

An Introduction to Public Speaking

Public speaking is one of the most feared things for many people – in fact, some public surveys show fear of public speaking as higher than fear of death. It boggles my mind that people are more afraid of ten minutes in front of a group of people than they are of the great unknown! But, then I'm a little weird in that I actually enjoy public speaking and being in front of an audience. It probably has to do with my love of theater and performance that makes me not afraid of being in front of an audience. Despite my lack of fear about public speaking situations, I have never been able to conquer the nerves and anxiety that come with almost any speech situation that I've been faced with. Communication instructors aren't here to make you excellent public speakers. Instructors try to take you from where you are and give you some skills to become a better public speaker – and hopefully eliminate some of the anxiety you may have about public speaking. It is my personal philosophy that anybody can give a speech if they know some basic techniques so let's get started on the components of a speech which will make you a successful public speaker.

Four Types of Speech Delivery

There are four types of speeches that most speakers utilize in delivering a speech.

1. Extemporaneous speeches are speeches that are carefully prepared and practiced by the speaker before the actual speaking time. A speaker will utilize notes or an outline as a guide while they are delivering the speech. The notes or outline will usually include any quotes and sources the speaker wants to cite in the presentation, as well as the order the information in the speech should be delivered in. The speech is delivered as if the speaker is having a conversation with the audience. Since the speaker is not reading the entire speech, the extemporaneous speaker uses the notes as a guide only – a sort of memory trigger – and the speaker will also be able to respond to the audience since her head isn't trapped by reading every word on a paper. This is the type of public speaking you should strive to use in Fundamentals of Oral Communication for your informative and persuasive speeches as this is most practical type of public speaking – the type you are most likely use in a real life situation when you might be asked to give a formal presentation.

It used to be a pretty standard technique of putting your notes or outline on notecards – those 3" by 5" recipe cards. The idea was that the palm of your hand can hold 3 by 5 inch cards and they won't be distracting to an audience – in fact, if you hold them just right, an audience almost can't see what is in your hand. Since the cards are relatively small, you would need several note cards for a ten minute speech (probably around five at least). I tend to have a Murphy's Law sort of experience is I speak off of note cards – they can be in the right order when I'm at my seat but by the time I get to the podium to speak one will be in the wrong order or worse yet, it will be gone entirely – zapped into the ozone! With the advent of computers, I find it is easier for me to use a single sheet of computer paper with an outline or list of notes to speak off of. I recommend that students use what they are comfortable with to speak off of. So, for this course, use either note cards or a single sheet of computer paper for your presentations.

2. Impromptu speeches are speeches that are delivered without notes or a plan, and without any formal preparation – they are very spontaneously delivered. This is one of the most nerve wracking situations for most students to find themselves in because there isn't a plan or agenda to follow – they just have to get up and speak without any “thinking” time. They are afraid of not knowing what to say when they get up in front of the audience so they might make a fool of themselves. If this type of speaking situation makes you nervous, you are not alone! The reality is that this is the type of public speaking you are the MOST prepared for. Your daily life is filled with impromptu experiences and conversations. Every phone conversation, exchange between you and a loved one, and discussion amongst friends is impromptu by its very nature – even if we “practice” our conversations, they are still impromptu in their delivery. So, while most students are nervous about impromptu speeches, they are the type they are the most prepared for from their daily experience.
3. Manuscript speeches are speeches that are delivered with a script of the exact words to be used. If they have to give a speech, most students prefer to have every single word in front of them so they can basically “read” the speech to the audience. While this is very reassuring for a speaker and they feel like they won’t “forget” anything if they have every word in front of them, manuscript speaking is one of the worst traps to fall into for a speaker. The speaker who utilizes a complete manuscript will often spend more time looking at the script than at the audience. By doing this, the speaker is unable to react to the audience or respond to the audience members questions. Therefore, the manuscript becomes a trap for the speaker.
4. Memorized speeches are speeches that are committed to memory. The speaker completely memorizes the text of a speech and then delivers the speech from memory without reliance on notes or an outline. This is a very fearful speaking situation for most people because they fear they will forget what they had planned on saying when they get in front of the group – and, they might make a fool of themselves in front of the audience if they forget what to say. This type of speaking is not very common to daily living unless you are in a profession like acting. Most of us memorize very little in our daily lives – we don’t even have to remember telephone numbers since we have cellular phones! I don’t require memorized speeches for Fundamentals of Oral Communication because I think they lead to bad experiences for some students and they are not something most people have to do in the course of their daily living. Unfortunately, public speaking tends to get a bad rap because some junior high and high school teachers require students to memorize speeches which can lead to some bad experiences in front of an audience for a student.

Vocal Aspects of Speech Delivery

There are six aspects of vocal delivery a speaker utilizes that influence an audience's interpretation of the speaker's message.

1. Pitch is the highness or lowness of a speaker's voice. It is the natural upward and downward movement that happens when we speak – the melody. Pitch is a learned activity. When you

were born, you didn't have pitch but you learned it from the significant people in your life. When your mom or dad talked "baby talk" to you – all that "ga, ga, goo, goo" stuff – they spoke using a variety of pitches. Your parent used quiet soft tones to bring about a soothing, calm response from you or happy, lively tones to bring about a smile or coo from you. As a baby you learned to mimic the melodies you heard from your parents. This is why family members often sound alike in their speech tones and patterns – children mimic those that they are around the most. For instance, if you heard my mom, and then myself on the phone, we sound exactly alike! If you were born without the ability to hear, you couldn't learn pitch which is why a deaf person who has learned to speak tends to sound monotone – they can't mimic because they can't hear. When it comes to public speaking, don't try to fight your natural pitch by sounding more "professional" or more "in charge." Let your natural melody flow as you deliver a presentation.

2. Rate is how fast or slow you speak when delivering a speech. A common problem of nervous public speakers is speaking too quickly or feeling like you are rushing through a speech which can lead to a cotton mouth feeling. To counteract rushing the presentation, have a bottle of water on hand and take a drink when you feel like you are rushing – this should slow you down. Likewise, concentrating too much on slowing down can cause you to drag your presentation. Try to speak at a natural rate when you are delivering your presentation.
3. Pauses are intended silences during a speech. In conversation, we naturally pause at the end of sentences and at the end of a thought. We should keep up the same pausing pattern in our public speaking that we use in our natural conversation. We can also use pauses to control an audience that might not be paying attention to the presentation. By taking a little bit longer pause than normal, an audience member will notice the silence and usually stop chatting, whispering, or being disrespectful.
4. Volume is the relative loudness of your voice as you deliver a presentation. It shouldn't come as much of a surprise that you need to match your volume to the size of the room you are speaking in. You should also pay attention to your audience – audience members are great about telling you when they can't hear. They will tend to lean forward or look around confused if you are too quiet. They may even make verbal comments like "What did she say?" or "Can you hear him?" When you see or hear this happening in your audience, speak louder.
5. Enunciation is the pronunciation and articulation of words in your speech. Each word is composed of syllables which are the little parts of each word that combine together to make a particular sound. The word "sugar" is composed of two syllables – "Shu" and "gar." When we don't pronounce each syllable in a word, we sound mush-mouthed and don't sound clear to an audience. As you give a presentation, concentrate on speaking very clearly and using your entire mouth to form each word. Most of us in our daily conversation are pretty sloppy in our talk – we rarely use our entire mouth to converse. In public speaking it is essential to use your entire mouth, speaking extremely clearly while making sure you say each syllable.

6. Fluency is the smoothness of your vocal delivery. Fluency is the flow of your words in the delivery of your speech. You should strive for a smooth delivery in your presentation but if your tongue gets tripped up, don't panic. Everyone gets tripped up at one point or another – even professional actors. That's why there are out-takes on movies! We all stumble over unfamiliar or new words or even old words we've said a thousand times. The trick is to not make a big deal out of the flub when it happens. Just maintain your professional tone and keep going. The biggest way to prevent stumbling over your words is to practice, practice, practice your presentation so your words are as natural sounding to you as possible.

