



Presentation Skills

12.1 ORAL PRESENTATION

An oral presentation is a form of oral communication. It is a participative two-way communication process characterised by the formal and structured presentation of a message using visual aids. It is purposeful and goal-oriented, and communicates a message to an audience in a way that brings about the desired change in their understanding or opinion. It is flexible, changing, as well as complex and varied.

Thus, an oral presentation is:

- Purposeful—The presentation will be made with a definite purpose.
- Interactive—It involves both the speaker as well as the listeners.
- Formal—It is a formal situation.
- Audience oriented—The topic will have to be dealt with from the listeners' perspective.

There are several forms of oral presentation, such as seminars, workshops, symposia, student presentations, industry conferences, product launches, press conferences, team presentations, annual general meetings, departmental presentations, and company profile presentations. Whatever may be the form of presentation, they all seek to achieve certain objectives. These objectives may range from exploring a new area of information to introducing a new product by a company.

Oral presentations differ from other forms of oral communication such as speeches and debates. Although speeches and presentations share several common features, there is a thin dividing line between the two. Speeches are intended to celebrate an occasion, to felicitate a person, to welcome or bid farewell to someone, or to inaugurate a function, while oral presentations raise a particular issue for discussion.

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12.2 IMPORTANCE OF PRESENTATION SKILLS

We may not all be professional public speakers but we may have to make a presentation at some point of time or the other. Whether one is a student, a professional engineer, an academician, or a business executive, one may have to make oral presentations in front of one's colleagues or professional peers. A professional student may be required to make presentations in the form of progress reports, student seminars, research presentations, and so on. Professionals in different fields, including scientists and engineers, have also to make oral reports, present seminars, deliver project presentations, or present a proposal orally. Similarly, business executives may have to introduce a new product that their company has launched, to present a new sales plan that they want others to know about, or they may just have a brilliant idea that they would like to share with their colleagues.

Thus, of the many skills that contribute to professional success, none is more important than the ability to communicate orally in front of a group of people. Business people rank oral presentation skills among the most important factors responsible for their success. Oral presentation is a tool of professional and business interaction. In fact, in some organisations, institutions, or universities, recruitment is made on the basis of a selection process, which involves oral presentation in the form of seminar presentation, short lectures, business presentations or some other form of oral presentation.

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A good presentation can do wonders for a person; it may help in getting a lucrative job offer from the company he/she always wanted to join, he/she may get a big business deal or the promotion he/she had been waiting for. The list is long. On the other hand, a poor presentation of ideas not only reduces the professional image of the person presenting it, but may result in major business or personal loss.

Therefore, the ability to deliver an effective presentation is essential for all of us. We should know how to present our ideas in a persuasive way, how to make our audience interested in our presentation, how to use appropriate visuals during our presentation, and how to reflect confidence while speaking. A person making a presentation should have the ability to begin his presentation in an effective way, develop his/her ideas logically and conclude his/her presentation with something memorable. He/she needs to understand the basic elements of an effective presentation—the 4 Ps, i.e., Plan, Prepare, Practice, and Perform.

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12.3 STAGES OF A PRESENTATION

12.3.1 Planning the Presentation

An oral presentation is the formal, structured, and systematic presentation of a message to an audience and it involves conveying a lot of information in a limited time. It should, therefore, be planned well in advance so that the material is delivered effectively. Planning the presentation is, thus, the most important element. It helps the presenter to:

- Know the audience

Planning a presentation involves defining the purpose, analysing the audience, analysing the occasion, and choosing a suitable title.

- Stimulate the interest of the audience
- Be sensitive to the needs and expectations of the audience
- Strike up interaction with his/her immediate audience in as many ways as possible
- Know his/her purpose
- Analyse the occasion
- Fit the material to the time at his/her disposal
- Select and narrow a topic for his/her presentation.

