



Five points to consider when giving a presentation

- What is the purpose of the presentation?
- What is the structure of your presentation?
- Who is the audience?
- How can I deliver my talk confidently?
- What strategies can help me handle questions?

What is the purpose of the presentation?

Having a clear purpose will mean that your presentation is clear and focussed. It is not necessary to say everything you know about a topic, as you will not have enough time to say everything, and focussing what you have to say into a clear argument will make the presentation purposeful. Identifying the purpose also helps you to decide what approach(es) and structure are most appropriate to use. It will help you to decide whether your approach will be formal or informal, whether you will allow for discussion, or whether you will allow for questions throughout your presentation. Some points worth considering are:

- What do you need to achieve with your presentation?
- Is the presentation to inform, persuade, entertain or demonstrate?
- What should the presentation include or omit?

What is the structure of a presentation?

A presentation should have three parts:

- Introduction: Tell them what you're going to tell them.
- Main body: Tell them.
- Conclusion: Tell them what you told them.

In the introduction, you should:

- Tell them who you are and why you are giving this presentation.
- Tell them what the presentation is about.
- Tell them what your objectives are.
- Tell them what the background to the presentation is.
- Tell the audience what they can gain from listening to you.

In the main body, you should:

- Give details of your topic in a logical and smooth order
- Use anecdotes and real examples to illustrate your points
- Tell the audience how this information applies to them
- Back up all the claims that you made at the start

In the conclusion, you should:

- Summarise your key points.
- Remind the audience of the advantages of your position, solution, options, and conclusions.
- Tell them what you want them to do next.
- Give the audience your contact details in case they require further information.



- Invite questions.
- Try to end on a high. Avoid saying “That’s it!”.

Who is the audience?

It is important that when presenting you think about who will be in the audience and why they are there. You should think about what the audience already know about the subject. The audience comes to a presentation wanting to find something out, and they will want to leave having learnt something new. Hence, it is important to consider what the audience already know about the subject.

If you don’t consider your audience, they may feel insulted – if you fail to recognise and acknowledge their existing knowledge and experience; and they may feel confused – if you assume a level of knowledge or expertise that isn’t there. In addition, if you fail to relate the presentation to their needs the audience may be bored; or they may be frustrated if they are not given the opportunity to question or contribute

Delivering your presentation confidently

Even if you are an experienced presenter, you will still get nervous before presenting. You might sweat, stutter or speak too quickly. To overcome some of these, you need to practise giving the presentation so that you are familiar with the timing and content of your presentation. In order to calm some of your nerves, try and visualise presenting like a person you admire. If you just read out a whole essay, this will sound monotonous and bore your audience, so try and use some notes. In relation to your voice, you should notice if people are straining to hear you and raise your voice, speak louder to emphasise key points. Talk to your audience, check that they are with you on points. It is important that you start positively; remember, your audience are interested in what you have to say.

Delivering your presentation confidently is also effected by your body language. Below is a table of engaging body language and body language to avoid.

Engaging body language	Body language to avoid
Stand up straight and face the audience	Shuffling your feet and swaying
Hold your head up high, with your chin up	Constantly rubbing an eye, nose or ear
Use your hands to emphasise and reinforce	Keep clearing your throat
Vary your gestures	Clenching your hands or pointing
Nod your head and smile to emphasise what you are saying	Crossing your arms or legs
Make proper eye contact	Continuous eye contact or staring

Handling questions

This is always difficult, but it is important to be prepared. Look through your presentation, identify the key messages and think of questions that could be asked about each point. Remember if you get questions you can’t answer, be honest. It is very easy to identify when someone doesn’t know what they are talking about. One option might be to ask experts in the audience for the answer, e.g. “that’s an interesting question, unfortunately I can’t answer it, but perhaps a member of the audience might be able to contribute”.

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