

# SEMINAR 1 ACADEMIC SKILLS, PRESENTATION

*"Failing to plan means planning to fail."  
Brian Tracy (b.1944), contemporary American management writer.*

*"Tell your audience what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell  
them what you told them."*

*#1rule*



## ***ACADEMIC PRESENTATION***

Warm up task. Try to answer these multiple choice questions.

1. *What is the main type of presentation found at international academic conferences?*

- a) informative                      b) instructional                      c) persuasive

2. *When is the best time to ask questions during a presentation?*

- a) during the conclusion    b) after the conclusion    c) after the introduction

3. *What is the purpose of the main body of a presentation?*

- a) to introduce the presenter                      b) to develop the main ideas and supporting sub-ideas of the presentation c) to conclude the presentation

4. *When should a presenter conduct an audience analysis?*

- a) after the presentation    b) during the presentation    c) before the presentation

5. *Which of the following sentences would be used in the conclusion of a presentation?*

- a) "Our purpose today has been to ..."  
b) "I'd like to introduce myself. My name is ..."  
c) "Could you repeat that, please?"

6. *When making a presentation, the speaker should look at:*

- a) the floor                      b) his/her notes                      c) the audience

7. *An introduction should:*

- a) state the purpose of the presentation                      b) give suggestions for future research  
c) develop supporting ideas

8. *In presentations, visuals are used to:*

- a) illustrate important ideas                      b) provide an attractive background                      c) show examples

## **1. STRUCTURE OF THE WHOLE PRESENTATION PROCESS**

PREPARATION – presentation analysis, planning your time, purpose, topic, audience

REHEARSAL<sup>1</sup> – phrases, timing, body language

TITLE – selection

INTRODUCTION – your name, position, purpose, topic/title, length of time, handling questions\*, outline\*

MAIN BODY – coherent<sup>2</sup> and logical structure, natural transition between main points

ENDING – signal to end, summary, conclusion, recommendations, closing

DISCUSSION – welcome questions, think before answering, accept criticism, reply positively

CLOSING – thank the audience

### **1.1 TITLE**

A title must attract your audience, describe your topic clearly, and give a precise\* idea about what to expect in the presentation. Here are some useful points to keep in mind when creating your title.

1. Avoid using redundant\* words and phrases such as “a study on” or “an investigation of”.
2. Avoid using abbreviations\* and jargon\*.
3. Avoid using “cute” or sensational titles.
4. Avoid being too vague\* or too general.

**Task 1** Look at the following examples of titles of presentations. Which of these can enable you to predict the content of the presentations?

1. Noise Stress and Human Behaviour
2. The Billion Dollar Question!
3. Industrial Policies of Industrial Countries
4. Out of the Oceans and on to Faster Bicycles
5. The Persistent Stereotype: Children’s Images of Scientists

### **1.2 INTRODUCTION**

The introduction is a very important - perhaps the most important - part of your presentation. This is the first impression that your audience have of you. You should concentrate on getting your introduction right.

It usually consists of:

- a) GREETING
- b) INTRODUCING ONE’S NAME AND POSITIONS
- c) TOPIC / TITLE / SUBJECT
- d) PURPOSE
- e) TIME
- f) OUTLINE
- g) VISUAL AIDS
- h) QUESTIONS

**Task 2** Match the structural points with the sentences from the text.

(1) So, I’ll begin with several comments on the background to the project, then I’ll go on to explain how the project works and finally, I’ll highlight what I see as the main advantages of videoconferencing. (2) Good afternoon, everyone. (3) I plan to be brief, it’ll take some 15 minutes. (4) I’m Tom Lukes, a postgraduate student of Information Science. (5) This morning I’m going to be talking to you about the videoconferencing project. (6) Thanks for coming. (7) The aim of this presentation is to get more people

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1 rehearsal – nácvik, zkouška

2 coherent – logický, jasný, promyšlený

involved in the project. (8) Feel free to interrupt me, if there's something which needs clarifying, but don't worry, there'll be plenty of time left over for discussion at the end. (9) I will also show you a few bits from the videoconference we had three days ago.

**Task 3** Introductions can become repetitive. It is important to have a choice of words and expressions at your fingertips. Use one of the following expressions to replace each of the expressions in italics in this introduction.

<i>don't hesitate</i>	<i>a chance</i>	<i>I take care</i>	<i>I'm delighted</i>	<i>sections</i>
<i>divide</i>	<i>go through</i>	<i>in more depth</i>	<i>my purpose is</i>	<i>finally</i>

Good morning, everyone. If I may have your attention, please? Thank you for coming. *It's a pleasure* to be with you today. My name is Emma Gold and *I'm in charge* of the Department library. *We are here today* to review some key principles and to get information about the loan system. So what I intend to do is to *break down* this presentation into three *parts*, first, the system and its rules; second, benefits, and *third*, the e-loans. If you have any questions, please, *feel free* to interrupt me, but I should also say there'll be *an opportunity* to discuss issues *at greater length* after my talk.

