

## SEMINAR 8 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."*

#Irule



### **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. *An introduction should:*

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

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

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

## 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.

## 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 1** Match the structural points above 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. Thanks for coming.
- (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) The aim of this presentation is to get more people involved in the project.
- (7) 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.
- (8) I will also show you a few bits from the videoconference we had three days ago.

**Task 2** 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.

## 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.

### Visuals

**Task 3** Look at the visuals below and try to characterize their qualities.

- 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.
- LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

Do exercise, carry out task

Describe, feedback

Think, draw parallels

Plan, try out, reflect, make decisions

**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE**

### 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.

## 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 4** Use one of the following expressions to replace each of the expressions in bold in the following conclusion.

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

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 forever. **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.

### Task 5 REPORTING WORDS

**While presenting, you will have to have a group of synonyms or words of similar meanings at hand. Complete these sentences. Choose the correct verb.**

1. **I'd like to \_\_\_\_\_ you of the latest news.**  
a) speak                      b) inform                      c) describe
2. **Could you \_\_\_\_\_ up, please? We can't hear you.**  
a) talk                      b) say                      c) speak
3. **I'll have to \_\_\_\_\_ the place as I don't have any photos with me.**  
a) explain                      b) describe                      c) present
4. **I'm going to \_\_\_\_\_ the results of our research.**  
a) report                      b) inform                      c) present
5. **Let me \_\_\_\_\_ why we used this strategy.**  
a) explain                      b) describe                      c) talk
6. **We'll have time to \_\_\_\_\_ about it this afternoon.**  
a) discuss                      b) say                      c) talk
7. **I couldn't \_\_\_\_\_ how long it will take.**  
a) talk                      b) speak                      c) say
8. **We will \_\_\_\_\_ you when the project comes to an end.**  
a) say                      b) describe                      c) tell

## Task 6 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE TALKING

Listening is hard work. Especially at conferences, where audiences attend many talks over many hours, people need the speaker's help to maintain their focus. This is the true meaning of "entertainment." In an academic talk, entertainment doesn't mean making your audience laugh or distracting them from their troubles. Instead, it's about helping them stay focused on and interested in what you have to say.

No rule applies always and everywhere. But the following principles work almost all the time. Try them!

1. **Talk** rather than read.
2. **Stand** up.
3. Use **visual** aids.
4. **Move** around.
5. **Speak** loudly, clearly, and **confidently**.
6. Make **eye contact** with the audience.
7. **Focus** on main arguments.
8. Finish your talk within the **time limit**.
9. **Summarize** your talk at the beginning and again at the end.
10. Notice your **audience** and **respond** to their needs.

**Now match the principles with the following arguments.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a) It's easier to keep focused on someone who's moving than on a motionless talking head. Hand gestures are also good. It's possible to overuse these devices, of course. Simply crossing from one side of the room to the other every three or four minutes is probably enough.               | f) An important element of vocal technique is to focus on the bottom (the deepest pitch) of your vocal range, which is its loudest and most authoritative tone. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback: "Can you hear me in the back of the room?"                 |
| b) Not to do so is disrespectful both of any subsequent speakers and of your audience. Most people's <i>maximum</i> attention span is 40-45 minutes. If you exceed this limit, you'll probably lose them. The only way to be certain you can keep within your limits is to rehearse your talk. | g) If this is anxiety-inducing, at least pretend to do this by casting your gaze toward the back and sides of the room. Be careful not to ignore one side of the audience.  |
| c) If people seem to be falling asleep, or getting restless or distracted, the problem may not be you. Is the room too hot, or too cold? Too dark? Can people see you? Is the microphone on? Is something outside the room distracting people?   | h) Especially in a conference situation, where talks are short and yours is one of many, your audience is not going to remember the details of your evidence. In such a situation, less is more. Give them short, striking "punch lines" that they'll remember. |
| d) This is one of the most important principles of public speaking. People are visual creatures. At the same time, it helps them understand the structure of your thinking. Talk outlines should be extremely concise.   | i) You'll be easier to understand, and you'll be better able to make genuine contact with your audience. Furthermore, ultimately talking will help you think more clearly by forcing you to communicate your points in ordinary language.                       |
| e) This is better for two reasons. First, people can see you better. Second, standing puts you in a physically dominant position. The audience needs your help to maintain their attention.  | j) "Tell `em what you're gonna tell `em, tell `em, and tell `em what you told `em": this ancient principle still holds. If you follow this rule, your audience is much more likely to remember your main points.  |

## Appendix “Sign Posting” Language

### Giving Talks and Presentations

#### **1 Introducing**

Good morning, my name is ... I'm a ... (*student ...*) at ... (*Masaryk University*)

This morning I'm going to ... (*talk about ...*)

Today I'd like to ... (*describe ...*)

The focus<sup>6</sup> / topic / subject of my talk / paper is ...

The aim of my presentation this morning is to ... (*explain ...*)

I've divided my presentation into ...

We can break this area down into the following fields ...

My talk will be in ... (*three parts.*)

First, I'd like to (*give you an overview of ...*)

Second, I'd like to focus on...

Then, I'll move on to ...

After that, we'll deal with ...

Finally, we'll consider ...

#### **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 ...

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.