Bodily Aspects of Speech Delivery

There are four aspects of a speaker's body which impact an audience's interpretation of the speaker's message.

1. Gestures are movements of the speaker's head, arms, and hands. When you watch a great public speaker, you will notice that their entire body is into the presentation. They use their entire body to deliver the message – their arms gesture, their fingers point or accent important words, and their head even nods when they are talking about something important. Most people think of a podium as wonderful piece of furniture to have on hand when they give a presentation – usually, because it gives the speaker someplace to hide behind! A podium is designed for one thing and one thing only – to hold your notes. It is not meant to support your weight, to be leaned on, or to death grip with your hands. If you hang onto a podium or death grip it out of fear, you will not be able to gesture and you will simply be a talking head. Most of us gesture naturally in our daily conversation. Many of us are accused of talking with our hands. In fact, if you are asked to sit on your hands and have a conversation with someone, you will probably compensate for the lack of arm/hand gestures by nodding your head or shrugging your shoulders more than normal! If you have a podium to speak at, set your notes on the podium and take one step back from it so you can't hang onto it. This will help you to gesture naturally and you won't hang onto the podium. If you hold your notes in your hand, avoid gesturing with the notes because your audience will logically follow the notes if you wave them around.
2. Facial expressions are movements of the eyes, mouth, chin, etc. The best piece of advice about facial expressions is to make them match your subject. If you speaking about a serious subject, use a serious facial expression but if you are speaking about something funny, go ahead and smile or even laugh. You can ruin a serious presentation by laughing during it and you can ruin a light hearted speech by never cracking a smile.

This is a good time to mention humor. Most of us love a good joke but few of us are genuinely funny by nature – just think about how few really great comedians there are in the world. You can certainly use humor in a presentation but if you are not naturally a funny person, don't go there because the audience will know if you are faking it. Likewise, if you are going to use humor, the humor should match the subject you are talking about. In other words, if you are going to use "Why did the chicken cross the road?" you better be speaking about chickens, roads, or what's on the other side of the road for the rest

of the speech. The worst thing you can do is to deliver a joke at the beginning of a speech which doesn't match the content of your speech because it sets the audience up with an expectation about your presentation which you can't then fulfill. It is never a good idea to deceive an audience because you ruin the trust between a speaker and the audience.

3. Eye contact is sustained, meaningful contact with the eyes of audience members. This is the top reason most people hate public speaking – the thought of people looking at you and all the eyes on you is probably the most difficult part of public speaking. There are a whole lot of ways that people will tell you to get around the eye contact issue. Some of the most common myths about eye contact include:
 - Look only at the back wall in the room, never at the people in the audience. The trouble with this approach is that you completely ignore the audience which makes audience members feel unconnected to the speaker.
 - Pick three spots and only look at those three spots in the room. The trouble with this approach is that this takes a whole lot of work – you have to remember where your three spots are and where to look next. The audience will feel like you are watching a tennis match instead of looking like at them.
 - Look only at the audience member's foreheads – not at their eyes. Have you ever tried to focus on someone's forehead? Unless there is some sort of strange growth on a forehead, we don't focus on this area of a person's head – we look in them in the eye.
 - Look only at the audience member's chest – not at their eyes. Okay, in today's world, focusing on a woman's chest could get you slapped or thrown in jail so this one is just ridiculous.
 - And, my personal favorites...think of your audience in their underwear or imagine your audience naked. The idea behind these is that by imagining them in these states, you should realize that everyone is the same. My perspective is that if you are imagining a room full of people naked or in their underwear, what is your speech about? Wouldn't it be more productive of you to focus on your presentation instead of what the audience is or isn't wearing?
 - So, if you can't use any of these to survive the eye contact portion of public speaking, how do you survive it? I think the best way to survive eye contact is to understand audience members because they are who you should be making eye contact with.

First, audiences are made up of unique individuals – they are not a homogeneous body where everybody is the same. If you understand who is in your audience, public speaking is not nearly as intimidating. Luckily, there are some common types of people who are usually present in every audience. If I were going to speak to 25 people, there are a variety of personalities that would be in the room. Research shows that there will be at least three to five of the 25 who will be clock watchers – meaning they will look at their watch the entire time I am giving the speech. When I give the speech, my ego will react negatively with a clock watcher because I will say to myself "Am I speaking too long?" The reality is the clock watcher is just that, a clock watcher. They may be worried about where they have to be next and not even focused on how long I've been talking. Along with clock watchers, I'm also going to

see several people doodling. Doodlers are great but as a speaker, I may find them distracting with my ego questioning "What are they writing? Is it about me?" Research shows doodlers pay better attention than non-doodlers in an audience. They are just adept at multi-tasking so it's not that they are writing cartoon images of me as the speaker. Along with doodlers will be some people who are sleeping. My ego will question whether I am so boring that I am putting people to sleep but the reality may be that those people may not feel well or they had a late night the night before because they work two jobs. This has nothing to do with me or my speech but my ego makes me question it. There will also be a group of people who will just not care about what I am saying. It really has nothing to do with me – it may be that they are distracted or worried about something that happened at home. Unfortunately, my ego works against me when I look out at the audience and I see all of these people not paying 100% attention to me – I get more nervous. So what should I do? Well, I should look for the friendly eyed people in my audience to start my presentation with. They will be there along with the doodlers and clock watchers, sleepers and those that don't care. If I start with the friendly eyes, I can then work out to others in the audiences. If I can look around the room and label the audience members as I go, it empowers me as the speaker and keeps my ego in check. When I feel my ego starting to question my audience, I can go back to the friendly eyes for reassurance that I am doing okay. By looking audience members directly in the eye as much as possible, I validate the audience – they feel connected to me as a speaker and I show them how I value their presence. So, sustained and meaningful eye contact is essential for successful public speaking.

4. Movement is where the speaker's entire body moves. If you can avoid it, don't let yourself be trapped behind a podium or in one area. When you watch a really great speaker, you'll see that they are almost never trapped behind something. They move around the room as they talk and that may mean they are down the aisle or all across the front of the room. The biggest place you can see this happen is by attending a newly constructed church. Most new churches are constructed to allow for personal interaction between a minister and the congregation which is different than most old churches where the minister or priest is isolated in a pulpit that is probably higher than everyone else in the room (giving the minister/priest the appearance of being closer to God than the congregation).

IMPROMPTU PRESENTATION AND EXTEMPORE

15.1 Introduction

Though oral communication happens to be a part of basic communication skills (which has been already discussed in lesson-6; section 6.1), yet oral communication *per se* needs elaborate discussion. Hence in this lesson, various dimensions of oral communication viz. impromptu, extempore, public speaking, group discussion, etc. have been discussed at length. Further, skills involved in organization of events like seminars, conference, etc have also been dealt with, in this lesson.

15.2 Impromptu presentation

A speech and/or event that involves an eight-minute speech (with up to three of these eight minutes available for use as preparation time) is known as impromptu speaking. The preparation time is known as prep time, or simply preps.

This event varies depending upon the situation; and, the time allowed also varies at different levels:

- ① The speaker at the college level is granted 7 minutes to divide, as he or she sees fit.
- ② Another variation exists in which the speaker must speak for five minutes and half of a minute is given for preparation time. The speaker is given a slip of paper, which provides three choices for his speech. The topics can be abstract or concrete nouns, people, political events, quotations or proverbs.
- ③ There is another variation where the speaker is given an envelope with slips in it, each with a quotation. They have to draw 3 slips of paper, choose one, and then put two back. They are then given 5 minutes to prepare a 5 minutes④ speech on the subject.

