

Presentation techniques

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- Body
- Conclusion
- Questions

Preparation

Good preparation is very important. Good preparation and planning will give you confidence. Your audience will feel your confidence and have confidence in you. This will give you control of your audience and of your presentation.

Consider these points when preparing:

Objective

'Why am I making this presentation?'- Your objective should be clear in your mind.

Audience

'Who am I making this presentation to?'- How many people? Who are they? A small, intimate group of 4 colleagues or a large gathering of 500 international people?

Venue

'Where am I making this presentation?'- A small hotel meeting-room or a large conference hall? Facilities and equipment? Seating arrangements?

Time and length

'When am I making this presentation and how long will it be?'- Will it be 5 minutes or 1 hour? Just before lunch, when the audience is hungry, or just after lunch, when the audience is sleepy?

Method

'How should I make this presentation?'- Formal or informal? Lots of visual aids or only a few? With or without anecdotes and humour?

Content

'What should I say?'

Include only relevant information. Create a title for your presentation. The title will help you to focus on the subject. Prepare your visual aids, if any.

Structure

Organise your presentation in a logical structure. Most presentations are organised in three parts, followed by questions:

1 Introduction

- welcome your audience
- introduce your subject
- explain the structure of your presentation
- explain rules for questions

2 Body of presentation

- present the subject itself

3 Conclusion

- summarise your presentation
- thank your audience
- invite questions

+ Questions

Notes

Try to appear as spontaneous as possible. Do not read your presentation. Reading a text is boring and will send your audience to sleep! Use notes to remember everything you need to say. Some people make notes on small, A6 cards. Some people write down just the title of each section of their talk. Some people write down keywords to remind them.

Rehearsal

Practise your presentation two or three times so that you:

- become more familiar with what you want to say
- identify weaknesses in your presentation
- can practise difficult pronunciations
- can check the time that your presentation takes and make any necessary modifications

Equipment

Your most important piece of equipment is **YOU!** Check your personal appearance carefully.

Overhead Projector

The overhead projector (OHP) displays overhead transparencies (OHTs or OHPTs). It has several advantages over the 35mm slide projector:

- it can be used in daylight
- the user can face the audience
- the user can write or draw directly on the transparency while in use

Whiteboard

The whiteboard is a useful device for spontaneous writing - as in brainstorming, for example. For prepared material, the OHP may be more suitable.

Duster

The duster is used for cleaning the whiteboard.

Markers

Markers are used for writing on the:

- whiteboard (delible - you can remove the ink)
- flipchart (indelible - you cannot remove the ink)

Flipchart

The flipchart consists of several leaves of paper that you 'flip' (turn) over. Some people prefer the flipchart to the whiteboard, but its use is limited to smaller presentations.

35mm Slide Projector

A slide projector must be used in a darkened room. Most slide projectors take 35mm transparencies or slides, but projectors for 6x6cm slides are also available.

Notebook Computer

The notebook computer is often used with an overhead projector, to project an image from the computer screen onto the wall screen. Make sure you have computer while preparing e.g. PowerPoint presentation!:))

Handouts

Handouts are any documents or samples that you 'hand out' (distribute) to your audience. It is not usually a good idea to distribute handouts before your presentation. The audience will read the handouts instead of listening to you.

Delivery

Delivery is the way in which you actually deliver or give your presentation and is at least as important as content.

Nerves

Most speakers are a little nervous at the beginning of a presentation. So it is normal if you are nervous. Pay special attention to the beginning of your presentation. This is when you establish a rapport with your audience. During this time, try to speak slowly and calmly. After a few moments, you will relax and gain confidence.

Audience Rapport

You need to build a warm and friendly relationship with your audience. Be careful to establish eye contact with each member of your audience. Each person should feel that you are speaking directly to him or her.

Body Language

What you do not say is at least as important as what you do say. Your body is speaking to your audience even before you open your mouth. Your clothes, your walk, your glasses, your haircut, your expression - it is from these that your audience forms its first impression as you enter the room. Generally speaking, it is better to stand rather than sit when making a presentation. Avoid repetitive and irritating gestures.

Cultural Considerations

Try to learn about any particular cultural matters that may affect your audience. Cultural differences can often be seen in body language.

Voice quality

Your audience must be able to hear you clearly. In general, you should try to vary your voice. Your voice will then be more interesting for your audience. You can vary your voice in at least three ways:

- **speed:** you can speak at normal speed, you can speak faster, you can speak more slowly, and you can stop completely! Silence is a very good technique for gaining your audience's attention.
- **intonation:** you can change the pitch of your voice. You can speak in a high tone. You can speak in a low tone.
- **volume:** you can speak at normal volume, you can speak loudly and you can speak quietly. Lowering your voice and speaking quietly can again attract your audience's interest.

Visual aids

80% of what we learn is learned visually (what we see) and only 20% is learned aurally (what we hear). This means that:

- visual aids are an extremely effective means of communication
- non-native English speakers do not need to worry so much about spoken English since they can rely more heavily on visual aids

It is important not to overload your audience's brains. Keep the information on each visual aid to a minimum - and give your audience time to look at and absorb this information. Remember, your audience have never seen these visual aids before. They need time to study and to understand them. Without understanding there is no communication.

Apart from photographs and drawings, some of the most useful visual aids are charts and graphs.