Planning an oral presentation, thus, involves purpose identification, audience analysis, analysing the occasion, and the process of selecting and narrowing the topic of presentation. The following suggestions will help in planning well:

Defining the Purpose

Planning a presentation should start by defining its purpose. What is the purpose of this presentation? This is the most important question that needs to be answered in order to make a presentation focused, with clear objectives. A general purpose as well as a specific purpose should be identified. General purposes include:

- To inform—to share information
- To persuade—to change behaviour, attitude, belief, values, and so on
- To demonstrate—to help listeners know how to do something

Identifying the specific purpose of a presentation involves identifying an observable measurable action that the audience should be able to take, and using one idea that matches audience needs, knowledge, expectations, and interests. It should focus on audience behaviour and restate the speech topic.

Study the following examples:

- At the end of my presentation, the audience will be able to describe three advantages of using HP PrecisionScan LT software.

(Informative presentation)

- At the end of my presentation, the audience will believe that the HP PrecisionScan LT is the best scanning software.

(Persuasive presentation)

- At the end of my presentation, the audience will be able to use HP PrecisionScan LT software.

(Demonstrative presentation)

A presentation could be informative, persuasive or demonstrative depending on the purpose.

Analysing the Audience

The desired results cannot be achieved from a presentation unless the person making the presentation knows his/her audience well. Audience analysis is an integral part of the process of oral presentation. It includes identifying audience characteristics, analysing audience needs and expectations, and identifying factors for getting and maintaining audience attention.

O Lenny Laskowski, an international professional speaker and an expert on presentation skills, has used the word A-U-D-I-E-N-C-E as an acronym, and has defined some general audience analysis categories that all surveys should include. The 'acronym' is reproduced below:

A_udience—Who are the members? How many will be at the event?

U_ndersstanding—What is their knowledge about the topic I will be addressing?

D_emographics—What is their age, sex, educational background, and so forth?

I_nterest—Why will they be at this event? Who asked them to be there?

E_nvironment—Where will I stand when I speak? Will everyone be able to see me?

N_eeds—What are the listener's needs? What are my needs as a speaker? What are the needs of the person who wants me to speak?

C_ustomised—How can I custom fit my message to this audience?

E_xpectations—What do the listeners expect to learn from me?

Identify Audience Characteristics

In order to know the audience, the presenter needs to identify their basic characteristics. He/she should try to gather as much background information about his/her listeners as he/she can—their age, gender, social, economic and educational background, religion, political affiliations, profession, attitudes (likes and dislikes), beliefs (true and false), and values (good and bad). If these audience characteristics are identified, he/she will be much better equipped to plan and prepare his/her presentation effectively.

Analyse Audience Needs and Expectations

Those who will attend and listen to the presentation have their needs and expectations. They will be there for a reason. If the presenter wants them to listen to him/her, he/she has to understand and respond to their needs and expectations. For this he/she should ask the following questions:

- Why will they listen to me?
- Who asked them to be there?
- Is their attendance compulsory?
- What are their interests?
- What ideas or experience do I have that the audience may like to hear?
- What are their needs?
- What do they expect?
- How do my objectives meet audience needs?

Answers to these questions will help him/her make appropriate modification in his/her presentation to suit his/her audience. The presentation must be audience oriented, dealing with the topic from their perspective. The presenter may not change his/her ideas and facts for his/her audience but he/she may change the way he/she conveys them. He/she may tell them what he/she wants to tell but in a way that appeals to them.

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Recognise Factors for Getting and Maintaining Audience Attention

Once the characteristics, needs, and expectations of the audience have been identified, factors that meet the needs of the listeners should be determined. Listeners will be more interested in the presentation if it meets their requirements. As a result, they will listen more attentively, understand what is said, and remember the key points of the presentation. The presenter needs to consider the following specific questions in this context:

- How can I relate my presentation to the needs and expectations of my audience?
- What should I do to ensure that my audience remembers my main points?
- What style will appeal to my audience?
- What are the changes that I should make?
- Have I incorporated ways of encouraging my listeners to give feedback and share information that will make my presentation more effective?
- Have I planned strategies for dealing with listeners' communication apprehensions?
- How will I handle hostile listeners or those who are disruptive?

