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.

When you prepare your presentation, you should decide not only about **the information** (What did you find in your research?), but also about **the message** (What do your findings mean to your audience?).

I. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
II. AUDIENCE
III. TITLE
IV. STRUCTURE OF YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION
V. DELIVERY
VI. VISUALS
VII. QUESTIONS
VIII. SURVIVAL TACTICS

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 homogeneous or heterogeneous (mixed)**.** Try 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, conference speakers 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.

1. **In academic titles, there are certain features typically avoided. Try to match them with the explanations why they are better to be avoided.**

To avoid:

- redundant words and phrases such as "a study on" or "an investigation of
- abbreviations and jargon
- cute or sensational titles
- being too vague or general

- In order to come to your presentation, the audience should be able to predict the content - almost nobody can predict the content of a presentation titled, e.g. "The Way to Truth" or "A Vital Question".

- Everybody expects that an academic presentation is based on a reputable study, investigation or research project.

- You want to inform your audience, not to shock them or to increase the selling. Titles such as "Urban Gorilla seen in Glasgow" or "Best Selling Computer Software: Here and Now!" will probably not attract an audience which would like to get unbiased serious information regarding urban gorillas or computer software.

- They may not be the same for different audiences, e.g., CR means the Czech Republic to Europeans, while in America it refers to Costa Rica, etc.

2. **Read the following titles and decide which of them would be acceptable for an academic talk.**

   Gender Issues in Reproductive Health and Promoting Male Responsibility
   From Cold War to Cold Peace: Explaining U.S.-French Competition in Francophone Africa
   Shells

Pretty Feet Hit the Street
The Impact of Herbivores on Plants in Different Resource Conditions: A Meta-Analysis
An Investigation of Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity
Statistics for ESC in AO, PO and IO
A Study of Prisoners and Guards in a Simulated Prison
Health and Schooling Investments in Africa
The Earth
This is research on the Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama.

IV. STRUCTURE OF YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION

You want to share your research work with other scientists and want to persuade them that the research presented is important, valid, and relevant to them. You must emphasize both the **motivation** for the work and the **outcome** of it and you must present just enough **evidence** to establish the validity of this outcome. Don't say out loud everything that you have in your writing, be selective, allow enough time for questions and answers, anticipate questions the audience might have.

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.

OPENINGS - TASKS

1. Follow John's opening and identify all the parts.

A. Attention getter (consists of a photograph depicting the syndrome)
B. Implicit need (namely, to identify the genetic cause of it)
C. Task (what they did)
D. Main message (what they achieved)
E. Outline
F. Transition to the body

In 1966, two Belgian clinicians published a novel syndrome, which we call now hypotonia-cystinuria syndrome. It is characterized by severe neonatal hypotonia – you can see that on this picture, which was included in their case report – but on top of that all the patients developed kidney stones within the first decade of their life, mostly even multiple kidney stones, and they also displayed growth retardation. Over the years, we have, in our hospital, collected a number of additional patients and, a few years ago, we have been able to identify the genetic cause of this syndrome. What I will show you in the next 15 minutes is how we came to identify the genetic cause of this disease and, since one of the genes affected in this syndrome is a novel protein called PREPL (prolyl endopeptidase-like), I will also show you the preliminary data that we have gathered in the characterization of this protein. But let me start by giving you a bit more information about the syndrome itself.

2. Listen to Jean-Luc's opening and take notes of what he is saying.

A. Attention getter (focuses on the audience)

B. Need (is audience-oriented like the attention getter)

C. Task (shifts the focus to the speaker)

D. Main message

E. Outline (includes the audience with a collective we)

F. Transition to the body

CLOSINGS - TASKS

1. Follow John's closing and identify all the parts.

A. Transition from the body

B. Review/Conclusion (concludes each point, implicitly recapping it)

C. Close (encourages feedback from the audience)

So that brings me to the conclusions. We have found a novel syndrome and we have been able to identify the genes causing this. And since SLC3A1 causes isolated cystinuria type 1, we can conclude that PREPL is responsible for the hypotonia and the growth retardation. We also have shown that PREPL is an active serine hydrolase, but unfortunately we have not been able to find the physiological substrate of REPL and hence we are not yet able at this stage to go back to the patient and try and explain why they have this syndrome as we observe it. And with that I am afraid I have to leave you with more questions than answers, but if you have any of the answers that I've been asking, please let me know.

