

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD PRESENTATION

Introduction

Here you are going to learn how to make an effective presentation in English. You will need this skill at the end of semester when you will have to present your project to your colleagues and to your teacher. Presentation skills are important in general: quite often during your study, and also later in your career, you will need to use this skill. Presentations can have different objectives: to inform, to sell something, to persuade someone, or to train people. Academic presentations are mainly meant for informing and training. You will agree that not all presentations are good. Just think how many presentations you attend every day: lectures given by your teachers or presentations by your colleagues during seminars, etc. A presentation is one of the most effective ways of communicating your message.

What irritates people most during presentations?

The speaker's nervousness, the speaker's disorganization, the speaker's bad accent, the speaker's not sounding enthusiastic, the speaker's monotony, the bad visuals, too soft speech, confused speech, the speaker's clothing.

Different aspects

To avoid any negative outcome the following aspects are important in making a presentation: preparation and planning, language of presentations, visuals/equipment, the presentation itself.

When you plan your presentation you need to answer the following questions: Who is my audience (how much do they know about my topic?). How am I going to organize my topic? (it needs to tell a story). How long should my presentation be? (you will have time limits and you need to say everything within that limit). What visual support shall I use? (PowerPoint, transparencies, models, objects...?).

It is important that you put the parts of your speech in a logical sequence. Your presentation needs to tell a story and be told in a simple language so that the audience can follow you. You will no doubt discover many ideas that you want to include in your presentation but you must be selective. Include only the information that is relevant to your audience and your objective. Leave all other ideas out. What approach should you use? Formal or informal? Lots of visual aids or only a few? But remember, your time is always limited, therefore be selective.

The language of presentations is different from the language that is used in publications or course books. The language used in books was meant for reading, so the sentences are rather complex and long, with lots of technical words. However, when we talk to someone we try to tell things in a simple and understandable way. The same goes for presentations. You should make your language as simple and clear

as you can. This means that you cannot use the same text as you used in your reports but rather “adapt” and simplify the text, to make it easier for your audience to follow you. Make your sentences short and simple. Apply the KISS principle: Keep it Simple Stupid. Use active verbs instead of passive verbs. Active verbs are much easier to understand. They are much more powerful.

Task 1. Present a plan of your presentation under the general title “Innovations in My Professional Activity”. Include the subject of your future presentation. Answer the questions: Who is my audience (how much do they know about my topic?). How am I going to organize my topic? How long should my presentation be? What visual support shall I use?

Presenter as an “actor”

When you come to stand on the podium you become the actor of your presentation. During your presentation you are going to speak and not read from your notes. This means using your voice, and also your body language. What is important is that you establish eye contact with each member of your audience. Each person should feel that you are speaking directly to him or her. You need to think in advance: Where shall I stand? How shall I keep eye contact? Where shall I keep my hands? What if I get lost? How to manage audience phobia? Most speakers are a little nervous during a presentation but there are some strategies to control your nerves. Also, you need to be aware of your body language.

Rehearsal is a vital part of preparation. You should leave time to practice your speech two or three times. In this way you will: become more familiar with what you want to say, identify weaknesses in your presentation, be able to practice difficult pronunciations, be able to check the time that your presentation takes and make any necessary modifications. So practice, practice, practice! Prepare everything: words, visual aids, timing, and equipment. Rehearse your presentation several times and time it. Is it the right length? Are you completely familiar with all your illustrations? Are they in the right order? Can you give good comments to your visuals? How will you answer difficult questions? Do you know the room? Are you confident about the equipment? When you have answered all these questions, you will become more confident.

How to start?

You could introduce your talk or presentation formally.

Today I'm going to talk about...

In this presentation, I'd like to tell you a little bit about...

Alternatively, you could grab your audience's attention by starting with a question or a challenging statement. Use pictures or objects.

So, how much do you know about _____?

Have you ever asked yourself why ... ?

What I'm going to tell you about today will change the way you think about...

Pass around the picture/object. What do you think it is?

How to organize the presentation?

Make it short. Write down the points you want to make, edit them down to, say, four, then decide which order you are going to make them in.

Introduce each point with an expression from the list below.

The first/key thing to say about _____ is...

The main point to make about _____ is...