Moreover, more informed decisions can be made about how to best adapt to the varying moods of listeners and how to tap their curiosity, interest, and motivation. Perhaps the best rule to remember in identifying factors for getting and keeping audience attention is to remain flexible. A blend of methods and alternatives to accommodate listeners' perceptions may be the best approach to audience analysis.

Analysing the Occasion

The occasion on which the presentation is to be made should be analysed in order to understand the nature of the event or communicative situation. Several aspects of the event like its background, the people involved, the organisations or associations linked to the event, and so on need to be considered. Here are some relevant questions.

- Is my presentation part of a larger event like a national/international seminar with a central theme, or just an internal conference where I am supposed to present my views on a particular topic?
- Am I familiar with the procedures of the event?
- Who are the sponsors?
- Who are the other speakers?
- What is the venue?
- What is the duration of my presentation?

In fact, thinking through the answers to some of these questions ahead of time may ensure that the presentation is effective.

Choosing a Suitable Title

Generally, a title has to be chosen for the presentation. The title gives the audience the first glimpse of the presentation and they form their first impression. Therefore, it is essential that the title is appropriate and conveys the essence of the message. A vague, misleading, and fussy title may confuse the audience.

The process of choosing a title may begin by first identifying a topic. The choice of the topic depends on the occasion, the audience, the type, and purpose of the presentation. A list of topics may be compiled, including potential topics like social, economic, political, technological and environmental problems (for example,

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poverty, unemployment, overpopulation, corruption, crime, inflation, AIDS epidemic, and so on.); ideas regarding society, education, business and economy, government, technological systems, and so forth, and reactions to debatable issues (for example, universal civil code, Article 370, politics and religion, and abortion). When all the possible topics have been noted, the choices can be evaluated and an appropriate topic may be chosen.

After a suitable topic has been selected for the presentation, it should be narrowed down as per the focus of the presentation in order to phrase a clear, complete, specific, and focused title. In this process, the nature of the general and specific purposes of the presentation as well as audience expectations and rhetorical sensitivity may be considered. For example, if the selected topic is 'pollution', it may be narrowed to any of the following:

- Vehicular pollution hazards in New Delhi (local focus)
- Pollution of the Ganges (national focus)
- CFC's and ozone depletion (international focus)

12.3.2 Preparing the Presentation

Once the presentation has been planned, it is time to begin preparing for it. Preparing well is the key to success. Making an oral presentation—whether a seminar presentation, an oral report, a project presentation, or a business presentation—is easier when it is prepared in a systematic manner. Being prepared helps the presenter

- deal with speech anxiety effectively;

Preparing for a presentation involves developing the central idea and the main points, gathering supporting material, and planning visual aids.

- develop the required confidence;
- seek precise and relevant examples and illustrations; and
- check for accuracy, redundancies, and clichés.

Preparing for a presentation involves developing the central idea and main points, gathering relevant supporting material, and planning visual aids.

Developing the Central Idea

The central idea of the presentation is its core idea or thesis statement. It should be a complete declarative sentence that captures the essence of the message. The following are the characteristics of a central idea:

- It restates the presentation topic.
- It is a simple audience-centered idea.
- It is a one-sentence summary of the presentation.
- It focuses on the content of the speech.
- It uses specific language.

The central idea of the presentation is a complete declarative sentence that captures the essence of the message.

Developing the Main Ideas

Develop the main ideas for the presentation. The presenter may make a logical division of the central idea, establish reasons for the idea being true, or support the central idea with a series of steps. Choosing one of these techniques will largely depend on the topic of the presentation as well as its objectives. Study the following examples:

- Logical division of the central idea
Example: Central idea: Unemployment in India
Logical divisions: A. Types B. Causes C. Solutions
- Establishing reasons for the central idea being true
Example: Central idea: Education in India needs to be restructured
Establishing reasons: A. Reason 1 B. Reason 2 C. Reason 3
- Supporting the central idea with a series of steps
Example: Central idea: Indo-Pak Relations can be improved
Series of steps: A. Strategy 1 B. Strategy 2 C. Strategy 3

The presenter may make a logical division of the central idea, establish reasons for the idea being true, or support the central idea with a series of steps.