Even though the format seems to be simple, it takes time to construct a speech in that time and talk on your feet. It is difficult to have mastery in this event, but many enjoy it, because one does not have to prepare for the event beforehand. Impromptu speeches need not be factual and are indeed encouraged to be humorous. There is a "triad" prompt in some impromptu rounds, where the participant is given three key words to talk about and connect during the speech.

15.2.1 Types of Impromptu

15.2.1.1 OHSSL impromptu (Ohio Impromptu)

In this type, the speaker is provided with seven minutes of time to divide at his own discretion between prepping and speaking. All topics are quotations and generally random, but occasionally may be random. It is also more factual and less humor-based, resembling extempore. Other structures can also be used. Double analysis is normally used by experienced impromptu speakers. The ratio usually being used by experienced speakers to divide the preparatory and speaking time is 1:6.

15.2.1.2 Editorial Impromptu

It is an attempt to return ⑤impromptu⑥ to impromptu speaking. The students are given a short editorial (ideally 3 to 5 paragraphs) to which they will develop a response. The students are allowed nine minutes to divide between preparation and speech time. At least five minutes must be used for speaking. Limited notes, prepared in the round, are permitted. The speech should involve the development of an argument in response to the idea generated or opinion shared in a given editorial.

15.2.1.3 High School Competition

In high school speech and debate competitions, thirty seconds are given to the competitor to select a topic from a set of topics (usually three). During those 30 seconds, the competitor must also compose a speech of five minutes with a 30 second grace period.

15.3 Structure of the Speech

An impromptu speech is simply a mini-speech and therefore it has: an Opening, a Body and a Conclusion.

15.3.1 Opening

- ⌚ Open by addressing the Chairman or Master of Ceremonies, e.g. Mister/Madam Chairman
- ⌚ Brief introduction/opening sentence ⌚ attention getting

15.3.2 Body

- ⌚ Cover the main points (Try to find one or two central themes)
- ⌚ Use clearly worded simple sentences and try to link the themes

15.3.3 Conclusion

- ⌚ Be brief and look for an elegant closing that links back to the opening
- ⌚ End by acknowledging the Chairman or Master of Ceremonies

A general outline for impromptu speeches is as follows:

1. Introduction/Roadmap (1 minute)
2. First section (1 minute)
3. Second section (1 minute)
4. Third section (1 minute)
5. Conclusion (1 minute)

The introduction should begin with a catchy beginning, the statement of the topic and an outline of the

speech. The conclusion is usually like the introduction except backwards, ending with a profound statement. There are many kinds of formats that can be used for the three body points. For example, if the topic is a quote, a competitor may go over how the quote is true, how the quote is false, and why they believe what they believe. Some other examples are: past, present, future; local, national, international. More advanced speakers use formats that look deeper into a subject such as: physical, moral, and intellectual; books, video, digital (media.) However, many speakers choose not to follow a format at all. Most beginners who fail to follow a solid format often find themselves lost in a jumble of ideas.

15.3.4 Benefits of effective impromptu speaking skills:-

- ⑦ Improves oral expression of thought
- ⑦ Develop confidence in public speaking
- ⑦ Think quickly on your feet
- ⑦ Develop leadership and communication skills

15.3.5 Techniques to Deliver a Better Impromptu Speech

15.3.5.1 Give yourself time to prepare

- ⑦ Take deep breaths
- ⑦ Rise slowly from your chair and walk slowly to the lectern (or stand behind and away from your chair)
- ⑦ Use this time to collect your thoughts and decide on the purpose and plan of your speech
- ⑦ Think about the opening sentence.
- ⑦ Always remember that never start the speech immediately.

15.3.5.2 Feel confident

- ⑦ Look around at audience and smile. Stand tall.
- ⑦ Don't slump, don't fidget, don't grasp the lectern, don't put hands in your pockets
- ⑦ Speak and act in a confident manner

15.3.5.3 Slow delivery

- ⌚ Gives you time to think ahead
- ⌚ The audience has time to absorb and react to what you are saying
- ⌚ Helps you reduce umms and ahhs

15.3.5.4 Focus

- ⌚ Keep the focus on the subject while talking
- ⌚ Don't think of any negatives (eg being unprepared)
- ⌚ Talk directly to the audience and adapt to their feedback
- ⌚ Maintain good eye contact with the audience
- ⌚ Be brief and to the point
- ⌚ Don't ramble or say too much on the subject
- ⌚ Speak at the audience's level

15.3.5.5 Sources of Content

- ⌚ **Personalize:** This is the subject you know most about. Audience can relate more easily to personal topics - they probably have similar experiences.
- ⌚ **Your opinion**
- ⌚ **Humour:** Breaks the ice with the audience and relaxes you
- ⌚ **Other:** Current events, something you have read or seen (newspaper, book, TV), knowledge of pertinent facts

15.4 Methods to Determine Content

The following methods are for guidance only. You don't have to use them however they may help you to think quickly on your feet. You may develop other techniques that suit your style of speaking better.

- ⌚ **PREP Method** (When asked to express an opinion - to inform, persuade or inspire)

- ⑦ **Point:** Make your point (Opening)
- ⑦ **Reason:** State your reason for making the point (Body)
- ⑦ **Example:** Give an example to justify your previous remarks (Body)
- ⑦ **Point:** Drive home the point again. Links the conclusion back to the opening.
- ⑦ **Past, Present, Future Method (Body)**

When asked for your comment on a particular topic:

- ⑦ **Point:** Make your point (Opening). Be brief.
- ⑦ **Past:** What happened in the past? Reflect on a past issue. (Body)
- ⑦ **Present:** What is happening today? (Body)
- ⑦ **Future:** What will/could happen in the future? (Body)
- ⑦ **Point:** Drive home your opening point. Reminds audience what the point of your speech was all about. (Conclusion) Be brief.

Be Prepared

There is a good chance that you will be unexpectedly called upon to give an impromptu speech at a Toastmasters (Table Topics) or others (business, club or P&F etc) meeting. Try and pre-empt possible topics that may arise, such as those from current events or contentious issues. Have an emergency speech available.

Speech Time

- ⑦ In Toastmasters: Club level (Table Topics) : 90 secs
- ⑦ Competition level: 2 minutes
- ⑦ Speechcraft : 60 secs
- ⑦ Elsewhere: 3 to 5 mins (whatever seems appropriate to occasion)

15.5 Summary

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- ② Deliberately rise from your chair very slowly and pause for a moment. Use this time to decide on the purpose and plan of your speech
 - ② Keep the focus on the subject while talking, and don't think about any negatives such as being unprepared or that you will look or sound foolish. Rather, ② think about the subject. Look for opportunities to bring in humor.
 - ② Talk directly to the audience and adapt to audience feedback.
 - ② Be brief and to the point. Guard against rambling and the temptation to say too much about the subject.
 - ② Remember, this is a mini speech so try to have an opening, a body and a conclusion. The conclusion should reflect back to the comments in the opening.
 - ② Always try to speak and act in a confident manner.
 - ② Don't rush.
 - ② Address the Chairman before and after the speech.

15.6 Extempore

The extempore speech, as used by certain MBA institutes during their selection procedure is when a candidate is given a topic and asked to speak about it for a minute or two. He is not allowed to ② prepare ② for this topic, but has to speak on the spot. Thus, he cannot prepare the content and decide what to say beforehand.

"Extempore" or "*ex tempore*" refers to a stage or theatre performance, that is carried out without preparation or forethought. Most often, the term is used in the context of speech, singing and stage acting. Synonyms are "impromptu", "extemporaneous", or "improvised".

15.6.1 Procedure followed:-

1. The candidate waits for his turn outside the room as happens for interviews.
2. He is then called in to the room and may be asked to sit down.
3. He is then given a topic for his extempore speech. In FMS, this happens just before the interview-i.e. the interview commences after the extempore round.

