

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION?

Think back to some of the best presentations that you have seen. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a good oral presentation?

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2.1 Talk nerdy to me: TED talk on oral presentations.

NERDY /'nɜːdi/ <http://www.wordreference.com/definition/nerdy>

https://www.ted.com/talks/melissa_marshall_talk_nerdy_to_me/transcript#t-254942

[by Melissa Marshall.](#)

A faculty member with the Department of Communication Arts & Sciences at Penn State University, Melissa specializes in teaching speaking skills to engineering students and has also lectured at Harvard Medical School, the New York Academy of Sciences, Cornell University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Melissa is the co-founder and advisor for the Penn State Engineering Ambassadors, an award-winning science and engineering outreach communication program.

Melissa Marshall brings a message to all scientists (from non-scientists):

“Contrary to popular belief, the general public is interested in your work and does want to hear the details of your research. The trick is that you must communicate your ideas clearly, because they will start snoring in their seats if you assault them with a slew of jargon and details they’re not prepared to understand.”

Watch the TED talk and identify the tips Melissa gives for effective communication in oral presentations?

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- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

- 5.
- 6.

Expand on Melissa's tips here:

<https://blog.ted.com/6-tips-on-how-scientists-and-engineers-can-excite-rather-than-bore-an-audience/>

2.2 Writing and speaking scientific

How to create and deliver an assertion-evidence presentation: Assertion-evidence approach <https://www.assertion-evidence.com/>

Step 1. Learn the key principles.

1. Build your talk on messages (not topics).
2. Support these messages with visual evidence (not bullet lists).
3. Explain this evidence by fashioning words on the spot.

Step 2. Download our template to create slides for an assertion-evidence talk.

Step 3. To boost your confidence, practice delivering your assertion-evidence talk.

2.3 Important sections in an oral presentation

Effective presentations are organised into clear sections that help to communicate the important points and the main message.

1. The introduction: Outline context and aims

A clear and confident introduction can make a good impression. It can also capture the attention of the audience and give them a good reason to continue listening.

2. The main body: Content

The body of the presentation is where you can share the details of your main message and any other important points. You can divide it into sub-sections, each covering a different topic.

3. The conclusion: Summary of key point and implications/future issues.

The conclusion sums up important points and repeats the main message. It's also a good time to thank the audience for listening and to invite questions.

What to say in the introduction?

What you say and how you say it is an essential part of communicating your message to the audience. Whether English is your first language or not, this section will highlight some useful phrases and vocabulary that will improve the organisation, content and delivery of your presentation.

Signposting language (the words you can use to signal the content and direction of your talk) is an important component of effective presentations. The language you use will depend, to some extent, on the context of your presentation. For example, in a formal setting (e.g. a talk at a business conference) you may wish to begin with:

- Good morning, ladies and gentlemen...

However, in a less formal situation (with close colleagues or classmates), you may simply say:

- Hello everyone...

Although presentations often contain fixed phrases, for example to signal information, the language used will contain features that make it sound natural and more informal, such as **contractions**:

- **I'm** going to...
- **Let's** start by...
- **I'd** like to...

Using **personal pronouns** ('I', 'we' and 'you') is also acceptable as these help to build connections between the presenter and the audience.

The approach to questions may differ too. In a more formal presentation, the speaker may wish to specify that questions will be taken at the end of the talk. Whereas in an internal meeting with colleagues, interruptions and questions during the main talk may be acceptable.

