



# PRESENTATION SKILLS

Structure and rules

# What is the typical presentation structure?

This is the usual flow of a presentation, which covers all the vital sections and is a good starting point for yours. It allows your audience to easily follow along and sets out a solid structure you can add your content to.

## 1. Greet the audience and introduce yourself

- Before you start delivering your talk, introduce yourself to the audience and clarify who you are and your relevant expertise. This does not need to be long or incredibly detailed, but will help build an immediate relationship between you and the audience. It gives you the chance to briefly clarify your expertise and why you are worth listening to. This will help establish your ethos so the audience will trust you more and think you're credible

# Introduction

In the introduction you need to explain the subject and purpose of your presentation whilst gaining the audience's interest and confidence. It's sometimes helpful to think of your introduction as funnel-shaped to help filter down your topic:

- Introduce your general topic
- Explain your topic area
- State the issues/challenges in this area you will be exploring
- State your presentation's purpose - this is the basis of your presentation so ensure that you provide a statement explaining how the topic will be treated, for example, "I will argue that..." or maybe you will "compare", "analyze", "evaluate", "describe" etc.
- Provide a statement of what you're hoping the outcome of the presentation will be, for example, "I'm hoping this will provide you with..."
- Show a preview of the organization of your presentation

In this section also explain:

- The length of the talk.
- Signal whether you want audience interaction - some presenters prefer the audience to ask questions throughout whereas others allocate a specific section for this.
- If it applies, inform the audience whether to take notes or whether you will be providing handouts.
- The way you structure your introduction can depend on the amount of time you have been given to present: a sales pitch may consist of a quick presentation so you may begin with your conclusion and then provide the evidence. Conversely, a speaker presenting their idea for change in the world would be better suited to start with the evidence and then conclude what this means for the audience.
- Keep in mind that the main aim of the introduction is to grab the audience's attention and connect with them.

# The main body of your talk

- The main body of your talk needs to meet the promises you made in the introduction. Depending on the nature of your presentation, clearly segment the different topics you will be discussing, and then work your way through them one at a time - it's important for everything to be organised logically for the audience to fully understand. There are many different ways to organise your main points, such as, by priority, theme, chronologically etc.
  - Main points should be addressed one by one with supporting evidence and examples.
  - Before moving on to the next point you should provide a mini-summary.
  - Links should be clearly stated between ideas and you must make it clear when you're moving onto the next point.
  - Allow time for people to take relevant notes and stick to the topics you have prepared beforehand rather than straying too far off topic.
- When planning your presentation write a list of main points you want to make and ask yourself "What I am telling the audience? What should they understand from this?" refining your answers this way will help you produce clear messages

# Conclusion

- In presentations the conclusion is frequently underdeveloped and lacks purpose which is a shame as it's the best place to reinforce your messages. Typically, your presentation has a specific goal - that could be to convert a number of the audience members into customers, lead to a certain number of enquiries to make people knowledgeable on specific key points, or to motivate them towards a shared goal.
- Regardless of what that goal is, be sure to summarise your main points and their implications. This clarifies the overall purpose of your talk and reinforces your reason for being there.
- Follow these steps:
  - Signal that it's nearly the end of your presentation, for example, "As we wrap up/as we wind down the talk..."
  - Restate the topic and purpose of your presentation - "In this speech I wanted to compare..."
  - Summarise the main points, including their implications and conclusions
  - Indicate what is next/a call to action/a thought-provoking takeaway

# Thank the audience and invite questions

- Conclude your talk by thanking the audience for their time and invite them to ask any questions they may have. As mentioned earlier, personal circumstances will affect the structure of your presentation.
- Many presenters prefer to make the Q&A session the key part of their talk and try to speed through the main body of the presentation. This is totally fine, but it is still best to focus on delivering some sort of initial presentation to set the tone and topics for discussion in the Q&A.

# Immediately before the presentation

**When you feel nervous immediately before a presentation, the following strategies and exercises should help you:**

## **Practice Deep Breathing**

Adrenalin causes your breathing to shallow. By deliberately breathing deeply, your brain will get the oxygen it needs and the slower pace will trick your body into believing you are calmer. This also helps with voice quivers, which can occur when your breathing is shallow and irregular.

## **Drink Water**

Adrenalin can cause a dry mouth, which in turn leads to getting tongue-tied. Have a glass or bottle of water handy and take sips before you start your presentation and occasionally during your presentation, especially when you wish to pause or emphasize a point. Take care not to take large gulps of water.

## **Chew Gum**

Chewing gum before a presentation may help you to feel more relaxed. Research has shown that the act of chewing can increase your alertness and help to reduce anxiety. It is usually best to get rid of the gum when you start your presentation.