What you really need to know about _____ is ...

Now let's look at...

Let's turn to/move on to ...

Another interesting thing to say about _____ is ...

Finally, I'd like to say a few words about...

What to say?

After introducing the point, add information briefly in two, three, or, at the most, four sentences. Use markers like the ones below to construct long, well-balanced sentences.

Anyway,...; Naturally,...; Of course,...

Similarly, ...; Surprisingly, ...; Remarkably, ...

Despite,...; However, ...; Although,...; Whereas...

Consequently, ...; In addition,...; Moreover,...; Furthermore, ...

Incidentally, ...; By the way, ...; It's worth noting that...

How to finish?

Conclude the presentation by briefly summarizing what you have said, or the points you have made. You could end by asking for comments or questions.

In conclusion,...; To sum up,...

So, remember that.....is all about....., ____, and .

So, there are three things to remember about__

Does anybody have any questions?

Task 2. Select the most effective phrases, in your opinion, to start, to continue, and to finish your presentation.

Vocabulary and Phrases for Making Presentations in English

Overviews

After you give your opening statement, give a brief overview of your presentation. Say what your presentation is about, how long you will take and how you are going to handle questions.

Useful language for overviews

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“My presentation is in three parts.”

“My presentation is divided into three main sections.”

“Firstly, secondly, thirdly, finally...”

“I’m going to...”

take a look at...

talk about...

examine...

tell you something about the background...

give you some facts and figures...

fill you in on the history of...

concentrate on...

limit myself to the question of...

“Please feel free to interrupt me if you have questions.”

“There will be time for questions at the end of the presentation.”

“I’d be grateful if you could ask your questions after the presentation.”

The main body of the presentation

During your presentation, it’s a good idea to occasionally remind your audience why your presentation and ideas are important or relevant.

“As I said at the beginning...”

“This, of course, will help you (to achieve the 20% increase).”

“As you remember, we are concerned with...”

“This ties in with my original statement...”

“This relates directly to the question I put to you before...”

Keeping your audience with you

Remember that what you are saying is new to your audience. You are clear about the structure of your talk, but let your audience know when you are moving on to a new point. You can do this by saying something like “right”, or “OK”. You can also use some of the following expressions:

“I’d now like to move on to...”

“I’d like to turn to...”

“That’s all I have to say about...”

“Now I’d like to look at...”

“This leads me to my next point...”

If you are using index cards, putting the link on the cards will help you remember to keep the audience with you. In addition, by glancing at your index cards

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you will be pausing – this will also help your audience to realize that you are moving on to something new.

Task 3. How many slides are you going to use in your presentation? Select the phrases for each slide.

Phrases for introducing visuals

It's important to introduce your visual to the audience. You can use the following phrases:

“This graph shows you...”

“Take a look at this...”

“If you look at this, you will see...”

“I'd like you to look at this...”

“This chart illustrates the figures...”

“This graph gives you a breakdown of...”

Give your audience enough time to absorb the information on the visual. Pause to allow them to look at the information and then explain why the visual is important:

“As you can see...”

“This clearly shows ...”

“From this, we can understand how / why...”

“This area of the chart is interesting...”

Summarizing

At the end of your presentation, you should summarize your talk and remind the audience of what you have told them:

“That brings me to the end of my presentation. I've talked about...”

“Well, that's about it for now. We've covered...”

“In brief, we...”

“To summarize, I...”

Relate the end of your presentation to your opening statement:

“To return to the original question, we can achieve...”

“So just to round the talk off, I want to go back to the beginning when I asked you...”

“I hope that my presentation today will help you with what I said at the beginning...”

Handling questions

Thank the audience for their attention and invite questions.

“Thank you for listening – and now if there are any questions, I would be pleased to answer them.”

“That brings me to the end of my presentation. Thank you for your attention. I’d be glad to answer any questions you might have.”

It’s useful to re-word the question, as you can check that you have understood the question and you can give yourself some time to think of an answer. By asking the question again you also make sure that other people in the audience understand the question.

“Thank you. So you would like further clarification on our strategy?”

“That’s an interesting question.”

“Thank you for asking. What is our plan for next year?”

After you have answered your question, check that the person who asked you is happy with the answer.

“Does this answer your question?”