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4. The topic could be anything. It could be based on the candidate's academic background, his hobbies/ interests, any current or general affairs topic etc
 5. The candidate is given a few seconds to think about what he wants to say and then is expected to start his speech.
 6. He is expected to speak for around a couple of minutes on the topic
 7. The candidate may complete the speech himself, or the panel, may let him know when to stop.

15.6.2 Extempore helps in testing:-

Firstly, your ability to think on the spot and your spontaneity. It has often been seen that candidates come with prepared answers for the interview, which they have mugged up. Thus these answers do not really reflect their thoughts or the kind of people they are. Hence, an extempore may be used, as you cannot prepare a speech beforehand in this case.

1. **Your ability to express your thoughts:** In an extempore, you have to think for a very short while and then express yourself. You will be judged on how well you are able to do so.
2. **Fluency in the language:** Your comfort level with English as a language can also be assessed.
3. **Body language/ Confidence:** Your body language and Confidence levels maybe judged. Many candidates feel very nervous about this round, as mentioned before. Does your nervousness manifest itself in your gestures and expressions? Or do you appear calm and collected despite everything? Can you express yourself confidently and clearly?

15.6.3 Do's in Extempore

1. Firstly, do not get nervous! It has been observed that many candidates get freaked out and are very scared about the extempore round, as you cannot prepare beforehand and have no idea as to which topic you may get. However, remember that you have to only speak on the topic for a minute or two- you are not expected to get into a high level of detail, or show some astounding knowledge about the topic given to you.
2. Do not start off speaking as soon as the topic is given to you. You have a few seconds to think use them! It has also been observed that those who start off immediately, run out of ideas and don't know what to say. Thus they end up finishing their speech in hardly 20-25seconds, or even less, in some cases.

3. Most importantly, structure your speech. Try and give it an introduction, a body and a conclusion. It would be highly impressive if you can structure your talk well, even though you were given only a few seconds to think about it.
4. You must buttress your points/ arguments with logic and examples. This is crucial and will help you stand out from the other candidates.
5. Try and either begin or end with a quote. If you can remember an appropriate quote and use it in the relevant context, it will be absolutely great. Once again, the ability to do such a thing at such short notice, will enable you to stand out from the other candidates.

15.6.4 Preparation for an Extempore

1. Make sure that you can speak for at least a minute on the following:-
 - ⌚ Important current affairs topics
 - ⌚ Important topics or issues pertaining to your academic background. For example, an engineer may be asked to speak on Electromagnetic induction as his extempore topic. Similarly, an Economics or Commerce graduate may be asked to speak on The Fiscal Deficit, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or some related topic.
 - ⌚ Your hobbies and interests
 - ⌚ A person you admire
 - ⌚ Your favorite sports person or actor/ actress
2. Practice for an extempore adequately, by speaking aloud, either in front of a mirror or even without one. The idea is that you should be able to speak, with a fair degree of fluency, for about a minute on any topic you get. Practicing speaking aloud will ensure that you are able to control your nervousness etc.
3. Watch your body language while you practice. It should not give away your nervousness. Practice speaking both while sitting and standing, so that you are ready for both eventualities.

Who holds a Group Discussion?

"Group Discussion", popularly labeled as GD, is a popular methodology used by many organizations (company, institute, business school, etc.) these days to gauge whether the candidate has certain personality traits such as interpersonal communication skills, confidence in public speaking, team spirit, leadership abilities, social behaviour and problem-solving skills. GDs form an important part of the short-listing process for recruitment or admission in a company or institution.

How is a GD Conducted?

In this methodology, there are usually 7-12 participants in a group. The the group of candidates is given a topic or a

situation which could be either factual, abstract or case based, and typically given some time to think and make notes about the same. After this, the group of candidates is, and then asked to discuss it the topic among themselves for a specific duration ranging between 10-40 minutes (which may vary from one organization to another). While the group discusses the pertaining issue at hand, the Moderators/ Panelists silently observe each candidate on various pre-determined parameters. The Panelists assign scores to every candidate based on his/her individual performance as well as how he performed within the group.

As in a football game, where you play like a team, passing the ball to each team member and aim for a common goal, GD is also based on teamwork, incorporating views of different team members to reach a common goal. So, a group discussion refers to a communicative situation that allows its participants to share their views and opinions with other participants. It is a systematic exchange of information, views and opinions about a topic, problem, issue or situation among the members of a group who share some common objectives.

Why is a "GD" conducted?

Over the recent years, Group Discussion became a popular method of assessing a candidate's soft skills. The contenders who are shortlisted on basis of written exams have qualified with their intelligence quotient, i.e., aptitude and knowledge. However, since the significance of emotional quotient arose, new tools such as GD were devised to gauge candidates' social and interpersonal skills. Organizations conduct GDs to find out whether you possess the critical qualities/skills to contribute effectively to the goal accomplishment process.

Why GD is important?

- It helps evaluate whether a candidate is the right fit for the organisation.
- It helps assess how a participant performs under different situations in a group.
- It helps to judge how one conceptualizes and manoeuvres his ideas through the discussion.
- It helps in analysing the candidate's attitude towards fellow members through one's communication and interpersonal skills, listening ability, humility and tolerance to others ideas.
- It helps in shedding light on candidate's leadership and managerial skills, problem-solving aptitude, creative thinking and knowledge on diverse topics.

Since, team work is an essential element of business management and corporate work-sphere, a person's ability to perform well in a GD is very critical for a successful career. A GD helps to achieve group goals as well as individual goals. The examiner can evaluate both the personality traits and group skills of candidates participating in a G.D. It is basically a situation test wherein a sample of a candidate's group worthiness and potential as a worker comes out quite explicitly.

PRESENTATIONS SKILLS

INTRODUCTION

Well-developed presentation skills enable you to communicate clearly, precisely and effectively in a variety of modes or registers and settings. It should be pointed out that they are rated as one of the most important soft skills. The ability of communicating with the audience and giving presentations should be seen as a mandatory prerequisite for both the effective learning process and the successful working life.

Thus, it is imperative to gradually increase and enhance your presentation skills through a continuous training that will help you to become more competent, confident and competitive.

The purpose of this chapter which is based on the best Western practices is to help to develop your presentation skills. It first introduces the basic premises of giving a presentation by examining in details its preparation, structure, timing, form of delivery and language, equipment and facilities, visual aids and material for distribution. The subsequent sections cover more specific topics including verbal (voice, intonation, appropriate language) and non-verbal communication (eye-contact, body language, hand gestures) communication, interacting with audience and answering questions, handling your nerves during the presentation. The chapter concludes by focusing on rehearsal activities and different forms of feedback which will enhance your presentation skills.

OBJECTIVES:

- to develop your skills to communicate clearly, effectively and confidently with a range of audiences in a range of different contexts;
- to improve your research and design skills, and strengthen your delivery techniques;
- to enhance your use of different support electronic and other visual tools;
- to reinforce your performance skills (verbal and non-verbal);
- to increase your confidence level in interacting with audience and control your nervousness;
- to promote critical and reflective thinking by dealing with feedback on your presentation skills.

DEFINITIONS

Three types of presentation might be identified:

1. Information-giving. This is predominantly descriptive, giving or summarising information. You may be asked to do this as part of a mini-teaching session, sharing theoretical or factual information. Here the point is to see what you have understood and how you have extracted the main facts from your reading and to relay these to the group. You will need to make decisions about what information to include.

2. Discursive. Here you will need to debate the strengths and limitations of an approach or develop an argument, exploring and weighing up different perspectives, challenging your audience to accept a different viewpoint. For this, you will need to decide your ‘angle’ – are you for or against it, weight pro and cons? Pull your audience in, challenge and confidently debate.