### 1.3 MAIN BODY

The body is the 'real' presentation. If the introduction was well prepared and delivered, you will now be 'in control'. You will be relaxed and confident. The body should be well structured, divided logically, with plenty of carefully spaced visuals.

Remember these key points while delivering the body of your presentation:

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| a. <i>do not hurry</i>                | f. <i>modulate your voice</i>                                 |
| b. <i>do not read from your notes</i> | g. <i>keep to your structure</i>                              |
| c. <i>be enthusiastic</i>             | h. <i>signpost throughout</i>                                 |
| d. <i>give time on visuals</i>        | i. <i>remain polite when dealing with difficult questions</i> |
| e. <i>maintain eye contact</i>        |   |

### 1.4 VISUALS AND AIDS

**Task 4** Look at the visuals below and try to characterize their qualities.

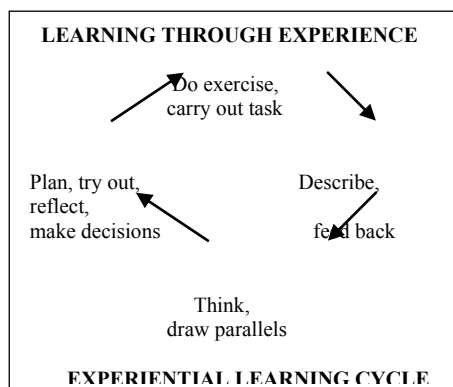
1.

**NATIONALISM**

There are four core debates which permeate the study of nations and nationalism.

- Nationalists argue that nations are timeless phenomena.
- The next major school of thought is that of the perennialists who argue that nations have been around for a very long time.
- Postmodernists and Marxists also play in the larger debates surrounding this topic, the modernization school is perhaps the most prevalent scholarly argument at the moment. These scholars see nations as entirely modern and constructed.

2.



- Some useful DON'TS:
- a) Don't use visuals to **repeat** what you can say with words.
  - b) Don't **overcrowd** visuals with too much information.
  - c) Don't use **too many** visuals.
  - d) Don't **read** from the visuals.

## 1.5 ACADEMIC STYLE

Academic speaking is similar in many ways to academic writing, however, it is less complex and objective than written language. Spoken language has shorter words, less grammatical complexity, it is lexically less dense and it has a less varied vocabulary. Spoken language is different from written language for many reasons. One important reason is that it usually has to be understood immediately whereas written language can be read many times.

Although the structure should be formal, the most effective speaking manner is usually **conversational style** (but not too familiar): use **short sentences** and **concrete** language to give examples.

**Task 5** What is the most efficient way of communicating ideas to your audience? (Choose the best answer)

- a) formulate each complete thought in a short sentence of 15-20 words.
- b) formulate more thoughts in a short sentence of 15-20 words.
- c) formulate your complete thought in a sentence of more than 40 words.
- d) formulate more thoughts in a sentence of more than 40 words.

**Task 6** Spoken language has many different features: tick  those which characterise spoken language.

- |                             |                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) Variation in speed       | 5) Paragraphs                   |
| 2) Spelling                 | 6) Stress and rhythm            |
| 3) Gestures - body language | 7) Pausing and phrasing         |
| 4) Intonation               | 8) Formal Grammatical Precision |

## 1.6 CONCLUSION

The ending, similarly to the opening, is a vital element of an oral academic presentation. It helps create the final impression on what you have been talking about and it is also the part most likely to be remembered by the audience.

The final section should reinforce and re-emphasize the main points of your speech or highlight the importance of specific ideas you have presented. Such a summary will be followed by a conclusion, which is an original idea drawn from effective arguments.

Use the conclusion to:

1. Sum up
2. Conclude
3. Thank your audience
4. Invite questions

**Task 7** Make full sentences by matching the correct halves.

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| a) Before we come to an end, | 1. there are two key theories.               |
| b) I'd be glad to answer     | 2. we start the discussion now.              |
| c) To summarize,             | 3. by quoting a well-known saying.           |
| d) We can conclude           | 4. we should try the second method.          |
| e) In my opinion,            | 5. your questions now.                       |
| f) I'd like to suggest       | 6. I'd like to thank you for your attention. |

**Task 8** Use one of the following expressions to replace each of the expressions in bold in the following conclusion.

<i>I'd be glad</i>	<i>talk</i>	<i>then</i>	<i>main</i>	<i>lastly</i>
<i>reliable</i>	<i>now</i>	<i>idea</i>	<i>covers everything in</i>	<i>As you can see</i>
<i>it seems to me that</i>	<i>listening</i>	<i>sum up</i>	<i>to put it simply</i>	