Audience Reaction

Remain calm and polite if you receive difficult questions during your presentation. If you receive particularly awkward questions, you can suggest that the questioners ask their questions after your presentation.

Language

Simplicity and Clarity

If you want your audience to understand your message, your language must be simple and clear:

- use short words and short sentences
- do not use jargon, unless you know that your audience understands it
- talk about concrete facts rather than abstract ideas
- use active verbs instead of passive verbs

Signposting

When you drive on the roads, you know where you are. Each road has a name. Each town has a name. And each house has a number. You can look at the signposts for directions. It is easy to navigate the roads. You cannot get lost. But when you give a presentation, how can your audience know where they are? They know because you tell them. Because you put up signposts for them, at the beginning and all along the route. This technique is called 'signposting' (or 'signalling').

During your introduction, tell your audience the structure of your presentation, for example: "I'll start by describing the current situation in Europe. Then I'll move on to some of the projects we organised in Asia. After that I'll consider the opportunities for projects we see in Africa. Lastly, I'll quickly recap about the worldwide projects before concluding with some recommendations."

Here are some useful expressions to signpost the various parts of your presentation.

Introducing the subject:

"I'd like to start by..."

"Let's begin by..."

"First of all, I'll..."

Finishing a subject:

"Well, I've told you about..."

"That's all I have to say about..."

"We've looked at..."

Starting another subject:

"Now we'll move on to..."

"Let me turn now to..."

"Next..."

Analysing a point and giving recommendations:

"Where does that lead us?"

"Let's consider this in more detail..."

"What does this mean for ABC?"

Giving examples:

"For example,..."

"A good example of this is..."

"As an illustration,..."

Dealing with questions:

"We'll be examining this point in more detail later on..."

"I'd like to deal with this question later, if I may..."

"I'll come back to this question later in my talk..."

Summarising and concluding:

"In conclusion,..."

"Right, let's sum up, shall we?"

"I'd like now to recap..."

Ordering:

"Firstly...secondly...thirdly...lastly..."

"First of all...then...next...after that...finally..."

"To start with...later...to finish up..."

The presentation itself

Most presentations are divided into 3 main parts (+ questions):

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion

As a general rule in communication, repetition is valuable. In presentations, there is a golden rule about repetition:

"SAY WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO SAY, SAY IT, THEN SAY WHAT YOU HAVE JUST SAID."

In other words, use the three parts of your presentation to reinforce your message:

In the introduction, say what your message is going to be.

In the body, say your real message.

In the conclusion, say what your message was.

Some tips for vocabulary:

Introduction

Welcome your audience:

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen"
"Good afternoon, everybody"

Introduce your subject:

"My purpose today is to introduce our new range of..."
"I am going to talk about..."

Outline your structure:

"To start with I'll describe the progress made this year. Then I'll mention some of the problems we've encountered and how we overcame them. After that I'll consider the possibilities for further development. Finally, I'll summarise my presentation (before concluding with some recommendations)."

Give instructions about questions:

"Please feel free to interrupt me if you have any questions."
"I'll try to answer any of your questions after the presentation."

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 up logically, with plenty of carefully spaced visuals.

Remember these key points while delivering the body of your presentation:

- do not hurry
- be enthusiastic
- give time on visuals
- maintain eye contact
- modulate your voice
- look friendly
- keep to your structure
- use your notes
- signpost throughout
- remain polite when dealing with difficult questions

Conclusion

Use the conclusion to:

Sum up:

"In conclusion,..."
"I'd like to sum up now..."

Give recommendations:

"In conclusion, my recommendations are..."
"I would suggest / propose / recommend the following strategy."

Thank your audience:

"Thank you for your attention."
"May I thank you all for being such an attentive audience."

Invite questions:

"Are there any questions?"

"Can I answer any questions?"

Questions

You may wish to accept questions at any time during your presentation, or to keep a time for questions after your presentation. It's your decision, and you should make it clear during the introduction. Be polite with all questioners, even if they ask difficult questions. Sometimes you can reformulate a question. Or answer the question with another question. Or even ask for comment from the rest of the audience.

Summary

- to allow plenty of time for preparation
- to ask the all-important questions: why? who? where? when? how? what?
- to structure your presentation into introduction, body, conclusion and questions
- to write notes based on keywords
- to rehearse your presentation several times and modify it as necessary
- to select the right equipment for the job
- to use equipment effectively
- to make use of clear, powerful visual aids that do not overload your audience
- to use clear, simple language, avoiding jargon and abbreviations
- to use active verbs and concrete facts
- to explain the structure of your presentation at the beginning
- to link each section of your presentation
- to signpost your presentation from beginning to end
- to say what you are going to say, say it, and say what you have just said
- to overcome your nerves
- to establish audience rapport
- to be aware of your body language
- to hold eye contact with participants for at least seven seconds.
- to understand cultural differences
- to control the quality of your voice
- to maintain interest by varying the speed, volume and pitch of your voice
- to deal with listeners' questions politely
- to respond to your audience positively
- to arrive early and check out all materials, visuals, equipment, etc. to be sure everything is in working order and properly adjusted.
- to make sure you speak from a location where you do not block the view of the visuals.
- to make sure your visuals are large enough for adequate viewing-people do not want to strain to view a small picture