3. Demonstrative. This type of presentation tends to be used in the context of training: for example, when demonstrating your ability to illustrate your understanding of a technique or teaching a practical skill to others. (Craig, C., 2009)

Presentations are key activities and might include:

- Group and individual presentations for a given topic as part of a module assessment.
- Seminar presentations giving a paper to an academic or your peers for the purpose of teaching or showing evidence of your understanding of the topic.
- Providing an overview of some research carried out by you or your group.
- Demonstrating the use of a piece of equipment or software such as PowerPoint to show that you have developed the essential skills to use it appropriately.
- Dissertation-related presentations and Vivas to demonstrate your ability to manage a research project.
- A job interview where you have been asked to present for several minutes on a given topic. (Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007)

PREPARATION

Usually, the majority feel nervous when presenting something. It is mainly due to the fact that in a live presentation there is no second chance. Plus, you should be aware that the way in which information or ideas are delivered strongly affects how they are understood by the audience. Even tiny inaccuracies in presentation can make it hard to follow. Thus, for communication to take place effectively presented information has to be received as intended by the speaker – and not misinterpreted.

Though some of you might be better suited to giving a presentation than your colleagues, actually this is not a skill which you either have or do not have at birth and anyone can be good at presentations. You can master these skills like many others, but it requires rigorous preparation, constant rehearsal, deep reflective practice and constructive feedback.

The crucial elements of any presentation are the information that you have to deliver and the audience that have to receive it. The best presentations are focused with a precise aim and the supplied information is appropriate and addresses the clear-cut, unambiguous question. Poorly prepared presentations are those which include just a bit of everything.

Thus, before you start working on the presentation, answer the following questions:

- What is the main aim of the presentation and what message you want to deliver to the audience in the time limit set?
- What is the current knowledge level of the audience and what new knowledge or awareness do you want the audience to have gained from your presentation?
- What is the most effective way to communicate this knowledge?

You should remember that planning a presentation can be even more demanding than working on a written assignment. The main challenge is to try to fit all gathered information that you usually consider relevant into the time that is allocated.

Some people solve this issue by planning and writing a lengthy piece which can be later reduced to key points. The advantage of this approach is that you will be well prepared with very detailed information which you can freely use during the presentation particularly if questions are asked. Otherwise, some people compile a set of headings, and based on these headings prepare a short paragraph for each point of their presentation.

This is your personal decision which approach to use, but it would be more advantageous and safe to prepare a detailed paper and then reduce rather than creating a brief set of headings and trying later to add more information. At any rate it would be propitious to have a set of notes to use as a guide during the presentation.

It should be pointed out your presentation has to be brief, clear and precise, and provide backup for more complex ideas. You should remember that overloading the audience with a very detailed, scrupulous information will not automatically make your presentation better. A potentially good presentation might be weakened by packing it with excessive details and losing a sense of key ideas and conclusions you want to communicate to the audience.

Thus, it would be useful to write down the aims of your presentation. Focus particularly on what new knowledge or awareness you want the audience to have gained – what will the audience know, understand, or be able to do by the end of the session that they did not know, or understand or were not able to do before?

You might plan the body of the presentation;

- prepare the first draft of the presentation;
- prepare the first set of prompts;
- put the presentation aside for a while
- review, revise and edit first draft – decide on a ‘good enough’ draft of the presentation;
- decide on the audio-visual aids that will be useful;
- prepare the ‘good enough’ set of prompts

(Pritchard, A., 2008) (Burns, T., Sinfield, S., 2004) (Barker, A., 2011)

STRUCTURE

Whether the audience can understand what you are trying to communicate will be determined by how you structure your presentation. You should focus on the development of a clear structure that will help to map out and guide you in your preparations and in your final delivery.

Some authors are quite prescriptive in their approach and suggest that you should: ‘limit your thinking to the rule of three: a simple technique where you are never allowed to use more than three main points’ (Richard Hall 2007: 320). This can be helpful in focusing your ideas and ensuring that you are clear in what you are arguing. The best approach is to decide your ‘bottom line’ – the key message that you want your audience to take away – and then work backwards from this so that everything you include leads to this conclusion. (Craig, C., 2009)

As a very general principle, the rule of three is offered.

1. *Tell them what you are going to tell them.*
2. *Tell them.*
3. *Tell them what you have told them.*

You need to think about how to build your presentation by dividing the material into sections, each one dealing with one important point. Structure your ideas so that you move seamlessly from one point to another. The structure of your presentation will depend on the topic that you are dealing with, but in general there should include:

- *An introduction, outlining the aim of your presentation and the areas your talk will focus on*
- *The main body, containing the substance of your talk and developing the ideas outlined in the introduction*
- *A conclusion, drawing together the main points and containing the ‘take home message’ for the audience*

INTRODUCTION

It is of key importance to get a good beginning. Apart from introducing yourself and subject of your presentation, you should plan carefully about what point of entry will stimulate your audience and at the same time, form a springboard into the main topics of your delivery. When thinking about your openings, keep your audience and their 'needs' very firmly in mind. A good beginning can make the presentation; a poor, inappropriate one can seriously undermine it. Many people tend to fail to have a proper introduction that contextualises the topic.

Once the ground rules have been established, you then need to outline the main points that you will be covering during your presentation. If you can say something that catches your audience's attention at the beginning and makes them want to hear what follows, then the presentation is likely to go well. You can be creative too. Instead of starting with a series of statements about what is coming next, you could consider stimulating more interest by posing a question, presenting a puzzle or a conundrum, showing a picture, or telling a story. Any of those devices are more likely to capture the imagination of your audience and help you create an engaged and interested atmosphere which can really set the scene for a strong and effective delivery. However, do be careful of starting with a joke; make sure that it will not cause offence and that it is not too well known. Consider any cultural considerations and sensitivities. (Barker, A., 2011), (Ellis, R., 2010)

MAIN PRESENTATION

This will be influenced by the general context and aim of your presentation and the expected audience. You may need to decide between a big picture approach and one that selects a smaller area with more detail. As you develop your knowledge of the topic, you will feel more confident about what to include and what to exclude. Identify the key messages. Three or four main points are normally sufficient for a presentation of up to a half-hour. For a longer presentation, do not exceed seven main points in order to avoid overloading your audience. Remember, less is almost always more. You should also decide what is best covered through speech, text, images and what could be given in a handout rather than used as presentation content.

Support your key ideas by choosing clarifying examples. Because it is usually difficult to follow a spoken argument, you need to make sure that it is relevant, accurate and interesting to the audience, your audience will find it easier to maintain concentration and to stay with your argument. You should choose carefully examples to provide interest and improve understanding and think where to place them in the structure of the content. Use such things as examples, stories, statistics, quotes from expert sources, or research findings. (Cameron S., 2010)

CONCLUSION

Because of the relief of having made it through, otherwise excellent presentations often suffer from an uninspiring, hurried ending. Do not let the pace and energy of your presentation drop at the end. This is the 'tell them what you have said' section. You need to summarise your points, again using visual aids to reinforce them if possible. Always leave your audience with something memorable, say a powerful visual or a convincing conclusion, with a key idea, a central theme to take away and want to reflect on later. It is also good practice to thank the audience for their patience and to invite questions or discussion. (Cameron S., 2010), (Ellis, R., 2010).

TIMING

In most presentations, it is usually better to deliver less content at a reasonable pace, than too much content at a faster pace that may leave the audience feeling overwhelmed and confused. You should fit the topic into the allotted time and plan time for breaks, asides, questions. This means you should think clearly about what to include and exclude from the final version of your presentation.

Inexperienced presenters will find difficult to fit into time allocated. On the one hand they have prepared too much material and then have to jump to their conclusion, rushing over key points and running the risk of leaving their audience confused. On the other hand they have under-prepared and have to face one of the most embarrassing of all public speaking experiences – running out after ten minutes with your audience expecting the full half hour.