That **brings me to the end of** my **presentation**. Let me just **run over** the **key** points again. Very briefly, there are three. First, water-related problems continue to affect millions of people and, contrary to what most people believe, future water supplies will not last for ever. **Second**, the growing number of projects trying to provide ever-increasing supplies of water indicate that a growing number of countries are aware of the present problems and of those to come. **Third**, current solutions are mostly highly expensive, not very practical and also very time-consuming. **From what you have heard**, there are some **very good** reasons to believe that the eventual solution would definitely be to conserve water worldwide and control pollution. **In other words**, we need to respect our most valuable natural resource much more than we do. **At this point**, I'd like to leave you with the following **thought**: it is certainly true that the twentieth century gave us some advantages by, for example, making us richer, healthier and freer to enjoy our lives. However, **in my opinion**, it did not make us wiser. The twentieth century also made our earth dirtier, our people less humane, and our spiritual lives poorer. We should, of course, continue to enjoy the benefits of technological advancements because they free us to pursue our interests and goals. However, we must make a concerted effort to preserve our natural environment for future generations. Thank you for your **attention** and now, if you have any questions, **I'd be pleased** to answer them.

## Appendix

### “Sign Posting” Language

<b><u>Giving Talks and Presentations</u></b>		
<b>1 Introducing</b>		
Good morning, my name is ... I'm a ... ( <i>student ...</i> ) at ... ( <i>Masaryk University</i> )		
This morning	I'm going to ... ( <i>talk about ...</i> )	
Today	I'd like to ... ( <i>describe ...</i> )	
The focus <sup>6</sup> / topic / subject of my talk / paper is ...		
The aim of my presentation this morning is to ... ( <i>explain ...</i> )		
I've divided my presentation into ...		
We can break this area down into the following fields ...		
My talk will be in ...	( <i>three parts.</i> )	
First,	I'd like to	( <i>give you an overview of ...</i> )
Second,	I'd like to	focus on <sup>7</sup> ...
Then,	I'll	move on <sup>8</sup> to ...
After that,	we'll	deal with <sup>9</sup> ...
Finally,	we'll	consider <sup>10</sup> ...

## **2 Referring to questions**

Feel free to interrupt me if there's anything you don't understand / you need clarifying.  
If you don't mind, we'll leave questions till the end.

## **3 Introducing each section**

So, let's start with ... (*objectives ...*)

Now let's move on to ... (*the next part ...*)

Let's turn our attention to ... (*the question of ...*)

This leads me to ... (*my third point ...*)

Finally ... (*let's consider ...*)

## **4 Summarizing a section**

Let me just run over the key points again.

I'll briefly summarise the main issues

That completes my ... (*description of ...*)

To sum up ...

So, to summarize ... (*there are five key points ...*)

## **5 Referring backwards and forwards**

I mentioned earlier ... (*the importance of ...*)

I'll say more about this later.

We'll come back to this point later.

## **6 Checking understanding**

Is that clear?

Are there any questions?

## **7 Referring to visual information**

This	slide	
	diagram	shows ...
	screen	

If you look at this graph you can see ...

What is interesting in this slide is ...

I'd like to draw your attention to ... (*this chart ...*)

## **8 Referring to common knowledge**

As you know ...

As I'm sure you're aware ...

## **9 Concluding / justification**

As you can see, there are some very good reasons ...

I'd like to leave you with the following thought / idea ...

In conclusion ...

I hope you've gained an insight into ...

## **10 Inviting questions and dealing with questions**

If you have any questions, I'd be pleased / I'll do my best to answer them.

I would welcome any comments or suggestions.

That's a good point.

I'm glad you asked that question.

Can I get back to you on that later? I'm afraid I don't have ... (*the information at present*).

I'm afraid I'm not the right person to answer that.

## **11 Closing**

That concludes my talk.

That brings me to the end of my presentation.

That completes my presentation.  
Thank you for your attention / listening.

## Presentation Assessment Criteria

- 1. Organisation**
  - title
  - introduction
  - main body (key points, logical sequence, sign-posting language)
  - ending (conclusion)
  - closure
  - timing
  
- 2. Content**
  - topic coverage
  - relevant to academic audience
  - informative
  - understandable
  - interesting, entertaining
  
- 3. Language**
  - appropriate to audience
  - explanation of jargon
  - voice (speed, volume, clarity, intonation)
  - grammatical accuracy
  - correct pronunciation of key words
  
- 4. Body language**
  - eye contact
  - use of notes
  - stance, enthusiasm
  
- 5. Visuals**
  - appropriate
  - supportive
  - clear
  
- 6. Questions**
  - handling of the discussion
  - clear, appropriate responses
  
- 7. Complex impression**
  - the best feature/part/characteristics
  - one feature that should be changed/avoided/improved