

# Appendix 1: How to give a good presentation

## A checklist

### A good presentation:

- is well-planned, with a clear, logical structure
- has clear and explicit links between the parts
- has information that is relevant to the audience
- has a memorable introduction and finish.

### In preparation the speaker:

- **plans** the presentation thoroughly. What is the purpose of the presentation – to inform, to persuade, to review? What information needs to be communicated? How will this information be structured?
- thinks about the **audience**. Who are they: colleagues, business partners, customers? How formal or informal does the presentation have to be? How much does the audience know about the subject? How long will they be able to concentrate? What is their first language?
- thinks about how **visual aids** can help the audience understand what is being said.

### During the presentation the speaker:

- speaks loudly enough to be heard by everybody
- doesn't speak too fast or too slowly
- does *not* read a prepared text, but improvises from notes or visual aids
- pauses for emphasis when necessary
- looks relaxed, positive and confident
- seems competent, organized and enthusiastic
- makes eye contact with the audience
- uses appropriate body language and gestures to convey meaning.

### The **introduction** to a presentation should contain:

- a welcome to the audience    Good morning/afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.
- (perhaps) a thank you to the audience    Thank you all for coming today.
- your name and position (if necessary)    My name is ... and I'm the ...
- the subject or title of your presentation  
   The subject of my talk is ...  
   This morning I'm going to talk about ...  
   The theme of my presentation today is ...
- a statement of the **purpose** of your presentation  
   ... because this is **something we** will all have to think about in the future.  
   ... because you **will be responsible** for carrying out these new procedures.
- (perhaps) a statement of the **length of time** you will take  
   I'm going to talk for **about 15 minutes**.  
   My presentation **will take about 20 minutes**.



- an outline of the structure of your presentation (a list of the main points to be covered)
  - My presentation will be in four parts.
  - I've divided my talk into three parts.
  - First ... Second ... Third ...
  - In the first part ...
  - Then ... After that ... Next ...
  - Finally ...
- (perhaps) a statement of when the audience may ask questions
  - If there's anything you don't understand, please don't hesitate to interrupt.
  - Please feel free to ask questions at any time.
  - I'd appreciate it if you would save any questions until the end.

The **main part** of a presentation is the most difficult. Beginnings and ends of talks often contain similar phrases, but in the main part you give your audience the information they have come to hear. If you have said in your introduction that you are going to divide your presentation into several parts, you should clearly signal the beginning and end of each of these parts as they occur.

- That completes the first part, so now we come to ...
- So, to move on to the second part of my talk ...
- That concludes the second part, so let's move on to ...
- That's all I want to say about ... so unless you have any questions let's turn to ...

The **ending** should:

- include a clear signal that you have finished or are about to finish the last point
  - That ends the third part of my talk, so ...
  - That's all I'm going to say about ...
- briefly summarize the main information\*
  - So, to sum up ...
  - I'll end by emphasizing the main points.
  - So now I'll just summarize my three main points again.
- perhaps draw some logical conclusions from what has been said
  - So what we need to do now is ...
  - This shows that we have to ...
  - So, to conclude, I have two recommendations.
- perhaps include a thanks for listening
  - Thank you for your attention ...
  - Thanks for listening ...
- include an invitation to ask questions.
  - ... and now I'd like to invite your comments.
  - Now I'd be interested to hear your comments.
  - Right, does anyone have any questions or comments?
  - Now we have 20 minutes for discussion.

\* This means that speakers often make their most important points three times: in the introduction, they tell the audience what they are going to tell them; in the main part of the talk, they say it; and in the summary and conclusion, they tell the audience what they have just told them. This should make certain that everyone hears the key points at least once! They won't necessarily all hear them three times, because they won't all be concentrating all the time.



**Answering questions** can be difficult because you can't prepare for it. (You might even think: 'I explained everything perfectly, so why are they asking questions?') But you should:

- welcome questions and listen carefully (and look at the questioner)
- not interrupt the speaker
- clarify the exact meaning of the question if you are not sure  
Sorry, I didn't catch that.  
Could you repeat that, please?  
Sorry, I'm not sure if I've understood exactly ...  
If I've understood you correctly, you want to know ... Is that right?
- take time to think – briefly – before you answer, if necessary
- be as brief and direct as possible
- be polite
- check that your questioner is satisfied with your answer  
Is that OK?  
Does that answer your question?

Sometimes, it is impossible to answer a question, because:

- it is not relevant to your presentation  
I'm afraid that doesn't really relate to my talk. Perhaps you could discuss that with ---.
  - for some reason you don't want to give this information  
I'm afraid I'm not in a position to comment on that.  
I'm not really the right person to ask about that. Perhaps --- could help?
  - you simply don't know the answer  
I'm afraid I don't have that information with me, but I will try and find out, and get back to you.  
That's a difficult question to answer in a few words. Could we talk about that later?
- At the end, thank your audience (again).

## Listening, seeing and doing

In a presentation, it's important to think about your audience and how they are going to understand your message. Different people have different learning styles, which affect how they take in information.

Some people learn by listening, and remember things they have heard. These people are clearly at an advantage at presentations.

Some people learn by doing, remember things they have done, and don't like sitting still for a long time. Such people are obviously at a disadvantage when they have to sit still during a presentation.

Some people learn by watching, remember things they have seen, find graphs, charts and diagrams very useful, and need to write things down to remember them.

Speakers can help people who learn best by watching – and probably everyone else too – by using **visual aids** as well as talking, so that the audience are using at least two senses.



## Visual aids

PowerPoint slides (or whatever you use) should be:

- large and clear, not too detailed, and visible to the whole of your audience
- displayed for long enough for the audience to read them (you should not use more than one a minute)
- possibly laid out in bullet points like this, rather than long sentences or paragraphs.

You can refer to visual aids with expressions like:

As you can see from this slide ...

I'd like you to have/take a (closer) look at this ...

I'd like to draw your attention to ...

## Equipment

You should check the equipment before starting. For example:

- Does the data projector work?
- Can you connect your laptop to the projector?
- Can everyone see you and the screen, or do you need to move the chairs?
- Is there any light reflecting on the screen? Do you need to close the blinds or dim the lights?

## Presenting across cultures

A good presenter who has to talk to an international audience will research the style of presentation that is appropriate to that particular audience. Some audiences, for example, may want to participate actively during the presentation while others will want to sit quietly and listen without interruption to what is being said. As part of the planning and preparation process, it is essential to find out what is appropriate.