“Do you follow what I am saying?”

“I hope this explains the situation for you.”

“I hope this was what you wanted to hear!”

If you don’t know the answer to a question, say you don’t know. It’s better to admit to not knowing something than to guess and maybe get it wrong. You can say something like:

“That’s an interesting question. I don’t actually know off the top of my head, but I’ll try to get back to you later with an answer.”

“I’m afraid I’m unable to answer that at the moment. Perhaps I can get back to you later.”

“Good question. I really don’t know! What do you think?”

“That’s a very good question. However, we don’t have any figures on that, so I can’t give you an accurate answer.”

“Unfortunately, I’m not the best person to answer that.”

What to say if things go wrong during your presentation

You think you’ve lost your audience? Rephrase what you have said:

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“Let me just say that in another way.”

“Perhaps I can rephrase that.”

“Put another way, this means...”

“What I mean to say is...”

Can't remember the word?

If it's a difficult word for you – one that you often forget, or one that you have difficulty pronouncing – you should write it on your index card. Pause briefly, look down at your index card and say the word.

Using your voice when making presentations

Don't speak in a flat monotone – this will bore your audience. By varying your speed and tone, you will be able to keep your audience's attention. Practice emphasizing key words and pause in the right places – usually in between ideas in a sentence. For example “The first strategy involves getting to know our market (pause) and finding out what they want. (pause) Customer surveys (pause) as well as staff training (pause) will help us do this.”

Don't forget – if you speak too fast you will lose your audience!

Overview

1. Think About the Details in Advance

Giving a presentation in front of an audience is always stressful. Thinking about such details as the location of the presentation, equipment, materials, timing, your appearance and outfit will help you avoid nervousness.

2. Do Your Homework

Effective preparation requires consideration of the following things:

- Ask yourself what the presentation is all about, its title and its goal
- Think about who your audience is
- Figure out what your main message is
- Think about the structure of the presentation: the opening, the main part and the summary
- Make it easier for the audience and yourself: use simple language
- Prepare yourself for questions. Think about what questions the audience might ask
- Usually an orator has a maximum of 15 minutes to present. So, make the presentation simple, have no more than 20 slides using a font that is legible from a distance

- Don't put large blocks of text in your presentation. No one will be interested in reading it; people prefer visual material. So think about images, graphs and videos that support your idea, but don't overwhelm the audience with too many visual aids

3. Introduce Yourself and Set the Theme

At the beginning of the presentation, it's important to introduce yourself, giving your full name, position and company you represent. Some people also include their contact information on the first slide. That's in case you want someone from the audience to contact you after your presentation. After the introduction, don't forget to state the topic of your presentation.

4. Provide an Outline or Agenda of Your Presentation

Providing an outline of the presentation is a must, as people want to know why they should listen to you. That's why the opening part is very important. It should be cheerful, interesting and catchy. You should know it by heart, so you don't lose track of your thoughts even if you are nervous.

5. Make a Clear Transition in Between the Parts of the Presentation

Using transition words and phrases in English makes your presentation look smooth and easy to follow.

6. Wow Your Audience

If you are not excited by your presentation, your audience will not be excited either. When presenting, you should plan to wow your audience. Use adjectives and descriptive words as they will help to attract the audience's attention and make your speech more vivid and memorable.

Useful phrases in English:

"The product I present is extraordinary."

"It's a really cool device"

"This video is awesome"

"This is an outstanding example"

7. Make Your Data Meaningful

If you need to present numbers or some comparative analysis of algorithms for integration, use some visuals to present it. You can use charts, graphs or diagrams to make your data meaningful and visually attractive. Remember that pie charts are good for representing proportions, line charts to represent trends, column and bar charts for ranking.

8. Summarize

At the end of the presentation, briefly summarize the main points and ideas. Provide the audience with your opinion and give them a call to action, let them know what you want them to do with the information you've shared. End of the presentation by thanking all the listeners and inviting them to the Q&A.

9. Practice

Try rehearsing your presentation using the above tips. Practice in front of a mirror or with your friends, parents or spouse. The more you practice, the better. While practicing, try not to use crutch words (examples: uhhhhh, ahhhh, so on, you know, like etc.)

Good luck with your presentation!