### **Use Visualization Techniques**

Imagine that you are delivering your presentation to an audience that is interested, enthused, smiling, and reacting positively. Cement this positive image in your mind and recall it just before you are ready to start.

### **Self-Massage**

Press and massage your forehead to energize the front of the brain and speech centre.

### **Relaxation Exercises**

Although you may not feel relaxed before you give your presentation relaxation, exercises can help. Try the following relaxation exercises, but do not continue with them if they cause any pain or discomfort although remember that you may use some muscles you have not exercised for a while and so feel a little stiff afterwards.

# During the presentation

**Many people find that once they are actually giving their presentation or speech they feel a lot better and more relaxed. But it's important to remember to:**

- **Pause**

Just before you start talking, pause, make eye contact, and smile. This last moment of peace is very relaxing and gives you time to adjust to being the center of attention.

- **Smile**

Smiling is a natural relaxant that sends positive chemical messages through your body. Smiling and maintaining eye contact also help you build rapport with your audience

- **Slow Down**

Speak more slowly than you would in a conversation, and leave longer pauses between sentences. This slower pace will calm you down, and it will also make you easier to hear, especially at the back of a large room.

- **Move Around**

Move around a little during your presentation as this will expend some of your nervous energy. However, try not to pace backwards and forwards, or rock on your heels, as these activities can be distracting or irritating to your audience.

- **Stop Thinking About Yourself**

Remember that the audience is there to get some information and that it is your job to put that information across to them. Try to put your nerves aside and think about communicating your message as effectively as possible.

# After the event

- **It's important to focus on the positives of your presentation once you've finished. Experience is the single most effective way of overcoming presentation nerves and delivering better presentations in the future.**

**Get feedback:** When possible, ask members of your audience for constructive feedback on your presentation. Listen to what they say and focus on areas that need improvement. Try to see any negative points not as a measure of failure but as learning opportunities for future presentations.

**Use reflective practice:** Reflective practice is a useful technique to help you think about and analyze your experiences and can be used for many aspects of life. The use of reflective practice for a presentation can be particularly useful for helping to minimize feelings of nervousness for future presentations.

**Don't beat yourself up:** Like most things in life, presentations are unlikely to be perfect and there are always ways you can improve. When you get feedback from others and reflect on your own performance, it is important that you understand this and give yourself a break. Think about the positives and what went well, and learn from any mistakes or elements that you feel unhappy with.

**Treat yourself:** Treat yourself to something that you'll enjoy. Perhaps a glass of wine, or a nice cake or just a relaxing soak in the bath. Something to make you feel a bit special and recognise your achievement.

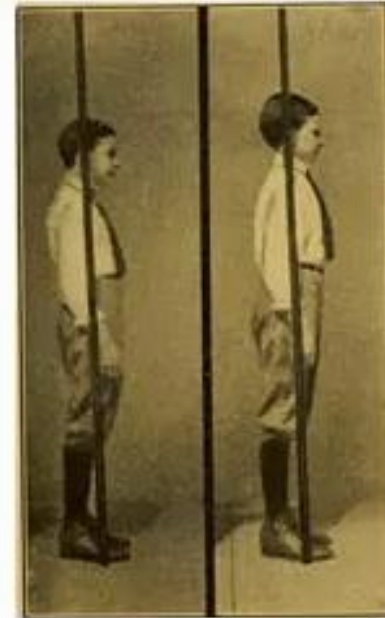
# Body Language – Face & Hands

- **Make eye contact and look at all your participants**
  - **Warning:** in some cultures, it is considered rude or aggressive
- **Use facial expressions congruent with your words**
- **Use gestures**
  - **Speak and gesture towards those sitting the furthest from you**
  - **No playing with markers, touching your head or crossing your arms; no hands in pockets unless it is to show to show informality and relaxation**



# Body Language - Posture

- Maintain good posture
  - It helps to project the voice better and to look more confident
- You can highlight a new section in the presentation by changing your posture or position
- Do not read off a piece of paper or script



# Body Language - Position

- When standing at the front of the room, plant your feet and do not shift your weight and avoid pacing back and forth on the same spot
- Sitting changes the tone and makes the atmosphere informal
- Never have your back to the group (or as little as possible if you are writing on a board)



# Voice – Volume, Pitch & Pauses

- Project your voice
- Change volume and pitch of voice to add emphasis
- Pause for emphasis
  - Pauses are also useful to give time to reflect and for you to observe participants
  - Do not be afraid of silence!





# Voice – Fillers & Elocution

- Try to avoid too many fillers
- Do not rush the end of sentences
- Use informal voice

Ah

You  
know

OK

Like

Right,  
then

Um...

Er...

# Space

- Move around among participants
- Move around the room looking first at a group, then another
- Never sit behind a desk but stand close to the class unless you are using the board a lot