Listen to Jean-luc's closing and take notes of what he is saying.

A. Transition from the body

B. Review (recaps the body's three main points)

C. Conclusion (place the body's discussion into a broader perspective)

D. Close (links to the attention getter)

OUTLINE – TASK

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 **Point 1** ***transition*** **Point 2** ***transition*** . . .	A map of the body (ideally three points, max. five) 1 2 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.

DELIVERY - TASKS

Pronunciation

How do you pronounce the following words?

geography, biology, analysis, occur, occurrence, triangle, hypothesis, hypothetical, theses, climate, method, thermal, chemistry, primary, tertiary, theory, theoretical, idea, ion, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, dioxide, gene, cycle, cell, basic, hypotheses, analyses, target, genetic, genome, species, technique, technical, process, procedure, organ, cell, technique, technology, characteristics, experiment

Pauses

1. **Good speakers know when and where to pause for dramatic effect and to create impact. Read the following extract aloud.**

   For the next 20 minutes or so I'm going to look at some of the different effects of global warming. Basically I've divided my presentation into three parts. In the first part, I'll talk about the melting glaciers and the way that these are contributing to rising sea levels, Then, in the second part, I'll look at climate change and give you some examples of how this is having a serious impact on wild animals' behavior and habitat. And, in the final part, I'll focus on the retreating snowlines and consider how these are causing the death of certain species of trees.

   Bell, D. (2008) Passport to academic presentations, Garnet, Unit 1, 5/1

2. **Now listen to the model extract and mark the pauses.**
3. **Read again.**

Word stress

1. **Stress can be used to gain maximum impact.**
   Examples:
   So, for starters, let's look at the history of the telephone (the word stress implies that other aspects of the telephone are going to be discussed, not just its history)
   So, for starters, let's look at the history of the telephone (the word stress implies that the history of other items will be discussed, as well as telephones)

2. **Try to predict where the word stress will fall.**
   OK, let's start by looking at where paper was actually invented.
   Now, I'd like to move on to the next part of my presentation, which is how Hitler got the support of the German people.
   Next, I'd like to look at my second point today: some of the ways in which mobile phone technology has developed.
   This leads us to my next point: suggestions for improving your English speaking.
   Right, I'm going to finish off today by looking at Alexander Fleming and the antibiotic penicillin.
   This brings us to the final part of my presentation today: what countries can do to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

3. **Listen to the recording and check your answers.**

BODY LANGUAGE - TASKS

1. **Watch the video and make notes on the presenter's body language. Complete the checklist.**

Posture	
Hands – position	
Hands – gestures	
Eye contact	
Facial expression	
Movement	

2. **Watch again, this time listening to the sound. As you watch, study what kind of gestures the speaker uses to emphasize the stressed words.**

3. **Watch without voice.**
   http:www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_harris_tells_the_web_s_secret_stories.html (2:20-3)
   http: www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_revolution.html (8:40-9:15)
   http: www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/nina_jablonski_breaks_the_illusion_of_skin_color.html

4. **Present a text focusing on your pronunciation, intonation and body language (1'). Observe your colleagues and provide feedback according to the above checklist.**

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 (**K**eep **I**t **S**hort and **S**imple) – 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

- 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...
- 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 ….. but …..

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*

QUESTIONS - TASKS

- Tell your partners what you are going to talk about and let them see your notes. Then write as many questions based on the talk as possible. You should be able to answer them or at least to react in a way.

- In small groups your study partners should prepare different types of question to ask you – irrelevant, difficult (asking for precise facts), interesting, controversial. Give your talk. The others will interrupt you to ask their questions (even those you have already answered). Deal with each type of question as politely as you can.

Ask for repetition	Ask an irrelevant question	Ask for simplification
Ask for clarification	Ask for additional information	Give your opinion
Agree	Ask for sources	Ask for evidence
Ask for examples	Interrupt the speaker	Ask for opinion
Follow up a question. You are not satisfied with the answer.	Express doubt and reservation	Disagree
Ask for methods	Ask for details	Ask for a take-home message

VIII. SURVIVAL TACTICS

1. Tick off what is true with you when you have difficulties.

- tend to say the expression in Czech
- pause for a long time
- say "nevím, jak se to řekne anglicky"
- ask the others to help

2. What could help you avoid panic?

3. Compare what you think and what you say (page 13).

Sources:

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INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

SURVIVAL TACTICS