contact** from time to time with the audience. Try concentrating on the hair-line of the people in the back-row. It looks like eye-contact, but can be less distracting.

Try looking at 1 different sections of the audience in turn – left, middle, right

Don't apologise for anything that you think could be better.

Act as confidently as you can, and you will convince the audience like-wise.

Pause between points – breathe – it gives the audience time to take in what you are saying. It also looks more confident and professional.

At the end, **briefly sum up** what you have been saying.

Prepare a good line to end with. Simply smiling and saying 'Thank you for listening. Would anyone like to ask any questions?' is perfectly fine.

Key things to avoid:

- Cramming in too much material
- Adding things at the last minute
- 'Over-loading' your slides
- Speeding up
- Talking for the sake of talking – stop and take a breath...

Key points to remember:

- Check what's needed
- Plan and structure
- Timing
- Practice
- Make changes
- Keep it simple
- Take control...breath
- Communicate enthusiasm!

....and finally:

Attitude

Be positive, think how much preparation you've done, and concentrate on the points you want to communicate – you need to really want to get them across! Summon enthusiasm for your subject and words will flow more easily.

Think: **I'm in control of this**. Any mistakes or difficulties will be dealt with by me, and I'll tell the audience what is happening – eg 'I'm just going to gather my thoughts about this question for a minute...' instead of panicking in silence. A clear statement of what you are doing has the double effect of informing the audience, and motivating you to do what you say you are doing!

Remind yourself to breathe between points...or sentences – think 'breathe' and it will help you focus

Remember to **learn** from the process each time. It doesn't have to be perfect!