

CITY OF GLASGOW
COLLEGE

Presentation skills

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Introduction

Presentations are used to assess students' work along with essays and exams, and can encourage discussion of a topic.

Some people dislike the idea of standing up and talking in front of others. Yet presentations are often necessary when applying for jobs and in many occupations. Don't fret if this applies to you - there are some simple preparatory steps you can take to make the whole experience more positive!

For a full checklist of what's involved in preparing a presentation, see the back page.

Preparing to speak

Choose the topic of your presentation and read a few articles or chapters about the topic to help you decide on structure and content. Remember: in 10 or 15 minutes, you will only be able to make a few main points. If the topic is new to your audience, you will need to explain everything slowly and clearly.

1

Find out about your audience to establish what language to use and how detailed your presentation should be. Will your audience understand technical terms or is it necessary to explain these? Ask yourself the following:

- Who will be in the audience?
- What do they already know about the subject you are talking about?
- What will be new to them?
- Will anything you say alarm them?
- How will the audience benefit by listening to you?

It is a good idea to write your presentation out in full first, and then transfer this information on to index cards from which you can read on the day.





Assessment

Check the assessment criteria with your lecturer. In general, you need to communicate your message effectively. Consider the time available, body language, content and delivery. Delivering a presentation takes longer than just reading it through, so take this into account. You may not be allowed to continue beyond your allocated time, so watch the clock and finish on time.

Equipment

Decide the format you will use to present your information. This will depend on what is permitted and the equipment available to use. If you are required to deliver a PowerPoint presentation, you can expect to have access to a PC and overhead projector. You could use another style of presenting (e.g. posters) but keep in mind how much preparation is needed.

2

Remember that technology can fail at the last minute! Have **backup copies** of PowerPoint presentations on separate memory sticks and handouts ready.

Delivering the presentation

Our judgements of other people are made along the following lines:

Verbal Content	7%	(i.e. what you say)
Vocal Interest	38%	(how you say it)
Body Language	55%	(what you do while speaking)

(from Bradbury, 2006)

At least 90% of your public image depends on *how* you look and sound,





rather than *what* you actually say. **This is not how you are assessed, but it is how others form an impression of you. Presenting *yourself* well is important.**

Verbal content

Ensure you cover the following in your presentation:

- 1. Tell the audience what your presentation will cover
- 2. Deliver what you have said you will deliver
- 3. Sum up what you have covered

Questions after the presentation

You may be asked questions after the presentation by your classmates or your lecturer. Rehearse your presentation in front of someone who can help you anticipate any questions and be prepared for them.

Your audience must understand the main point of your presentation. Ideas which may help to get your message across in the presentation can be:

Opening with a question will focus audience attention:

How important is stress management in College life?

How can we encourage sustainable tourism?

What are the five main principles in human resource management?

Use statistics to highlight a point: These statistics are from **Issues Online**, which you can access from the Library’s e-resources page, using your College login:

In 2011, 60% of adult smokers responded they would struggle to last a day without smoking. **Smoking**

The UK produces more than 100 million tonnes of waste every year. **Waste and recycling, 2013**

Worldwide, more than 40 million animals are killed for their fur. **Animal rights, 2012**



Use quotations for emphasis and impact:

Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising.

Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*
(US humourist, novelist, short story author and wit, 1835 -1910)

The art of leadership is saying no, not yes. It is very easy to say yes.

Tony Blair

Vocal interest

By greeting the audience before you launch into your presentation, you will immediately establish a rapport. Resist the temptation to read directly from your notes - it affects your voice projection and sounds very monotonous!

Speak in your own natural voice, as if having a conversation. Use pauses for effect, for example, after you use numbers. Pausing lets your audience digest what you have told them. Be positive while speaking: if you speak as though you enjoy the topic, it will come across in your voice and delivery.

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Body language

By maintaining eye contact with the audience, you will appear confident and relaxed. Glance at different people throughout the presentation, or even imagine a friendly face in the audience. Do not stare or look solely at one person, as it is very disconcerting for them! Looking out the window will distract your audience and suggest you are bored by your own subject. Wherever you stand, do not block the view of your audience - everyone in the room should be able to see your visual aids.

Even if you feel relaxed, do not “perch” on your notes table or the like, as it appears





unprofessional and too informal. **Smile and act confident, even if you don't feel it!**

What do you think the following say about a speaker? (See the answers on the back page)

The speaker is...	This makes the speaker seem.....
...settled in one spot, leaning to one side	
...looking out the window, no eye contact	
...sitting on the table provided for notes or water	

Handling nerves

Presentations can be nerve-racking, but will get easier with practice. Breathe deeply while you are waiting to speak to calm your nerves. When you are actually presenting, it is easy to fidget about if you are nervous, but you can overcome this by holding onto your notes while you are talking.

The simple rules below will help you control your nerves and feel in control:

- Prepare thoroughly and in good time
- Know your audience
- Keep it simple
- Keep to the point
- Have confidence in yourself and in your message

Rehearsing your presentation

It is essential to practice delivering your presentation beforehand. This will help calm your nerves and help identify any lurking glitches before the big day.





Rehearsing in front of a mirror will help you with your body language and self-confidence. If you can, rehearse in front of others and ask for feedback on the clarity of your voice, whether you are getting your message across simply, and the usefulness of any visual aids you are using.

See someone presenting well...

- Have a look at this link from Accenture UK Careers – the presenter manages to perfect the matter of presenting calmly and clearly:
<https://youtu.be/Xwa4c6xVpMg> (last accessed 5 July 2016)

Resources available from City Campus Library

- Atkin, K. (2015). *The presentation workout: the 10 tried-and-tested steps that will build your presenting skills*. Harlow: Pearson. **Location: 650.144 ATK (level 5)**
- Ledden. E. (2013). *The presentation book: how to create it, shape it and deliver it!* Harlow: Pearson. **Location: 658.542 LED (level 5)**
- Lightheart, A. (2016). *Presentation now: prepare a perfect presentation in less than 3 hours*. Harlow: Pearson. **Location: 658.452 LIG (level 5)**
- Schofield, J. (2014). *Presentation skills in 7 simple steps*. London: Collins. **Location: 658.452 SCH (level 5)**



Answers to questions on page 5

Speaker is...	Speaker appears.....
...settled in one spot, leaning to one side	...bored and would rather be somewhere else Solution: stand still, keep your weight evenly balanced and your hips level
...looking out the window	...bored and would rather be somewhere else Solution: focus on the back of the room or imagine a friendly face in the room
...sitting on the table provided for your notes or the overhead projector	...to think the presentation is unimportant and requires no effort Solution: no matter how relaxed you feel, stay standing. No perching!

Your presentation checklist

Task	Tick when completed
Identify aims	
Identify audience characteristics	
Identify time allowance for the presentation	
Check out the room	
Get material together	
Decide on a format and structure	
Group presentations: divide up roles and tasks for preparation before and on the day itself	
Make speaker's notes	
Prepare visual aids	
Prepare the delivery: the beginning, the middle, the end	
Prepare for the question session	
Techniques for coping with nerves?	
Be organised on the day!	

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Adapted from page 112 of *The Student Skills Guide* by Sue Drew & Rosie Bingham (2nd edition, Gower, 2001).