Gathering Supporting Material

One of the most difficult aspects of preparing a presentation is gathering relevant supporting information. Information that will be used in the presentation should be carefully selected. This will depend on the scope and length of the presentation.

While gathering supporting information a systematic approach should be adopted. First, the presenter should gather all his/her thoughts on the subject and then recall related information from his/her personal knowledge and experience. Thereafter, several research resources such as the Internet, library resources, personal interviews, and discussion with experts, colleagues, and special interest groups should be consulted. A list of material to be included in your presentation should be made. The supporting material gathered may include facts, examples, definitions, quotations, and so on.

One of the most difficult aspects of preparing a presentation is gathering relevant supporting information.

An outline of the collected material is developed, and reworked until it is in good order. After that, the first draft is written and revised as required. It is important to check for accuracy, redundancies, and cliches.

Planning Visual Aids

Using appropriate visual aids will increase the effectiveness of presentations. Good visuals may serve the following purposes.

- **They Serve as Speech Notes:** Visual aids may be used as notes to emphasise and clarify the main points of the presentation. Each visual aid may contain a main idea. Effective titles may be used to convey the main message of the visual aid.
- **They Give Confidence:** Using good visuals might increase the presenter's self-confidence because they refresh his/her memory, establish his/her credibility, and show that he/she has planned, is well-prepared, and is professional.
- **They Help Focus on the Theme of the Presentation:** Visuals help the presenter to focus on the theme of the presentation and concentrate on the objectives of his/her presentation. He/she may use effective visuals to highlight the central idea of his/her presentation.
- **They Increase Audience Interest:** Interesting and relevant visual aids make the audience more interested in what is being said. They may force even a hostile and demotivated audience to pay attention.
- **They Give Clarity and Precision:** Visuals make the presentation easy to understand and remember.

Any of the following types of visual aids may be used.

A. Three-Dimensional Visual Aids

- (a) Objects
- (b) Models
- (c) People

B. Two-Dimensional Visual Aids

- (a) Drawings
- (b) Photographs
- (c) Slides
- (d) Maps
- (e) Graphs
 - Bar graphs
 - Pie graphs
 - Line graphs
 - Picture graphs
- (f) Charts
- (g) Overhead transparencies
- (h) Computer generated presentations
- (i) Chalkboard

The following suggestions will help in planning and using visual aids effectively:

- Relevant visual aids must be chosen. The visual aids should match the message. Using a visual that does not match with what is being said is distracting and may confuse the audience.
 - The presenter must be familiar with his/her visual aids and rehearse his/her presentation with using the visual aids.
 - Computer software programs such as PowerPoint and Corel Presentations may be used to enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. However, special care must be taken while designing electronic presentations or multimedia presentations because making the presentation overly dependent on electronic visuals may create certain handicaps.
 - Handouts may be distributed, i.e., charts, presentation abstracts, summaries, brochures, pamphlets, outlines, and so on, in order to complement the presentation.
 - While using overhead transparencies, eye contact should be maintained with the audience.
 - Visual aids must be introduced before actually showing them.
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12.3.3 Organising the Presentation

After the central idea as well as the main ideas have been developed, relevant supporting material has been gathered, and appropriate visual aids have been planned, the message has to be organised and structured. Good organisation is essential for effective presentation. The key to good organisation is the repetition of the main ideas of your message. Just remember the three Ts:

Your presentation should be organised into three distinct parts: introduction, body, and conclusion.

Tell the audience what you are going to tell.

Tell it.

Tell them what you have told.

Divide the presentation into three distinct parts: the introduction, body, and conclusion.

