



Communications

**Presentation Skills**

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A spiral-bound notebook with a cream-colored page and a brown cover. The spiral binding is on the left side. A yellow rectangular box is centered on the page, containing blue text.

## **Giving Talks and Presentations:**

**How to prepare the presentation**

**How to structure a presentation**

**What about “Stage Fright”?**


**Dealing with questions!**

## **Making a presentation**

- Credibility is at the heart of effective public speaking.
- You must establish credibility quickly in your talk and work to maintain it throughout.
- Credibility in speaking depends on two foundations!

The first is: **Good Preparation**

The second is: **Effective delivery**

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**Many beginners make the mistake  
of underestimating the amount of  
effort that must be put into  
preparation.**

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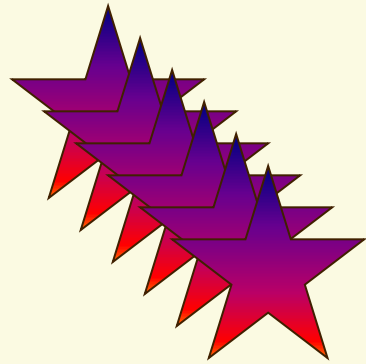
**Good delivery is no less important!**

*“That person is very intelligent, but they  
just can’t get their ideas across.”*

Many well-prepared speeches and presentations are ruined by dull, insensitive or rambling delivery.

Competence in presentation is well within the ability and grasp of ANY person who:

- Pays attention to the basic techniques and
- Evaluates their own performance objectively



# Preparing Your Presentation

## **Preparation**

### **Identify your audience**

The first step in preparing for any presentation is to find out who your audience will be.

The second is then to find out as much as possible about them as you can.



Who are they?

Are they :

- members of your class?
- colleagues from work?
- people whom you have never met before?
- ...

Also,

- How many people will be there?
- What is their age range?
- How much do they know about the subject.
- Why are they there?
- Have they special information needs that they expect you to fulfil during the course of your presentation?
- What are their expectations?
- Are they an expert audience or an interested public?
- Are they likely to be a sympathetic audience or hostile to your “message”?

The more you know about them the more confident you can be of :

- Meeting their needs
- Speaking to them in a language that they can understand

## Objectives

Think carefully about the purpose of the presentation.

What transformation of attitude or behaviour do you want to achieve in your audience?

It is usually better to state your objectives in terms of “audience outcomes” rather than your own aims.

The overall purpose will affect:

- Length
- Content
- Style of delivery

- If you are **speaking at a social occasion** then  
you need to be brief, congratulatory and humorous.
- If you are **presenting instructions** then  
you need to be clear and coherent with your material.
- If you are **trying to persuade an audience of something**, or perhaps promoting a new product then  
you need to be enthusiastic and have conviction..


For example:

Suppose you are talking to sales staff on the theme of “Putting the customer first”.

What do want the audience to believe, or do, when you have finished the presentation?

You might want them to:

- Know what “Putting the customer first” means.
- Understand the benefits in this approach.
- Develop a positive attitude towards the customer
- Change their behaviour when dealing with customers.

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Objectives such as these give a clear shape and direction to the presentation.

They also focus clearly on the needs and interests of the audience rather than the presenter.

## **Filling in the background**

Other factors will influence and affect your handling of the presentation.

These are:

### **Venue**

- If you are speaking in an unfamiliar place you should (must!) check it out in advance.
- It is crucial that you do this if you plan to audio-visual aids.
- Do not assume that the room is suitable!
- Do not assume that the equipment available is suitable.



### Other difficulties that can arise with the venue:

- There may be a lot of background noise
- Poor ventilation
- Uncomfortable seating
- Pillars may make it difficult for some of the audience to see

Visiting the venue in advance will help you to deal with these problems.

## Time

Nothing annoys an audience more than a speaker who rambles *on and on and on and on* beyond the time allocated for their presentation.

- Find out how long you have been allocated, and *how long people expect you to speak for*.

Does this include time for taking audience questions?

- Finish within your time limit.

If the time allocated is very short then the best you can hope for is to simply get one or two points across concisely and persuasively.

## Context

It is helpful to know as much as you can about the context in which **your** presentation is being made.

Are you the only presenter?

Who are the others?

What are they going to talk about?

Will they speak before or after you?

When are you scheduled to speak?

Remember that your listeners' energy levels will be low immediately after lunch or late in the afternoon.

## Research

Once you have got the profile of your audience and a statement of your objectives the next step is to gather information about your subject for presentation.

How do you go about this?

