

## Oral Presentations

### *Other Handouts:*

- Scientific Writing
- Referencing
- Citation Style Guides (library)

Public speaking is often considered one of the most frightening experiences one can face. In a university assessment situation, the risk-factor of a public ‘performance’ can seem greater, not only because you must present your work in front of your peers, but also because a mark or grade is involved.

It doesn’t have to be this way!

Try to see the group presentation as an opportunity for creative, collaborative work, and for making academic material accessible to others. An oral presentation is a form of lecture, but it can include a wider range of media and can also be interactive with the audience if you wish.

The key here is ‘engagement’; how can you involve the audience in your presentation?

### ***Tips!***

- *Keep your audience’s needs in mind*
- *Do your research*
- *Structure a simple, clear and logical presentation*
- *Use audio/visual aids as appropriate*
- *Present your material slowly and clearly*

### **An oral presentation is:**

- An opportunity to get a main point across, as clearly as possible;
- A multi-media approach to a topic (use flexible learning materials);
- A one-off experience (support with examples and handouts as needed)

### **Audience**

What does your audience already know, and how could you clarify or add to this knowledge? Don’t just include information because *you* know it! Be selective and thoughtful about your audience’s experience of listening and observing. Oral presentations are not designed to convey the same complexity and quantity of information as written materials.

- Be aware of who your audience is.
- Be thoughtful about preparation and how you present the material.

### **Research**

Good research will always yield more ‘raw’ material than you will be able to include in the final presentation. Do not simply ‘regurgitate’ *every aspect* of your research. Carefully consider the purpose of the presentation, and formulate this into a single **main point** that you will make. A good presentation always begins with this one main aim of the presentation – it could be a thesis statement, a scientific hypothesis or a descriptive title for a lecture or study. Use any data you collected as your ‘evidence’ (and if this is not your own data, always cite the source). In this respect, an oral presentation is much like any other academic work – your

research must be done sufficiently – but don't become so overwhelmed with data that you forget to decide on your main point or thesis.

## Structure

### **Introduction:**

Explain your topic and place it in context – tell the audience what you are going to cover in this presentation. As with any good presentation of materials, it is always best to begin with a general description to 'set the scene'. Don't just launch straight into your aim/s. It is good to show an outline of your presentation's structure at this point.

### **Body:**

This is where you present more detail for each point, giving examples where necessary. Make the best use of audio-visual aids (see below).

### **Conclusion:**

Remind your audience of what you have covered and the points you have made in support of your main point or thesis. Think of a way of finishing gracefully (many people end presentations very abruptly!)

### **Question time:**

Always give your audience time to ask questions or provide comments.

### **Hint:**

*If you are able to include humour in your presentation, do so. However, this depends entirely on how appropriate humour is in the context of the topic and whether you are able to be humorous with confidence. Never overdo it.*

## Aids

Handouts can be added for more detailed information or examples.

- Do not hand these out until you want the audience to read them.
- Keep handouts simple, neat and relevant.
- Always cite anything you have taken from another source.

Audio-visual aids, such as overheads, slides or PowerPoint/Keynote, can be very useful. Give the audience time to view these properly - don't rush through these and don't overuse them.

### **Tip!**

*Arrive early to prepare equipment and ensure that everything (including audio if appropriate) is working as planned. Keep screen content very large and very simple. Allow time for people to read or view each slide or overhead.*

## Performance

Speak slowly and clearly. If you feel yourself rushing or mumbling, slow down and speak up. Think of the audience as being on *your* side (not as the enemy)

Stand still; your body language should be relaxed, open, friendly, confident – of course this may take time and practice, but it can make all the difference. *Never* turn your back on your audience and try not to fidget too much. Holding a pen or pointer is a good way to keep your hands occupied.

Use eye contact to establish rapport with your audience.

PRACTICE – this is very important. Practice the whole presentation *at least once*, preferably more.

**Tip!**

*Consider learning Microsoft PowerPoint or Apple's Keynote software and use the slides to help you structure and present your talk – each slide acts as your prompt. Practise your slide show – keep slides simple and clear, and pace yourself.*

**A final tip!**

*Can you remember a good or a bad lecture? As yourself what made it good or bad? For example, in a bad lecture, did the lecturer speak too fast, not explain the material clear enough, or rush through their material so quickly that you had little time to take notes? Make a list of both good and bad points and use this as a checklist against your own presentation. This is by far, one of the most useful strategies you can adopt. It works for us!*