

PREPARING YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION

First of all, think ...

- *Think about what you want to achieve:*
do you want to inform your audience, inspire them to think about your topic, or convince them of a particular point of view?
- *Think about your audience:*
what background knowledge do they have about your topic? Do they have any particular interests? How are you going to involve them in your presentation?

Then ...

- Brainstorm your topic and write a rough outline.
- Research your topic. Don't get carried away—remember you have a limited time for your presentation.
- Organise your material and write a draft—think about the length of time you have to talk.
- Summarise your draft into points
- Rehearse your presentation and get its length right. Ask a friend to listen and time you.

ORGANISING THE CONTENT

Introduction (may be written last)

- *Capture your listeners' attention:* Begin with a question, a funny story, a startling comment, or anything that will make them think.
- *State your purpose;* for example:
'I'm going to talk about...'
'This morning I want to explain...'
- *Present an outline of your talk;* for example:
'I will concentrate on the following points: First of all...Then...
This will lead to... And finally...'

The Body

- Present your main points one by one in logical order.
- Pause at the end of each point (give people time to think about what you are saying).
- Make it absolutely clear when you move to another point. For example:
'The next point is that ...'
'OK, now I am going to talk about ...'
'Right. Now I'd like to explain ...'
'Of course, we must not forget that ...'
'However, it's important to realise that...'
- Use clear examples to illustrate your points.

The Conclusion

- It is very important to leave your audience with a clear summary of everything you have covered.
- It is also important not to let the talk just fizzle out. Make it obvious that you have reached the end of the presentation.
- Summarise the main points again, using phrases like:
'To sum up...'
'So, in conclusion...'
'OK, to recap the main points...'
- Restate the purpose of your talk, and say that you have achieved your aim:
'I think you can now see that...'
'My intention was ..., and it should now be clear that ...'
- Thank the audience, and invite questions:
'Thank you. Are there any questions?'

DELIVERING YOUR PRESENTATION

Talk to your audience, don't read to them!

If you read out your presentation as if it were an essay, your audience will probably understand very little and will lose concentration quickly.

So use notes, cue cards as prompts, and **speak to** the audience. Include everyone by looking at them and maintaining eye-contact (but don't stare or glare at people).

Watch your language!

- Keep it simple. The aim is to communicate, not to show off your vocabulary.
- Emphasise the key points—and make sure people realise which are the key points. Repeat them using different phrasing.
- Check the pronunciation of difficult, unusual, or foreign words beforehand.

Use your voice to communicate clearly

- Speak loudly enough for everyone in the room to hear you.
This may feel uncomfortably loud at first, but if people can't hear you, they won't listen.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
Don't rush! Speaking fast doesn't make you seem smarter, it will only make it harder for other people to understand you.
- Key words are important. Speak them out slowly and loudly.
- Vary your voice quality. If you always use the same volume and pitch (for example, all loud, or all soft, or in a monotone) your audience will switch off.
- When you begin a new point, use a higher pitch and volume.
- Slow down for key points.

- Use pauses—don't be afraid of short periods of silence. (They give you a chance to gather your thoughts, and your audience a chance to think.)

Use your body to communicate, too!

- Stand straight and comfortably. Do not slouch or shuffle about.
- Hold your head up. Look around and make eye-contact with people in the audience. Do not just address the lecturer! Do not stare at a point on the carpet or the wall. If you don't include the audience, they won't listen to you.
- When you are talking to your friends, you naturally use your hands, your facial expression, and your body to add to your communication. Do it in your presentation as well. It will make things far more interesting for the audience.
- Don't turn your back on the audience!

Interact with the audience

- Be ready to get the discussion going after your presentation. Just in case nobody has anything to say, have some provocative questions or points for discussion ready to ask the group.