1. Write down randomly your initial thoughts on the subject. Do not worry about connection or linkages at this stage.
2. Decide on additional sources of information (Books, experience, reports, articles etc.)
3. Carry out your research and collect your material carefully. Give preference to up-to-date information.
4. When you have collected your information, make an outline plan containing the main areas you want to cover.
5. Select the most relevant points and begin to shape them into a persuasive message.

## Writing up the presentation

You will have to decide whether to speak

- from a script
- from notes
- ‘freeform’ or ‘ex tempore’ - without either

## Presenting from a script

Inexperienced presenters often like the assistance of a script.

The advantage is that you have all the material in front of you. Nothing important will be omitted, even if you are quite nervous.

The drawback of a script is that your presentation loses the spontaneity or informality of a conversation. In particular, you lose eye contact with your audience.

## Presenting from a script

- Write out clearly what you want to say in simple, clear language.
- Aim to cover a maximum of 4 or 5 areas only.
- Signpost each main area with a **HEADING** to highlight these in the script.
- Indicate clearly in your script where you intend to use presentation aids such as slides, etc.
- Write clearly, or better still, **TYPE** your script.



## Presenting from notes

- The presentation sounds more natural and convincing.
- The language is more informal and conversational.
- It is easier to maintain eye contact with the audience.
- You have more freedom to respond and adapt to the audience as the presentation proceeds.

## Presenting from notes

- Condense your talk into a series of key points.
- Write up these points on notepaper or cue cards.
- Each cue card, if you use them, should contain one key point only. (Sub-points may be written underneath).
- Keep points short. A word or a phrase is sufficient to trigger your memory.
- Make sure that your notes are clearly printed with plenty of white space between each point and the next.

## Cue Card Example

4.

### *The Problem of Litter (Slide 2)*

1. *Are we Europe's "litter louts"?*
2. *What tourists think*
3. *Do we like living with litter*
4. *Persuading people to clear up their mess*

*Tell story about "Floozy fountain" in O'Connell Street*

## Rehearsal

Your notes are ready.

Your visuals are prepared.

You are ready to present to your audience.

**BUT:** There's one thing left to do:

Polish your presentation by having at least one full rehearsal.

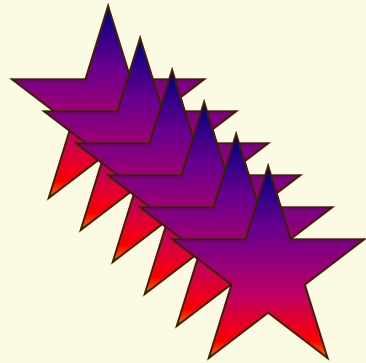
## Rehearsal

- Many people simply read through their notes and then check that all the slides are in order.
- Others prefer to do a “dry run” with a colleague, or workgroup of peers. This works especially well when a group of colleagues have to present as they can provide positive support and feedback to each other in rehearsal.
- The rehearsal need not be very formal.

## Dress

The final stage in preparation is how to dress for the occasion.

- Clothes should be neat, comfortable and well fitting.
- The occasion will usually determine what is appropriate to wear.
- Jeans and sweatshirt are OK for a talk to your local club, but not for an important meeting.
- A presentation in a business context will require at least a jacket, shirt, tie as this is the expected norm.



# Delivering Your Presentation

## **Different possible structures for a presentation**

### **The ‘meaty’ sandwich**

- 1. Catch the audience’s attention**
- 2. Holds their interest while the “plot” develops**
- 3. Build towards a satisfactory conclusion**



## **Different possible structures for a presentation**

### **Question and Answer Format**

**Lead the audience through your topic by proposing a series of questions and answering each.**

**Alternatively, if you know your audience will not 'dry up' you can run the presentation by answering their questions.**

**This approach would only be appropriate for an informal presentation.**

## **Different possible structures for a presentation**

### **Hierarchical decomposition**

**This involves taking a very rigid, point-by-point approach.**

**Start off with the most important points, and deal with each sub-point of this. Then proceed through each point of your presentation in this structured way.**

## The Introduction to your Presentation

**Audience interest and attention peaks soon after the beginning of a presentation and gradually declines before picking up again near the end.**

A good presenter exploits this by trying to get off to a strong start.

## How do you do this?

- Introduce yourself and your organisation
- Introduce your topic.
- Put your subject in context, or highlight its importance.
- State your main objective
- Give an outline of the issues you will address (.... briefly...!)
- Show the benefits ( *“putting these ideas can lead to large cost savings...etc.”* )

There are devices that you can use to get your audience involved:

- A rhetorical question
- A startling or thought-provoking fact
- A personal anecdote
- A humorous story

## Main Body of the Presentation

Presentations can take many different forms.

