

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Many people say they are anxious about giving an oral presentation, but this nervousness can be dramatically reduced by knowing the material well. The best advice is to prepare carefully and allow plenty of time to practise.

The process

The following section outlines a useful approach to preparing a presentation.

1. Analyse the task

Analyse the question to be sure you understand what the topic requires. Will you be giving an outline of the topic or an in-depth analysis? Be sure that your topic has a clear focus.

2. Brainstorm

Bring all your ideas together on one page to take stock of what you already know. Identify gaps. Start a plan.

3. Know your audience and venue

What does your audience already know about the topic? It's important to engage with everyone, not just your lecturer/teacher.

Also, for assessment purposes, it's important to show that you know the topic; therefore, key terms, procedures, concepts should be explained – even if you think the audience is familiar with them – so that the lecturer/teacher can see you understand them.

Check out the venue if you haven't been there before. Consider the size of the room and equipment available.

4. Research and plan

Use a variety of sources to bring in a range of ideas and information. The more informed you are on the topic, the more confident you will feel.

Decide on a logical order for the points you want to make. Think about how they fit into the structure of your presentation (introduction, body, and conclusion).

6. Write and edit

Write notes to guide your talk. You shouldn't try to script and read your presentation. Prepare your presentation slides and supporting visual materials. Edit them carefully for grammar and spelling.

Make sure that any visual materials are clear and easily read by the audience: consider font type and size, use of colour. Diagrams and graphs may be useful to illustrate your points.

7. Practise, practise, practise

Practise out loud, either to friends or family or in front of the mirror. Practise using the main points and brief notes only. It is important that you know your topic thoroughly so that you don't read.

Use introductory phrases for new points, and linking words to connect your ideas.

Practise the volume of your speech and the speed at which you talk so that it fits the time allocated to the presentation.

8. Deliver your presentation

Your voice should be natural, expressive and easily heard.

Use effective body language – posture, gestures, eye contact. Appear confident.

Keep your audience interested by asking questions and directing their attention to interesting points on your slides.

Expect your audience to ask questions, and try to predict and prepare for these questions.

STUDY TIPS

The structure

Your presentation should have three distinct sections:

- the introduction: an outline of the presentation
- the body: presenting the new information
- the conclusion: the answer.

The structure is usually:

Introduction	Tell them what you're going to tell them
Body	Tell them
Conclusion	Tell them what you just told them

Introduction – an overview for the audience

- Begin with a brief general statement outlining your presentation. You may need to define key terms.
- Explain how you have structured the information and issues you will discuss.
- Lead to a thesis statement, which summarises the presentation.

Body – made up of logically connected ideas

- Information is presented in sections around central ideas, consisting of main points and supporting details. These are similar to paragraphs in an essay but generally, written as dot points on your slides.
- Be sure to relate your information directly back to the topic.
- The sections need to be linked to create logical flow of information for your audience, for example:
 - First, I'd like to highlight the importance of ...
 - Another important consideration is ...
 - As you can see on the slide, X is also a major aspect of ...

Conclusion

- Provides a very brief summary of the main points.
- May open out with recommendations or predictions connecting your ideas back to the world again.
- It can be appropriate to thank the audience for their attention to make it clear that you have finished.

Note: The formal conclusion may be followed by questions from the audience.