Subject	Phrase
Greeting the audience	<p>Good morning/afternoon...</p> <p>...Everyone</p> <p>...Ladies and Gentlemen</p> <p>I'm [name] and I work as a [job] at [Company]</p> <p>My name is [name] and I study [course] at [Uni name] university.</p> <p>I'm delighted/very happy to be here today.</p>
Introducing the topic/main aims	<p>Today, I'm going to talk about...</p> <p>...HR Strategy</p> <p>The purpose of my talk is to....</p> <p>The aim of my presentation is to....</p> <p>....demonstrate the benefits of.....</p> <p>....tell you about a fantastic new service.</p> <p>I'd like to introduce you to....</p> <p>.... a new healthy snack product.</p>
Outlining the structure	<p>My presentation is divided into 3 sections...</p> <p>I've organised my talk into 3 main parts...</p> <p>Firstly, I will....</p> <p>Secondly,.....</p> <p>Then, I will...</p> <p>After that....</p> <p>Finally.....</p>
Approach to questions	<p>There'll be an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the talk.</p> <p>I'll take questions at the end of the talk, if you don't mind.</p> <p>If you have any questions during the talk, feel free to ask.</p>

What to say in the body?

After introducing your aim and offering an outline of the talk, the focus will turn to the specific content – the main body. In this main section, you should provide more detailed coverage and explanation of the important elements of the presentation.

Use language that clearly signals that you are starting or ending a sub-section, highlight what you have covered and show links between different parts. This will ensure that your talk is coherent and that essential components of the main message are being emphasised.

Here's a list of terms that may be of use at certain points during the main body of your talk:

Subject	Phrase
Introducing a sub-section	Let's start by.... I'm going to begin by....
Moving to a different sub-section	Turning to..... Now let's move on to.... Another important point is....
Showing connections	Firstly, secondly....finally (sequence) However, although.....(contrast) So, therefore (reason/result)
Highlighting/emphasising key points	It is important/essential that we..... If we want to do X....., it is vital that we..... Here, I'd like to emphasise/highlight that....
Referring to visual information	As you can see from this slide.... This graph/image shows I'd like to draw your attention to.... What is interesting about this data/chart is that...
Summarising a sub-section	So what I have covered in this section is... That completes my analysis/evaluation of.....
Making the transition to a different speaker	Now, I'd like to hand over to X who will speak about..... Next, my colleague/team mate will continue....

There are many different ways to structure the body of your presentation and focus on the important elements.

What to say in the conclusion?

After providing details of the important elements in the main body of the talk, you should provide a short conclusion and make it clear that you have reached the end of your presentation.

Use language that sums up what you have covered and reinforces the central message. Indicate that you have finished the presentation and invite questions. Here are a few key terms that you could use when concluding your presentation:

Subject	Phrase
Summing up	To sum up/summarise... Now, just to briefly go over the main points... So, what have we looked at/covered today?
Making suggestions or recommendations	I/We recommend that.... We'd/I'd like to suggest..... From the evidence, our proposal is to.....
Closing and thanking the audience	That brings me to the end of my talk..... That completes my presentation.....
Inviting questions	Are there any questions or comments? I'd be happy take/answer any questions now..... So please feel free to ask questions now...

2.4 Signpost language

Signposting language refers to the words and phrases that people use in order to guide the listener coherently through what is being said. It is used to make clear what has just happened, and what is going to happen next.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/business/talkingbusiness/unit3presentations/expert.shtml>

*Next unit will expand on signposting language.

2.5 Clarity

Whenever you are giving a presentation, it's essential that the talk has specific aims and is expressed clearly. The purpose of a presentation may be to inform, persuade or recommend. The success of the outcome will not only be based on the content and visuals but on the clarity of your delivery.

People speak in a range of local and regional accents and English may not be your first language. The most important aspect is that the meaning and main message of your presentation is communicated effectively.

How do you ensure that your delivery is clear?

The guidance below will help improve the overall clarity of the presentation:

- Speak at an appropriate pace and volume

- Check pronunciation of vocabulary in advance – identify important vocabulary and phrases and make sure you know how to say them (see activity below)
- Make sure only important points are outlined on the slides – avoid using too much text
- Stand in an appropriate position (not behind the computer or in front of the screen) and maintain eye contact with the audience
- Practise – careful preparation and rehearsal will build confidence.

Source: *MOOCs Course*, www.futurelearn.com, University of Coventry.