Where the presentation timing is preset, it is important that the pace of the verbal and image presentation are in a correct sequence. In five minutes your message must be to the point with little by way of illustration. Twenty minutes, on the other hand, will enable you to make an impact both verbally and visually. Ensure that you are not trying to squeeze too much information into the allocated time. Enough is enough; no one wants to hear you rushing through the material in the hope of getting to the end. Rehearsal will help you to set realistic timing and adjust your pace of delivery to accommodate pauses and changes of voice tone for emphasis. You will then be able to edit the content, perhaps deciding what facts you need to discuss and what can be covered in the handouts or visual aids. (Malthouse, R., Roffey-Barentsen, J., 2010), (Ellis, R., 2010). (Craig, C., 2009), (Van Emden J., Becker L., 2004)

DELIVERY (FULL SCRIPT VERSUS NOTES)

Inexperienced presenters attempt to write down the whole speech, even including 'Good morning ladies and gentlemen'. They prepare a closely drafted text, each line filled, with very little space left. Experienced presenters have their own style of notes, but never fill the page with text. You can organize your speech notes in many ways and it is very much a personal preference. When it comes to the actual presentation you need to decide whether you will read from what amounts to a script, or whether, based on your notes, you will speak without reading directly. Certainly when a presentation is delivered in one of these two ways there is a noticeable difference, and in most cases the reading of a script comes across definitely less well. It depends to a certain extent on the way that you have written the script. If it is written in a formal academic tone then it will sound overformal. If you are able to write it in a more conversational style, then you will have a better chance of making it sound natural.

Apart from very brief, well-chosen text, it is better not to read from a prepared text. A written text from which you need to read can stand like a literal barrier between you and your audience, but also typically when people read their voices go dead and they deliver the topic in an ill-paced monotone that has the average audience losing interest after about the second sentence. If you are marking for successful communication, then an audience must be listening to and following your presentation. You should work to become as comfortable as possible with your material in advance, so that you do not need to rely on a prepared text. Delivering your presentation using a natural conversational style is the best way to make the most of face-to-face presentations, and is much more likely to result in a performance that everyone will evaluate positively. Try do not pack too much into your notes – they are, and must always be, a distillation of your preparation, not a script of all that you have prepared. Your notes must support, not distract you.

There will be times when you may need a fuller script and these short notes will not be enough, especially if you have to give a paper. Again, do not clutter up your page. Remember to put in some markers when you can pause and paragraph breaks. Many presenters use a cue card system. For each point they are to make, they write a heading, a short phrase or two, or a set of key words, on a post card, or similar, and arrange the numbered cards in the correct order to follow through the presentation. These cards might also have other reminders: 'Refer to diagram'; Write in bold and in the centre of the card so that you do not have to peer. These are particularly useful when you have to walk about while you are presenting. (Barker, A., 2011), (Moore S., Neville C., Murphy M., Connolly C., 2010), (Pritchard, A., 2008)

FORM OF LANGUAGE

It is important to recognise and respond to the difference between formal written language and spoken language. When giving a presentation it is not obligatory to use complicated language constructions, to use long words, or to speak in nested and convoluted sentences. If you choose to speak in a way that does not necessarily come naturally to you, or is in some way made more complicated than it needs to be, you will in all probability not

communicate effectively. This does not mean that you should not use correct vocabulary, especially when dealing with technical terms, which clearly form an important element of the content. There is a case for giving an explanation, or simple definition, of technical terms as they arise for the first time, particularly if you are dealing with an area of your subject which is new to the audience. Use correct language and proofread (words used appropriately; correct spelling and punctuation). It is essential to check your work for errors. Also follow general principles: avoid gender stereotyping; avoid racist and racism stereotyping; avoid being aggressive, swearing or obscenities; use the language that can include everybody (Pritchard, A., 2008), (Drew, S., Bingham, R., (2010)

ENVIRONMENT (EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES)

You should find out when your presentation will take place. The danger spots are immediately before or after lunch and last thing in the afternoon when your audience may be distracted by thoughts of dinner or the journey home. During these times, the more interactive your presentation can be, the greater the chance your audience will be attentive and engaged.

Another important aspect of planning concerns the location of your presentation. This can have significant implications for how you plan your content and organise yourself. Go to see the room in which you will be presenting in advance of arriving for the actual presentation.

If you have access to the venue, it might help to pay an early visit. If this is possible, listen to other presenters in the same room. The aspects you might want to check include:

- type and size of room
- seating arrangements – fixed or movable
- lighting – artificial or natural?
- acoustics
- equipment available, e.g. whiteboard, projector, OHP, flip chart, tape recorder
- location of power points
- position of speaker (you)
- facilities for special needs (The-learning-guide) (Craig, C., 2009) (Drew, S., Bingham, R., 2010)

VISUAL AIDS / MATERIAL FOR DISTRIBUTION

If you use more pictures and diagrams than text, you will possibly help the audience to understand better what you are saying. This is because after three days an audience will have retained 7% of what they read (bullet points, or other notes on the screen), but 55% of what they saw pictorially (charts, pictures, diagrams).

You should be aware that visual aids are complementary to the presentation and you should not focus too narrowly on visual aids because you will lose the key point of presentation.

Visual aids can:

- Help audiences understand the presentation itself. For example, writing up the agenda of the talk on the board or as a handout will help an audience follow the structure of the presentation itself. (clarify the meaning)
- Emphasise different parts of the presentation. Here you might underscore a key word or point by capturing it on a PowerPoint slide, by giving a supporting quote or reference or by producing a illustrative image or object. (visual aids reinforce what you say)
- Take the pressure off the speaker. For a brief while all eyes are on something else for a moment. This is a good thing. (people tend to look at the visual aid rather at you, it helps when you are nervous)
(Burns, T., Sinfield, S., 2004) (Ellis, R., 2010)

When you think about what makes presentations effective, it will be convenient to consider how you can use images to communicate more effectively. It will be useful to remember these general principles:

- Use images to improve understanding. Sometimes, it is easier to use a picture instead of words to improve audience understanding. When you show a picture, you can ask them a question or suggest they think about the image in a certain way. You can then remain silent while they think about the image or the task you have set them. Images can also be used to direct audience attention away from you and onto the image on the screen. This may help to steady your nerves as it gives you a few seconds to perhaps take some deep breaths or check your notes.
- Use images to save time. If there is only a short amount of time you could include images as a quick way to cover some of the content. You have probably heard of the phrase, 'a picture paints a thousand words' and this is very relevant to a student presentation.
- Use images for interest. Images use the visual sense whereas sound and speech use the auditory sense. Providing content in a variety of formats means that the audience has to use of a range of senses. This keeps them active in the process of receiving the presentation. We all have preferences and using a variety of communication approaches ensures a wider appeal to different members of the audience.
- Use images for impact. Images are more relevant for some topics than others but even if only a few can be included, they can be useful to create pauses and breaks in the delivery, generate discussion themes or make a lasting impression. (Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007)

Tips for PowerPoint presentations:

1. Avoid clutter slides at all costs
2. Select a clear font such as Arial or Helvetica.
3. Use bold rather than underline and avoid italics;
4. A dark background (deep blue or black) and light coloured text (white or yellow) for contrast will make your words stand out (Use of colour that detracts from the main content of the slide, or that makes reading the text difficult.)
5. Use a font size of 20 or over: use a 36 point for titles and a 28 point for body text
6. Spelling and /or grammar mistakes
7. Use pictures and icons and beware of the special effects, e.g. spinning words or sound effects
8. Keep the presentation consistent, e.g. background and style. Do not suddenly switch fonts half way through. You may not notice but your audience will
9. Less than 30 words per slide, 5–6 words for headings a maximum of five bullet points per slide
10. Keep the number of slides down to one per minute or even one per 40 seconds

(Malthouse, R., Roffey-Barentsen, J., 2010), (Craig, C., 2009)

Handout material

Sometimes you will be expected to produce a handout of some kind. Handouts can be taken away as a reminder of what you said. Handouts can have details that might clutter up your presentations. Handouts distributed at the end can be a good way of concluding, but you need to tell people at the beginning that you are going to do this, otherwise they can feel annoyed if they have taken careful notes which the handout makes superfluous.

