Oral Presentations

Aim

To cover the basic principles of delivering good oral presentations, including the research, planning and practice stages, as well as the structure, including slide design, and other aspects essential to good presentations.

It will also include the variations in individual and group presentations and some technical tips that can reduce stress when using Microsoft PowerPoint

Oral presentations in academic and professional life

Oral presentations are included as an assessment task in many disciplines as well as being an important aspect of our professional work. You will have presented information and ideas orally to others in your everyday life, perhaps at a special occasion with family or friends, or in informal discussions about shared interests. However, formal oral presentations to an unfamiliar audience can seem daunting and many people get anxious when asked to deliver one. Like any 'text', these have certain conventions you are expected to comply with

- There is a beginning, middle and end.
- You need to consider your audience and the purpose of your communication, as well as the most effective way of 'reaching' your audience to get your message across.
- You use spoken, written, visual and other non-verbal channels such as gestures and/or tone of voice for example.

A good place to start is to examine some examples or models. These might be from everyday life, such as television shows or events. Others might be from a professional context, such as meetings, your lectures, or a showcase of good practice. Try to attend some formal presentations in your location to note the ways the presenter shares information and ideas with their audience. Examine slideshow presentations for format and effectiveness, whether handouts are provided for the audience to refer to, and how they are introduced or introduce themselves and their topic, or other group members also presenting.

> Think of a presentation you delivered or attended. Do you remember a particularly effective one? What was it and why do you think it was it so effective?

Think about how you would introduce yourself. What do you need to include in your introduction?

This might include your name, role, and topic. If it is a group presentation, what else might you say, and who says what? Think about a debating team: each member has a specific role to play and speaking order. When and what have you presented in the past? If you have a past or current presentation task, introduce the topic you would cover.

Although a script can help you to begin your first practice sessions, try to note essential items in dot point form so you can remember your main points and supporting details. Beware of relying on reading information word for word from cue cards, your notes or your presentation slides.

Being **well prepared and well practiced** will certainly help reduce anxiety you may have about giving oral presentations.

Let's work through the tipsheet.

1. Where to begin
- Research
- Plan
- Practice

What do you think each of these stages involves?

Know your material so that even if you are nervous and make a mistake, you can easily correct it and continue and the audience may never even know about it. Planning can also involve making sure you know what equipment is available and how to use it, or whether you will provide handouts, and if so, how many are needed. Practice includes visualising yourself successfully giving the talk, speaking clearly, at a natural pace

2. The presentation
Beginning   – the introduction
Middle   – the body of the talk
End   – conclusion

You will be familiar with this structure as we use it for essays and reports. You may also be familiar with some of the ways we can communicate our main points to support our argument, and how we can guide our 'reader' (or audience) with signals such as sequence words. We also use linking words, phrases and sentences to give flow and cohesion to our writing. We can also do this in oral presentations. Some of these are:
- Firstly it is necessary to….
- One example is….
- Some exceptions may include…
- In summary, ….

Referring to the sample notes for a presentation in the tipsheet, let's plan a group presentation and create the Powerpoint slides as we go.

3. The task

> The internet has become an essential component of people's lives in the 21st century. However, there are concerns that the disadvantages of the internet may outweigh the advantages.
>
> Refer to current literature and draw upon the perspectives of a minimum of four authors from this unit's recommended reading list, and argue either in favour or against the impact of the internet.

Let's look at a sample taxonomy we can use to plan the presentation.

Topic	Sub-topics	Main points/details
		Effects on family life
Effects of	Social structures	Effects on religion

the Internet on society		Effects on courtship
	Cultural identity	Effects on nationalism
		Effects on multiculturalism
	Politics	Effects on voting public
		Effects on activism

How many slides do we need? Consider how many main points we are making. Let's make this the number of body slides (the middle). What about title, introduction/overview, conclusion, references, thank you/questions?

Now let's put plan the content of each slide, drawing from details from a sample essay.

Slide number	Content: Slide title & points/items
Slide 1	
Slide 2	
Slide 3	
Slide 4	
Slide 5	
Slide 6	
Slide 7	
Slide 8	
Slide 9	
Slide 10	

4. Using Microsoft Powerpoint to create slides, notes and outlines

This application allows us to create individual slides using slide templates suited to title slides, tables,

text and graphics and many other items. We can create a slideshow presentation file and utilise the 'add notes' feature to assist us by including instructions for ourselves or with the activities and/or questions we intend to use to round out our presentation and elaborate on our minimalist slide content. Thinking about the 'extras' can help to make the presentation more interactive and interesting for our audience. You will develop the confidence to create quality presentations as you build your experience.

You may wish to provide handouts to your audience. MS Powerpoint offers you some different options, these are best seen by clicking File > Print Preview

Page Setup > Print What: open the drop-down list to see options such as slides, handouts (from one to 9 slides per page), notes pages and outline view.

- **Slides** – this uses a page per slide, an expensive option for trees;
- **Handouts** - check how clearly readers will be able to read slide content before deciding how many slides to include on each page. Also consider paper usage! These provide some lines for people to make notes on next to each slide;
- **Notes page** – this displays the slide with the notes you have added in your file – a useful guide for you to follow;
- **Outline view** – this displays an outline view of slide titles and main dot points for the entire presentation which can also be useful as a handout or as an overview directory for presenters.

It is well worth exploring the options available in your slide presentation software.