Introduction

The opening of the presentation should convince the audience to listen to it. It has five functions:

- Get the audience's attention
- Introduce the subject
- Give the audience a reason to listen
- Establish the credibility
- Preview the main ideas

The opening of the presentation should convince the audience to listen to it.

Get Audience Attention

The speaker needs to get the attention of his/her audience and hold it until the end of his/her talk. Listeners form their first impression of the presentation quickly, and first impressions matter. Therefore, the opening should capture their attention. Audience attention may be captured in several ways. These techniques include using any one of the following:

- **Startling Statement/Statistics** Say something surprising or unexpected, or give statistics that surprises the audience.
- **Anecdote** Tell a short entertaining account of an event, a short story.
- **Questions** Ask some interesting questions. The question should be rhetorical with an obvious answer.
- **Quotations** Start the presentation with a relevant quotation that throws light on the central idea of the presentation.
- **Humour** Start the presentation with a humorous reference.

Introduce the Subject

A statement of the central idea should be included in the introduction. In simple and direct language the audience has to know what the presentation is about.

Give the Audience a Reason to Listen

Audience attention should be drawn to the topic of the presentation by showing them how the topic affects them directly. Giving relevant statistics can motivate the audience.

Establish the Credibility

The speaker's credibility should be established early in a speech. He/she should be able to convince the audience that he/she is worth listening to. The speaker should be well prepared, appear confident, and strike a rapport with the audience by narrating personal experiences relevant to the topic.

Preview the Main Ideas

The audience should be told what they are going to listen to. The preview to the presentation should be given towards the end of the introduction. The preview should include a statement of the central idea and mention the main points of the presentation.

Remember the acronym

KISS

(KEEP IT SIMPLE AND SHORT)

Your audience will understand a simple message easily.

SHORT

Your audience may concentrate better if your message is short.

Body

The body contains the main content of the presentation. Most people fail to make an effective presentation simply because they try to convey so much information and include so many ideas. The speaker may be tempted to include so many points in his/her presentation but it is advisable to focus on a few main ideas, two to four. Each main point should be supported by appropriate details but not excessive data. This will spoil the presentation because it may confuse the audience. In short, the *mantra* (key) is to use a few main points with relevant supporting details. The speaker should concentrate on each main point and use appropriate transitions to indicate a change of point as the audience may not be able to differentiate between the main points and minor points. He/she should ensure that his/her information is accurate, complete, and relevant.

Most people fail to make an effective presentation simply because they try to convey so much information and include so many ideas.

As the body of the presentation is structured, the speaker should choose the sequence he/she will follow from among any of the following organisational patterns:

- Sequential
- General to specific

- Specific to general
- More important to less important
- Less important to more important
- Categorical
- Problem and solution
- Contrast and comparison

In developing the sequence of a presentation, transitions between sections, illustrations that will be used, and points of emphasis should also be decided.

Conclusion

The conclusion of your presentation should accomplish the following five specific objectives:

- (i) Summarise the presentation
- (ii) Re-emphasise the central idea
- (iii) Focus on a goal
- (iv) Motivate the audience to respond
- (v) Provide closure

Summarise Your Presentation

The conclusion gives the speaker the last chance to present his/her key ideas. The main ideas should be repeated.

Re-emphasise the Central Idea

The central idea of the presentation should be restated in a memorable way.

Focus on a Goal

The speaker should focus on the specific objective of the presentation and concentrate on what he/she wants his audience to do, think, change, remember, and so on.

Motivate the Audience to Respond

The audience should be motivated to give feedback. They may be encouraged to ask questions.

Provide Closure

Verbal techniques may be used to let the audience know that the speech has ended. Appropriate words and phrases such as "in conclusion", "lastly", "finally", and "as my last point" may be used. The speaker may thank the audience for their patient listening. Non-verbal cues may also be used to signal closure.