You need to consider the style and content of handout material, as well as the purpose. Some options are:

- Main points/headings.
- Notes generated by the presentation software that you have used. Possibly an edited version of a long presentation would be a good idea.
- Headings/main points, with space to write notes.
- Diagrams.
- Charts.
- Statistics.
- References.

Avoid giving handouts while you speak. The distribution of handouts while you are talking distracts people, and you will lose your audience. It does not matter how often you say of a handout 'don't read this now' – the temptation to look at it immediately seems universally irresistible. (Cameron S., 2010) (Pritchard, A., 2008)

VERBAL (VOICE, INTONATION, APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE)

However, it is not possible to use images for everything in your presentation. But be aware that up to 38% of what is taken in by those present is through the spoken word, which highlights the clear need for what you say to be audible and very much to the point.

You should remember that your voice is an incredible tool. On average 7% of what the audience understand comes from the words that are used within the verbal interactions, compared with 38% of information resulting in tone of voice and 55% being dependent on non-verbal cues. Use this to your advantage. Presentations are greatly enhanced by varying the tone of voice to emphasize aspects of the content. Make sure you project your voice to the back of the room. Try to vary the tone of your voice and the speed or pace of delivery to give emphasis to different parts of what you say. Use silence to your advantage. A short pause can give emphasis to a point you are making.

One of the ways in which inexperienced presenters betray their lack of skill is that they fade in volume. They may begin their talk with reasonable audibility but this decreases as they forget to project their voices in accordance with the size of the audience (the more bodies, the more the sound is absorbed) and the acoustics of the room. Good projection should not be a matter of straining but of being aware of where the voice is going, and making effective use of breathing to support the voice. Presenters who fail to project are usually too busy peering at their notes and being worried by what is coming next.

Another concern for those giving presentations is that of speaking too quickly. When speaking to an audience of any size it is advisable to speak more slowly than your normal speed, and to leave pauses occasionally. Speaking more slowly and pausing is even more important if you want the audience to pay attention to words, diagrams or pictures on a screen at the same time. Speaking slowly is not the same as speaking hesitantly, and although being nervous might lead to hesitation, it is a good idea to work towards eliminating this.

Be enthusiastic about what you have to say. If you fail to show any interest, there is little chance that your audience will be attentive and engaged. Nothing is as boring as a monotonous voice reciting a presentation that has obviously been memorised and delivered on many occasions or, even worse, reading from notes. To keep your presentation alive there needs to be an element of spontaneity. This can be achieved by varying the pitch and tone of your voice in relation to the subject matter. Speeding up your delivery is another technique that will keep the audience's attention. Sometimes this is followed by a moment of silence (just for effect) and then a calmer, more measured approach follows. Experiment with this during your rehearsal to ensure that you do not come over as being a little manic.

NON-VERBAL (EYE-CONTACT, BODY LANGUAGE, HAND GESTURES)

Eye contact. Eyes are one of your best tools for involving the audience in what you are saying. Good posture, movement and gestures will be of little use if you fail to support them with appropriate eye contact. Great presenters understand that eye contact is critical to building trust, credibility, and rapport. Far too many have a habit of looking at everything but the audience. One way of spotting inexperienced presenters is to see how they focus on a small group, usually in front of them and usually those giving off positive expressions of interest or encouragement. This focusing has the effect of rather embarrassing those people while, at the same time, losing contact with others in the audience. Those who started with rather negative feelings towards the speaker will be unlikely to have such feelings ameliorated if they are never looked at, seemingly never included in the occasion.

It is advisable to maintain eye contact with your audience at least 90% of the time. It is appropriate to glance at your notes or slides from time to time, but only as a reminder of where to go next. You are speaking for the benefit of your audience. Speak to them, not the slides.

If you are an inexperienced presenter, you might find it very difficult to look any member of the audience in the eye. A useful technique is to try to focus between and slightly above the eyes; the audience will feel that they are being looked at and involved, unless you are extremely close. The size of the audience will determine the appropriate level of eye contact but here are two important guidelines to follow, regardless of audience size.

- Never hold one person's gaze for more than five seconds maximum.
- Never appear to be 'watching tennis', swinging your eyes (and head) from one side of the audience to the other.

(Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007), (Ellis, R., 2010), (Drew, S., Bingham, R., 2010)

Body language. You will also need to think how you communicate using body language. Body language can distract people from what you are saying or even irritate. People can bite their nails, twiddle with things, sniff and so on. If you have distracting habits, find a way of controlling them. Hold your hands behind your back or hold a sheet of paper so you can't fiddle.

Body language can encourage people to listen to what you are saying. This things can engage other people: smiling (it is appropriate to smile but not like a Cheshire cat); leaning towards them; standing up to do a presentation (it gives your authorities and helps project your voice); moving in a natural way (standing totally still is distracting).

Hand gestures and facial expressions can be used to your advantage to emphasise particular points. However, treat these with caution because inappropriate gestures can also interfere with your presentation and detract from what you say. The way that you stand will have a huge impact on the way that you breathe. The way that you breathe will have a huge impact on how you sound. Think about whether you will be sitting or standing during the presentation and which will be most appropriate for the event. Avoid standing frozen like a statue, try not to pace about like a caged animal, but aim to move naturally and appropriately. (Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007) (Craig, C., 2009)

Gestures. Using your hands can help in the same way that whole body movements can: to relax, stimulate and illustrate. If you find it hard to use your hands naturally, then the best policy is to hold them by your sides. Try not to:

- clasp hands behind the back. This looks much too formal.
- fold them in front. This is usually interpreted as a very defensive posture.
- keep them stuck in your pockets throughout the presentation. This can look either casual or nervous.
- scratch, poke or stroke yourself. As you have probably observed, this is quite a common nervous reaction amongst stressed presenters.
- wring your hands together. This can look dishonest or slightly peculiar.
- fiddle with keys, pens, pencils, coins, lucky charms, worry beads, etc. You will just look nervous.

(Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007)

INTERACTING WITH AUDIENCE AND MANAGING QUESTIONS

While developing presentation skills, you can tend to focus on yourself as the speaker and forget about the audience. This is a mistake. You should be interactive.

If you begin positively and catch the audience's attention by establishing a rapport, you are more likely to keep it. You should stand up straight and speak directly to your audience, making eye contact and smiling, though not inanely. If you can do this, you will let them know that you are confident and you have something to say that is worth listening to. Ask the audience questions and give them an activity (make a list; vote on something) Check if they understood and see if they need something to clarify. Make sure that you include everybody. Have an attention-grabbing opening and other statement. Check with them that you are on the right lines: 'Was that point clear?', 'Can you all see this slide?', 'Am I going too fast? Do not be afraid to admit that you had not thought of a particular angle if someone springs a surprise question on you, but rather use it as an opportunity to stimulate further discussion You may have heard advice about making a joke, and the use of humour in general, and this can work very much to a presenter's advantage in some situations. If you want to start discussion: ask people to discuss in 2s or 3s for a minute, then share with the group; make

If you provide time at the end and stimulate a question-and-answer session sometime during your presentation it can really help you to ensure that you cover or clarify areas that you simply did not know required clarification. If it is a formal meeting, always check with the organizer before you start your presentation about the ground rules for questions, and any time limits you need to be aware of.

If members of your audience ask you questions, then it means that they have found something of interest, something to challenge or a point that requires further expansion. The interactive time during a presentation is often the most animated, intellectually stimulating and engaging part of the experience.

However, too many speakers make little or no effort to prepare themselves for questions. This is dangerous, because the inexperienced presenter can flounder here. As you prepare your material, take into consideration probable.