### Key guidelines:

- Set out the points you wish to make in clear, coherent order.
- Use linking devices (“an alternative view is.....”)
- Choose a language pitched at the right level for your audience.
- Use some repetition to help your audience grasp important ideas.
- In a long presentation give short summaries of points already made.

## Conclusion

A strong conclusion is very important to your presentation

There are several ways that you can achieve this in your presentations:

- Briefly summarise the main points
- Repeat and stress the key message
- Propose a course of action
- Invite questions
- Thank the audience for their attention

## Being Persuasive

Some techniques that will help you:

- Begin with some ideas that you know that the audience will support.
- Appeal to the audiences needs and wishes.
- Give both sides of any argument.
- Support the points you make with well-chosen examples, illustrations or statistics.

**But be aware: there is a very thin line between persuasion and manipulation.**

You must never manipulate your audience.

You must never knowingly mislead your audience.



## **Keep the Audience Involved**

In a long presentation there is a genuine problem of keeping the audience's attention throughout.

To help overcome this, try to break the routine, or rhythm of your talk as it progresses.

The longer you talk, the harder it is for your audience to fight against tiredness, noise and other distractions.

By varying your presentation you make life that little bit easier for your audience... and your talk more interesting.

## **Overcoming Stage Fright**

**Some anxiety at the start of delivery of your talk is natural ..... and inevitable!**

**Nervousness is a sign that you are filled with energy and ready to deliver a good performance.  
Use this to your advantage!!**

**The worst part of presenting is waiting to start, or for your turn to talk.**

### **Remember:**

- **Audiences are sympathetic.**
- **The positive responses are the nods and smiles that you get as you talk**
- **This should give you a confidence boost.**

## Voice

### Important factors are:

- Clarity
- Volume
- Pace
- Pauses
- Tone
- Accent
- Using a microphone

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## **Eye Contact**

Eye contact is a very important element in effective presentation.

It enables you to build and maintain a rapport with your listeners.

Eye contact provides you with important feedback.

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### **Do:**

- Make eye contact before speaking.
- Look briefly at your notes and gather your thoughts.
- Re-establish eye contact and begin speaking.

### **Don't:**

- Let your focus wander around the room.
- Look into the top left, or right, corner of where the walls meet the roof! Your audience is not there!

## Dealing with Questions

- Taking questions is usual at the end of the presentation.
- The response to a question can usually be determined in some way by the intentions of the questioner.
- Most people ask questions because they are genuinely interested in the material.

But: Occasionally there may be other motives at work

Do not feel the need to “get impaled” on a devious question!!

## *Preparation and Delivery* *- the main points*

### 1. The subject

- Is it appropriate?
- Is it controversial?
- What does the audience expect to hear?

### 2 The audience

- What is the demographic profile?  
(Age, background, etc)
- What is the psychographic profile?  
(Hostility or support? Knowledge needs?)

## *Preparation and Delivery* *- the main points*

### 3. The occasion

- Am I the only speaker? If not, who else?
- What time? After lunch?
- What venue? Acoustics? How much time for speaking?

### 4. The speaker

- Confident, humorous if appropriate, eye contact and appropriate body language
- Pitch, tone and volume
- Any questions



## **Key Message..... and Conclusion**

- Good presentation skills only come about through practice.
- Take every opportunity you get to stand before an audience to talk in order to give yourself practice.
- The more you prepare and practice, the luckier you will get ... and the better you will get.
- Learn from your mistakes (.... everybody makes them).

**Most importantly:**

**YOU can do it ...  
You can make a good presentation**

# Some exercises to do...!

## Exercises

1. Why is it necessary to consider your audience when preparing a presentation? List some audience characteristics that could be important.
2. Presenters are advised to find out about, and visit, an unfamiliar venue before giving a presentation. Why?
3. Comment on the importance of time in public speaking.
4. Why is it usually better to speak from notes than from a script.

# Some exercises to do...!

5. Give some guidelines that you would use in preparing cue cards for use by yourself
6. What kind of information can you give in the introduction to a presentation.
7. Why is eye contact with the audience such an important feature of presentations.
8. Choose any issue that is being debated in the press or on television, or about which you feel strongly. Prepare and deliver a short (2 - 5 minutes) talk in which you give your views on the matter.

# Some exercises to do...!

9. Select any product recently launched on the market (i.e. a new camera, PC, video game, bike, car, etc.).

Prepare and deliver a short (2 - 5 minutes), but informed and researched talk, based on some analysis of the manufacturer's product brochure.

10. Each member of the class submits a single trigger topic word or subject on a sheet of paper. These are mixed up in a box. Each member picks a topic word from the box and speaks on that topic word or subject. Each person talks unprepared on that topic or subject for 1 minute. No preparation is allowed.