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I2.3.4 Rehearsing the Presentation

The speaker, having planned, prepared, and organised a presentation well, may feel confident about delivering it without any rehearsal. However, it is important to rehearse the presentation properly because it will give him/her more confidence and avoid any distraction and deviation during actual presentation. Moreover, it will make him/her familiar with his/her message and will give sufficient time to make positive changes in the presentation. Therefore, before giving a presentation, it should be practised several times.

Before rehearsing a presentation it is necessary to answer a few pertinent questions. Who will the audience be? How many rehearsals are necessary? What would the methods of rehearsal be? Where should rehearsals be held? Should delivery notes be used while rehearsing? What should the duration of each rehearsal be? The answers to these questions depend on the topic, the speaker's familiarity with the topic, his/her oral communication skills, and objectives.

Rehearsal should be planned and conducted properly and systematically.

Specific computer software designed to help with rehearsal of presentations may be used. The presentation graphics package will help concentrate on key points, which may be displayed on the screen. There would be timing and pacing indicators that would help in maintaining an appropriate delivery rate and pauses for effectiveness. However, using computer software for rehearsals may make one computer-dependent.

The following suggestions will help in rehearsing the presentation in a proper and planned way.

Plan the Rehearsal

Rehearsals should be planned well in advance, leaving sufficient time between the rehearsal and the actual presentation so that there is enough time to make the required modifications in the presentation. A rehearsal is an opportunity to review and revise the presentation. Hearing oneself speak may also give some new ideas to make the presentation more effective.

A rehearsal is an opportunity to review and revise the presentation.

Rehearse Before a Live Audience

If possible rehearsals should be held before a live audience, involving them in the presentation. This helps in analysing their reactions and responding to them appropriately, in preparation for the actual presentation. Friends, classmates, colleagues, or roommates can make up the audience. Their responses, comments, and suggestions on your presentation help point out weaknesses and improve the presentation.

Timing During Rehearsal

While rehearsing a presentation, particular attention should be paid to timing. Although the rate of delivering the presentation may vary according to the communicative situation, delivery technique and style of speaking, a rate that varies between 120 to 180 words per minute is ideal. The speaker may be tempted to talk too quickly in presentations. However, to be effective he/she should speak slowly and pause appropriately between important points. This speed should be maintained during rehearsal too.

Recreate the Presentation Environment

Rehearsal is essential in order to experience the actual presentation. The main purpose of rehearsals is to help learn to make the presentation with confidence in a natural and spontaneous way. The speaker should be his/her natural self while rehearsing, and keep practising until he/she is confident of delivering the presentation smoothly.

12.3.5 Improving the Delivery

Once the presentation has been planned, prepared, organised and rehearsed properly and systematically, it can be delivered. What is important is said in a presentation but how it is said is more important. It is essential to improve delivery in order to give effective presentations. Improving delivery involves understanding several delivery methods, choosing an appropriate method, and controlling and reducing stage fear.

The way a presentation is delivered does influence the way listeners will respond to the message. Thus, the most important element of a presentation is the speaker's performance. It involves choosing an appropriate delivery technique, using speech notes, and deciding the non-verbal behaviour.

The way a presentation is delivered does influence the way listeners will respond to the message.

Choosing Delivery Methods

There are three basic methods of delivery: the memorising method, reading method, and the outlining method. A speaker may choose a method of delivery that suits his/her content, style, and objectives.

Memorising Method

Some people prefer the memorising method, i.e., they memorise the entire presentation and present it from memory. This method may be used if the speaker has stage fear and is very nervous about giving the presentation. Learning what one intends to say word for word may develop the required confidence in the person. However, this method has its disadvantages. First, the speaker may forget something in the middle of his/her talk preventing him/her from continuing his presentation. This could be disastrous. Moreover, if the entire presentation is memorised, it may not sound spontaneous and natural creating monotony in the presentation. Finally, if the speaker concentrates more on what he/she is saying, he/she may not be able to involve the audience in his/her presentation.

Some people memorise the entire presentation and present it from memory.