The longer and more complex the presentation the more your audience may appreciate the chance of asking you questions at certain intervals rather than having to wait until the end. However, until you are fairly experienced, and feel confident that you can handle questions during your talk, it is safer to take substantive questions at the end. Otherwise, you risk being completely sidetracked from your main argument or disconcerted by challenges to what you are saying before you have completed your presentation. Make it clear at the beginning that during your presentation you will deal only with requests for clarification and that there will be time for questions at the end. Be sure to announce that there will be time for one/two more questions and stick to that limit.

When you do accept a question, your listening skills will be important. It is hard to listen carefully when you are nervous, particularly if someone is asking a complex multiple question. If this happens, write down the key parts of the question, otherwise it is easy to answer the first part and forget all the rest. If you are at all uncertain what the question means, clarify this with the questioner.

You should be aware that people ask questions for many reasons. There will be some who are trying to make an impression on the audience or they may simply like being the centre of attention. Where questions are clearly being asked in the questioner's personal interest, it is simplest to thank them for raising their point, agree with as much of the point as you can, perhaps suggest a discussion outside the meeting and move on to the next question.

If questions reveal a genuine weakness in your presentation, it is usually better to accept this and ask for suggestions from the questioner and the audience for ways around the difficulty. You may find that someone can suggest a way forward. If, however, the difficulty seems to you to be much less significant than the

questioner is suggesting, you will need to make sure that the audience does not end up devaluing the bulk of what you have said.

If you do receive a rude, hostile or discourteous question that appears to be an attack on you, then do try and stay calm. The audience will be very much on your side if you can stay calm and not be provoked. It is very tempting to retaliate and bite back. This will play directly into the hands of the questioner. Stay calm and respond on the lines of: 'I think it is best for us to discuss this later'. ' You're fully entitled to your opinion. Can I respond to the general point you've made'.... (Thus ignoring the personal attack)

(Ellis, R., 2010), (Barker, A., 2011), (Cameron S., 2010)

HANDLING NERVES

Many people get nervous when they speak in front of others. Having nerves is good as this gets the adrenaline flowing and keeps you alert and on top of the subject. You may find that you are nervous at the beginning of the talk until you get into the swing of it and then you are fine. This is very common. There are several things that can help considerably: get as much practice as you can; concentrate on exposing yourself to similar situations; practise deliberate relaxation; and prepare for each specific presentation.

During your preparation it is worth considering how you will handle your own anxieties and nerves. For example, you can memorize the first paragraph. If you are aware of the symptoms of your anxiety you may be able to act to limit their effects. For example, if your hands shake, avoid holding notes in your hand; if your mouth dries up, have a bottle of water to hand; if having a roomful of people looking at you directly makes you feel uncomfortable, begin with an interesting visual aid which will attract the focus of the audience; if you fear that your mind may go 'blank' have your notes available and be sure that they are easy to navigate – in a large, easy to read font, or highlighted in a bright colour, for example. Finding what are often quite simple ways of controlling the symptoms of nervousness is likely to help you to feel less nervous.

If you are over-nervous, find the least threatening situations first – talking to a small group before addressing the audience, getting used to the room before giving a paper at a conference. But do it. Each time you will feel less nervous.

Be positive about yourself. Avoid apologizing for yourself. An overly apologetic presenter does not inspire confidence, and if those in the audience have no confidence in you, there is a tendency for them not to listen attentively. You need to remain confident, at least on the outside, and to present in an interesting and lively way. Remember that you do know what you are talking about because you are very well prepared. You probably know more about the topic of your presentation than the audience, even, in some cases, more than the tutor. Your best weapon against nerves is the knowledge that you have done everything possible to prepare for the event, that you have carefully researched your subject and audience, your talk (or poster) is well structured and your notes are well organised, your visual aids well-chosen and you have at your fingertips supporting evidence and examples. (Cameron S., 2010), (Ellis, R., 2010), (Pritchard, A., 2008)

REHEARSAL

The more you prepare you more you are likely to succeed. And knowing that you have prepared will reduce your nerves. It is suggested that for every minute you are on your feet when presenting you will need an hour's preparation. That may sound excessive but, if you think about it – the searching through sources; making notes; preparing your slides; rehearsing the talk; checking on the length; selecting your quotes; and double checking your facts and figures – you can see that the ratio is not so absurd.

Once you have prepared a presentation you must rehearse. Not to rehearse is not an option. It might seem tedious to have to practise, but it really pays to rehearse several times in advance. You will need at least one full-scale, real-time rehearsal to check timing, use of aids and flow of arguments – or responses to likely questions. Ideally, find colleagues or friends to act as an audience and ask them to give you feedback afterwards. If this is impossible, then, for a formal presentation, tape yourself and replay the tape after a decent interval, listening critically and noting points where you need to change something.

The need for rehearsing diminishes slightly as you gain experience, but it remains vital so that:

- You can confidently move away from your notes on stage and make eye contact with an audience rather than having to be glued to your text.
- You can keep to time – and the shorter the time for your presentation, the more you need to rehearse to ensure that every one of those precious ten minutes is used to best effect; please don't try to just read your paper very quickly and face the chair's axe halfway through. For such short speeches, learn the whole thing but keep your notes handy as back-up.

Remember when practising, though, that it is often difficult to replicate the conditions that you will be facing on the day of the presentation. (Burns, T., Sinfield, S., 2004), (Barker, A., 2011)

Rehearsal checklist

- Rehearse and learn the factual content and structure so that they are very familiar to you. Make sure that you understand the wider context of the topic so that you will be able to handle questions effectively.
- Rehearse speaking aloud so that you can hear the sound level, pitch and emphasis you need to use in your voice. This will help you to use pauses confidently and prevent you from rushing in to fill the silences that do occur naturally in presentations.

- Rehearse in front of a mirror or video camera so that you can see how members of the audience will see you. This may cause you to change the way that you use your hands or how you hold your notes or cards. Using a mirror or video is a technique used by many actors and professional communicators and can improve your performance considerably.
- Time the rehearsals so that you can edit your content to fit the time available. You may be penalized for taking longer than the time given or you may be told to stop when the allotted time is up, regardless of how little of the content you have covered. Rehearsal should help you to be realistic about what you can reasonably be expected to cover and what content could be given in a handout.
- Rehearse as part of the group to make sure that it sounds like one complete presentation rather than a set of individual parts with some duplication. Group rehearsal will also help to prevent the presentation overrunning for the reasons we have outlined above.
- Rehearse using the technology to improve your skills and confidence levels. This will also help you to be time efficient. Using the technology should not delay your progress but improve the overall quality. This rehearsal will also help you to be aware of how much movement is needed to operate the technology.
- Rehearse in the physical environment if this is possible. Practice in using tables, lecterns or chairs will be a real help for the actual event. Think about whether you will be sitting (Chivers B., Shoolbred M., 2007)

FEEDBACK

Presentation skills require much feedback and the preparation for next presentation should be based on feedback from the last.

You should remember that for communication to take place, information has to flow in two directions – that is, the ‘receiver’ picks up the message from the ‘sender’ and confirms receipt by giving some form of recognizable feedback – even if it is no more than a gesture (a grunt seldom qualifies as good feedback). Without real feedback you cannot be certain that communication has in fact taken place.

You may need to take into account several different kinds of evaluation for your feedback during and after your presentation. These can include:

Formal evaluation – Completed marking criteria sheets and any other written/verbal feedback from tutors, lecturers, and/or peers (other students). Request additional feedback or clarification if necessary (from tutors, lecturers, other students and audience members). Incorporate appropriate suggestions next time you present

Informal evaluation – People's body language; Comments made during or after the presentation; Interaction between yourself and audience members, and the kinds of questions that are asked.

Self-evaluation – Think about your presentation. What worked? What did not work?