Giving Presentations

Structure of a Presentation

A formal oral presentation has three main parts:

- The introduction (about 10% of your time allowance)
- The body of the presentation (about 85% of your time)
- The conclusion (about 5%)

The Introduction:

The purpose of this is to:

- Introduce yourself
- Catch the attention of the audience (thus should begin with a ‘hook’, a striking point or detail introducing the topic)
- Introduce the topic
- Outline the talk that you’re about to give (tell your audience what you’re going to tell them!)

The Body of the Presentation – your “content”:

Should contain about 4 main points:

- Main points should be planned carefully and clearly presented (planning should be done in an outline, like this one!)
- You should use examples, facts and statistics
- You should use linking words and phrases to show relationships e.g. “my third point is…”
  “next I’d like to talk about…”
  “by contrast, now I’d like to consider…”

The Conclusion:

Is used to recap & round off. A good conclusion may return to the hook point, using it as a way of recapping what’s been covered – but no new information is ever introduced here.

- Announce that you are concluding.
  For example: “In conclusion, I’d like to say…”, “Just to sum up…”
- Remind the audience of what you’ve been telling them
- Summarise your main points
- Round off with thanks (and, if appropriate, invite a few questions)
The notes overleaf are an example of presentation outline form. They outline for us the ‘end product’ our instructors expect when we give a presentation. Now we should consider the process of putting a presentation together – organizing our ‘content’, what we will present. Finally we should think briefly about the problem of how to present, our ‘presentation style’, and the related problem of dealing with presenter’s nerves.

**Preparing your Presentation**

Preparing a presentation consists of collecting & organizing the information you will need:

- **Collect your information.** This may involve looking at:
  - reference books
  - magazines & newspapers
  - handouts, e.g. campaign materials
  - internet sites

As you gather information and material, you should already be thinking about how you’re going to organise the information you’re collecting.

- **Organise your information:**
  - brainstorm the points you think are important to the topic
  - mind map these points to explore their connections and structure (circle your points and draw in connections)

See pamphlet Organising Assignment Responses on brainstorming & mind mapping!

- **Write the presentation:**
  - outline the presentation using a word processor like *Word* or presentation software such as *PowerPoint* or Adobe *Persuasion*.
  - if you’re using *PowerPoint*, you can write your outline in either the ‘normal’ or ‘outline’ views, and as you do this you are automatically creating ‘slides’ to present.

If using *PowerPoint*, always outline *first*, before setting slide styles, background, fonts and color selections (Format menu), or animations & transitions (SlideShow menu). Content should come before style!

It’s worth saying here that PowerPoint and similar packages are fairly easy and quick to learn, even for first time users. If you can use a word processor, you’ll soon be able to use presentation software.

- **Prepare speaker’s notes by:**
  - Printing your outline (if word processed); *or*
  - Reformattting your outline into separate small pages (one page per main point); and printing these pages four per page; these pages can be cut these up for speaker’s notes; *or*
  - Selecting Notes Pages from the “Print What” selection in PowerPoint’s Print dialog, print out your speaker’s notes.

- **Prepare your presentation graphics:**
  - **If using an overhead projector** (OHP), you will need to:
    - print a main point outline of your talk, for your introduction (if using *PowerPoint*, “Print What” = Slides)
    - print separate main point + sub point ‘slides’ for each main point of the body of your presentation (*PowerPoint*: “Print What” = Slides)
    - photocopy these outline slides on OHP transparencies,
    - photocopy any supporting graphic images on to OHP transparencies (use ‘image & text’ settings if photocopier allows this)
  - **If using a computer slide projector or computer:**
    - use a library computer scanner to scan & save any support graphics
    - use *PowerPoint*’s Insert menu, Picture command, to import graphics into slides

- **Practise your Presentation:**
  - At home, in a quiet room, run through your presentation. Make sure you simulate the use of an OHP, or use your own computer if computer based. Time your practice presentation!
  - With a friend in a quiet classroom, run through your presentation, using an OHP or computer. Time your practice!
Giving your Presentation

When giving a presentation, your personal appearance and presentation style are very important. A nervous presentation style will mar good, well organized material; while a positive presentation style will lift average material into an interesting, valuable experience for your audience.

Here are some points regarding personal style:

- **Voice**:
  - loud enough, but not over loud
  - clear and positive
  - varied in tone and volume

- **Eyes**:
  - make and keep eye contact with the people in the audience – which means that while you can glance at speakers notes, you *mustn’t read them*
  - look at everyone in the audience – move your eyes (and face) around
  - don’t look at any one person for too long.

- **Face**:
  - let it show the emotions that your presentation is trying to communicate.

- **Hands and Body**:
  - when you make hand or body movements, have a reason for moving – don’t touch your face, or make other kinds of hand/body movements for no reason
  - use your hand and body movements to reinforce your words
  - when not using your hands, ‘anchor’ them by holding them folded behind or in front of you, or hold the sides of a lectern or the back of a chair.

- **If you are nervous**:
  - prepare thoroughly
  - practise at home using a mirror, a cassette recorder or a friend to give feedback
  - when presenting, use pauses to collect your thoughts (above all, don’t rush – a pause which seems long to you is not necessarily long to your audience)
  - use the furniture to steady your hands
  - remember that you are the expert (that is, you probably know more about your topic than the people in the audience do)
  - remember that the audience wants to be positive, they are there to listen and learn, not to criticize you
  - *don’t* tell the audience that you are nervous
  - *don’t* tell the audience that you are glad when that your presentation is over

And above all, remember that how you feel is not necessarily how you *look* to the audience. It’s generally understood now that the some of the calmest and most confident presenters are almost always nervous before they begin to present: the whole thing is to look positive and confident, and the rest will follow!