The following are some suggestions to use the memorising method effectively:

- Plan, prepare, and write out the presentation.
- Do not memorise the entire presentation. Instead, the significant parts of the presentation, such as the opening part, the attention-catching statements, central idea, the main points, and important illustrations should be memorised.
- Rehearse thoroughly before giving the presentation and keep a set of notes ready for reference.
- Try to be flexible and spontaneous.

Reading Method

The reading method may be used to deliver presentations, i.e., the presentation is written out and delivered by reading from the manuscript. This method is useful while presenting a technical paper or report that may contain complex technical information or statistical data. This method of delivery helps control nervousness during presentation because there is no danger of forgetting anything in the middle of the talk. This gives the speaker confidence. However, specific techniques will have to be used to involve the audience and avoid monotony.

In the reading method the presentation is written out and delivered by reading from the manuscript.

The following suggestions will be helpful in using the reading method effectively:

- Prepare a full script of the presentation. Use capitals, spacing, and underlining to break out important parts and highlight significant points.
- Before giving the presentation, rehearse it before a live audience. Learn to look at long stretches of your presentation so that you may establish eye contact with the audience.
- Use non-verbal signals (i.e., facial expressions, gestures, body movements, and so on) and voice modulation in order to maintain the interest of the audience.
- Adopt a conversational tone. Use personal expressions and short sentences.

Outlining Method

Presentations may also be given with the help of delivery notes. This is the most effective delivery method as the notes will make the speaker familiar with his/her message and give him/her confidence. He/she is able to establish eye contact with his/her audience because he/she only has to glance at his/her notes for a while and can then concentrate on his/her audience. Moreover, he/she can afford to be flexible and spontaneous. However, the notes should be prepared carefully because the success of the presentation largely depends on the quality and type of delivery notes.

The following suggestions will help use the “notes” method effectively:

- Plan and prepare the presentation carefully and write notes or outlines that contain all the important points, transitions, and illustrations. Use capitals, spacing, and underlining to show important transitions.
- Rehearse the presentation using the outlines. Systematic practice helps develop the required confidence.
- While delivering the presentation notes, the speaker should glance down at each main point, look up at his/her audience, maintain eye contact with them, pause for a moment and then explain the point.
- The speaker should try to be comfortable with the way he/she phrases his/her ideas. He/she may look at the examples and illustrations, but should not pick up the words from his/her notes and just repeat them.
- In order to sound spontaneous and natural, he/she should use the notes just as starting points.

The outlining method is the most effective delivery method as the notes will make the speaker familiar with his/her message and give him/her confidence.

Handling Stage Fright

Everyone who has faced an audience and has made a speech or presentation must have experienced stage fright. Perhaps one of the most difficult things that need to be handled during a presentation is one's first encounter with stage fright. Whenever we are faced with a frightening situation we find difficult to handle, our body responds. This response is in terms of extra energy to deal with the situation. As a result, the heartbeat quickens, breathing becomes more rapid, the mouth becomes dry, blushing occurs, palms sweat, and several other physiological changes occur. We become nervous or anxious and suffer from stage fright. In fact, even very good speakers experience some degree of stage fright when they have to give a presentation before an audience. So, some degree of stage fright is quite normal. However, it is important to learn to handle stage fright and use the extra energy positively to improve presentation delivery.

Even very good speakers experience some degree of stage fright when they have to give a presentation before an audience.

Do you know that

- You feel more nervous than you appear.
- The more you think that you are nervous, the more nervous you will feel.
- Your audience cannot easily detect your stage fright.
- Even the most experienced presenters get nervous before an important presentation.
- Even great speakers like Kennedy and Churchill were extremely fearful of speaking in public.

The following strategies can be used to control and reduce stage fright:

Concentrate on the Three Ps: Planning, Preparation and Practice

As discussed earlier, presentations should be well-planned, thoroughly prepared, and rehearsed repeatedly. Knowing the purpose, audience, and occasion helps to reduce speech anxiety. Effective preparation familiarises the speaker with his/her message and thus reduces stage fear. Knowing the introduction, body and conclusion well in advance gives the speaker the confidence to control his/her speech anxiety. Finally, practice makes one perfect, if the presentation is well rehearsed. There is nothing to fear and there may be little or no stage fright at the time of presentation because the speaker is familiar with the situation.

