

WEEK 1 – READING TASK + VIDEO TASK: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Effective communication is about **getting your message across**. In contrast to written documents, oral presentations allow you to establish stronger contact with the audience and better convince them of your viewpoint through verbal and nonverbal delivery, as well as the ensuing interaction.

Invest your time in the preparation process. If you give a poor 15-minute presentation to an audience of 200 people, you have wasted the equivalent of 50 hours of work — more than a week of someone's work time. Make it a habit to write and **speak in a simple, straightforward way**. Aim to **inform**, not impress.

- I. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
- II. AUDIENCE
- III. TITLE
- IV. STRUCTURE OF YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION
- V. DELIVERY
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- IX. KEY

I. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Before you begin to prepare your presentation you should think about the following questions.

What are you going to talk about?
Why should you talk about it?
Who are you going to talk to?
Who is your audience?

How many people will be there?
What is their knowledge of the subject?
Why are they there and what do they expect to learn from me?
What are my needs as the speaker?
What are their needs as the audience?

II. AUDIENCE

Adapt to your audience, be audience-friendly. The audience can be all of the same type, i.e. homogeneous, or heterogeneous, i.e. mixed, in which case we should aim at trying to see things from their perspective, not just those who have expertise. Scientists from other fields should be able to understand what you are saying.

For fear of being too simple, academicians often make their presentations too complicated!

- capture your audience's attention
- ensure your audience **understands** the idea you are trying to convey
- encourage your audience to do something with that information (remember it/apply it/provide feedback)

III. TITLE

When preparing your presentation, it is important not to forget about its title. It is the first thing the audience can see of any presentation. A title states the topic as simply and as briefly as possible. It should attract the audience by clear description of the topic and by giving a precise idea about what to expect in the presentation.

IV. STRUCTURE OF YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION

At university very often we make presentations to inform / share ideas / train other people / educate; also in later stages of the medical studies we may want to share our research work with other scientists and want to persuade them that the research presented is important, valid, and relevant to them. Be it describing a topic or your research, we must emphasize both the **motivation** for the work/presentation and the possible conclusions or results of it. In case of surveys / studies we are also expected by other academicians to present just enough **evidence** to establish the validity of our results.

1. The introduction

- **attention getter**
 - open your presentation with a **short** attention getter (a little over one minute) **get everyone's attention** fast
 - focus the audience's undivided attention on **the need (your motivation)**
 - be audience-oriented, **bridge the gap** between what they know or are interested in and what you will present (a question, a statement, an anecdote – humorous or not, example);
- **main message** – is **the sentence you want your audience to remember**, it is your main conclusion, perhaps stated in slightly less technical detail than at the end of your presentation.
- **preview /outline** – outlines the body of your presentation

2. The body

main points - identify two max. five statements to support your main message

subpoints - think of two max. five statements to support each main point

That is the maximum your audience can absorb in a single oral presentation!

- do not mention introduction and conclusion in the outline
- **organize** your main points and subpoints **into a logical sequence**
- **use transitions** between points and between subpoints: transitions=linking parts=signaling devices
- transitions are **crucial** elements for revealing a presentation's structure – the shifts are not obvious to the audience
- transitions are **often underestimated** - Wrap up one point, then announce the next by creating a need for it: *"So, this is the microstructure we observe consistently ... But how does it change if we? That's my next point. Here is..."*

3. The closing

- **review/summary** - review the **main points** to help your audience remember them and prepare the audience for your conclusion, make time for a review/summary
- **conclusion** – develop your main message more fully in your conclusion
- **close** – close the presentation by indicating to your audience that these are your last words, thus giving them the signal to applaud. What works well is to make the link back to your attention getter – thus you indicate that you have completed the loop.

 **OUTLINE**

To design your presentation, write down your ideas for each component below.

Attention getter	A way to lead the audience to the need efficiently
Need	A difference between actual and desired situations
Task	What I decided/was asked to do to address the need
Main message	The one sentence I want my audience to remember
Preview/Outline	A map of the body (ideally three points, max. five)
Point 1	1
transition	
Point 2	2
transition	
.	3
.	
.	4
	5
Review/Summary	A recap of the body, leading into the conclusion
Conclusion	What the above means to the audience in the end
Close	A way to end the presentation clearly and elegantly

V. DELIVERY

Delivering effective oral presentations involves three components.

1. verbal (what you say)

- don't read, don't memorize your full text X memorize the outline/tree structure of main points and sub-points
- avoid fillers ("well, um, so, yes") simply pause – (2-3'' of thinking time is ok)
- use preferably the informal approach - the audience will appreciate it and you will feel more comfortable/relaxed

2. vocal (how you say it)

- modulate your voice for meaning, complexity, and importance, vary the tone, rate, volume of your voice
- avoid monotony, be dynamic and expressive
- don't be afraid of pauses, they can add emphasis to key points
- give stress to important words, pause after stressed words
- slow down for important points
- prepare a list of **key technical words** and difficult words – if you are unsure of how to pronounce some words or phrases, check online dictionaries that offer phonetic spelling or audio rendering

3. visual (what is seen)

- **posture** - try to keep your posture upright but relaxed, look straight ahead, not down at the floor or up at the ceiling
- **movement** - don't stand completely still – a little movement is more interesting; don't move around too much, or the audience may watch you instead of listening to you
- **eye contact** – establish eye contact, maintain good eye contact with different people in the audience. don't just look at one person
- **facial expressions** - (e.g. smiles) to emphasize your feelings.
- **gestures** – make large and deliberate gestures, use your hands to emphasize what you say; it is safer to keep hands out of pockets – in some cultures this shows disrespect; hold a pen or pointer if you feel more comfortable, but don't play with it.

Below you will find a few pairs of expressions which can be used in the introductory part of your presentation.

Friendly expressions	Formal expressions
OK, let's get started.	Perhaps we should begin.
Afternoon, everyone	Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.
Thanks for coming.	On behalf of..., may I welcome you to
I'm ...	My name's...
This afternoon I'd like to	What I want to do this afternoon is ...
talk to you about ...	discuss
tell you about ...	report on...
and show you ...	And present
If you have any questions you'd like to ask, I'll be happy to answer them.	Feel free to ask any questions you like as we go along.
And don't worry, there'll be plenty of time left over for questions at the end.	Perhaps we can leave any questions you may have until the end of the presentation.

VI. VISUALS

1. Slides

- use visuals to support or summarize what you say
- design your slides so they get a message across to your audience **in a visual way** - be as visual as possible
- **with each slide, get a message across**
- use KISS technique (**Keep It Short and Simple**) – the content should be concise, both verbally and visually
- state that message verbally in **the title** area as a **short sentence** (10–15 words on a maximum of two lines); *e.g. the temperature increased much faster than anticipated*
- slides are for the audience – they should **NOT be designed as a memory aid** for the speaker - don't read from them
- **plan about one slide per minute**
- **avoid language mistakes and misprints in slides**
- **use sans serif fonts**, such as Arial, Tahoma, Verdana (x Times New Roman is a serif font used in word documents – serifs are the small features at the end of strokes)
- use a pointer and/or masking techniques where appropriate
- face the audience as much as possible.
- don't block the audience's view.

2. Introducing the visuals

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OK. Let's take a look at ▪ The first / second / next / final slide is ▪ This shows / illustrates / demonstrates / refers to ▪ This is I graph / an organigram which shows ▪ As you can see, this is ... ▪ As you can see from these figures... ▪ Here we can see ▪ I'd like you to look at this graph... ▪ Let me show you this pie chart... ▪ Let's have a look at this model... ▪ Let's turn to this map... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To illustrate my point let's look at some diagrams... ▪ If you look at these photographs you'll see... ▪ If you look at this bar chart you'll notice... ▪ If you look at this histogram you'll appreciate... ▪ If you look at this flow chart you'll understand ... ▪ If you look at this matrix... ▪ I'd like to draw your attention to ▪ One of the most important aspects of this is ▪ At first glance it seems |
|---|--|

3. Naming the parts of diagrams

The vertical axis represents

The horizontal axis shows

The curve, the solid line, the dotted line, the broken line, the shaded area, the unshaded section, the dotted column, the colored segment, the red bar...

VII. QUESTIONS

Answering questions:

- anticipate questions
 - when receiving a question, don't rush into answering it
 - listen to the entire question
 - make sure you understand the question
 - make sure the other attendees understand the question
 - if they might have not heard it, repeat it
 - if they might not understand it, rephrase it
 - think – take time to construct a concise, to-the point answer
 - if you don't know the answer, say so, then try to find it
 - you might offer to look it up (*"I do not have the numbers with me, but if you leave me your e-mail address, I can look them up and send you the answer later."*).
 - you might refer the questioner to someone who might have an answer (*"Oh, that is a strongly biological question. I am a chemist myself, so my work focuses on the chemical processes involved. Is there a biologist in the room who can answer this question?"*).
- you might even guess, as long as you make it clear that your answer is a guess (*"I have never calculated it in the case you mention, but if I had to give you an*

Sources:

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Adapted from:

<http://www.nature.com/scitable/ebooks/english-communication-for-scientists-14053993> and materials *English for Science*, a course developed by Hana Němcová at MU Faculty of Science