Set Realistic Goals

Set objectives that are realistic. If the goals are unrealistic and beyond one's capabilities, it will unnecessarily create nervousness. In fact, the normal stress of the speaking situation is heightened by unrealistic ambitions. The speaker should be practical and identify his/her shortcomings. If he/she is not a very effective oral communicator, he/she should set humble goals. Moreover, he/she may set himself up to feel nervous by putting undue emphasis on a presentation.

Avoid Negative Thoughts

Entertaining negative thoughts may sometimes create more anxiety. Avoid thoughts such as "I am going to fail", "I can't speak", "My topic is boring", "I didn't prepare well", "I am not ready", "My audience don't like me", "I'm not fluent", and so on. Instead, positive self-talk such as, "I really know this presentation and believe in what I'm saying", "The topic is very interesting", "I am well-planned and confident", and so on.

The speaker should feel confident about his/her planning and preparation, have faith in himself/herself, tell himself/herself that everything is fine and that his/her listeners are positively disposed towards him/her.

Begin the Presentation with a Pause

Beginning presentations is accompanied by feelings of excitement and nervousness. This can be controlled by taking a few moments to make oneself comfortable. The speaker should not be in a hurry to start rather he should approach his/her audience calmly with a smile, adjusting his/her delivery notes, establish eye contact with the audience, and then begin his/her presentation.

Speak Slowly

Speaking too quickly exposes one's nervousness.

Inexperienced speakers often try to control their nervousness and stage fright by speaking too fast. This should be avoided as speaking too quickly exposes one's nervousness. The audience will recognise this and they will moreover find it difficult to understand the talk. Therefore, it is important to speak slowly and take appropriate pauses.

The speaker should not be in a hurry to start; rather he should approach his/her audience calmly with a smile, adjusting his/her delivery notes, establish eye contact with the audience, and then begin his/her presentation.

Learn and Practise Stress Reduction Techniques

Learn effective stress reduction techniques, such as deep breathing, isometrics, progressive relaxation, mental relaxation, and so on. They are useful in reducing stage fright. Usually stage fear is expressed by discomfort, which may range from mild embarrassment to outright panic. The key in dealing with stage fear is to maximise one's performance by coping with the obstacles that prevent positive performance.

12.3.6 Checklist for Making a Presentation

Start With Confidence

A startling statement/quotation/anecdote/question/joke are good options for starting a presentation. The speaker must make sure that the technique used to start the presentation helps emphasise or support his/her point. It must match his/her message. Examples from personal and professional life can be used to stress points. The speaker must be willing to give of himself/herself by sharing his/her experiences and insights with the audience. It is useful to practise the opening of one's speech and plan exactly how it should be said.

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Be Organised

Presentations should be organised properly with an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction should provide an overview of the main points of the presentation. The speaker should make the purpose of the presentation clear, use transitions and signposts to clarify its organisation, and incorporate credible and interesting supporting material.

Stay Relaxed

Advance planning and preparation help in staying relaxed and tension-free during the presentation. Focussing on the message rather than the audience also helps in staying calm and confident.

Pay Attention to Body Language

Effective gestures, body movements, and walking patterns make an impression on the audience. The speaker should, at all times, maintain eye contact with the audience. These aspects should be borne in mind while rehearsing the presentation.

Use Appropriate Visual Aids

Visuals should be chosen with a view to creating maximum effect. They should focus on the main points of the presentation and help in retaining audience attention.

Pay Attention to all Details

The speaker should pay attention to even the smallest details, making sure to organise all his/her papers, speaking notes, handouts, and visual aids, before starting the presentation.

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Close in a Memorable Way

The presentation should be concluded in a memorable way, with a summary of the keypoints. The audience should leave with a positive impression of the speaker and his/her presentation.