

Preparing Presentations

Like any academic project, before giving a PowerPoint presentation you need to prepare and plan ahead.



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Identifying the purpose

By firstly identifying the purpose of your presentation, you will be better able to ensure that what you say is focused, clear, concise and purposeful. Although you may feel inclined to say everything you know about a given topic, the outcome will be of a far higher quality if you channel your knowledge and opinions into a clear and informative argument/overview.

As you prepare and rehearse, you need to make the purpose of your presentation really clear. If you don't, your audience will be left thinking "So what?". To ensure this does not happen, you need to keep asking yourself "Why am I saying this?" and "What is the purpose of telling my audience this?". Being clear about the purpose of your presentation helps you decide what to include or leave out. It stops you from waffling or going off track when you are presenting. If you lose direction your audience may become bored or restless. Identifying the purpose will also help you to decide which approaches and structures are most appropriate to use.

It is important you communicate to the audience why you are presenting, so they are aware of their role and can begin to think about how the presentation will be useful to them and any questions they may have.

Questions to consider

- What are you hoping to achieve with your presentation?
- What questions are you intending to answer?
- Is the presentation to inform, train, persuade, show your ability, entertain or demonstrate?
- Do you aim to get ideas or feedback from the audience, as well as sharing your ideas? If so, how will you do this?

Considering your audience

It is vital that presenters think about who is in their audience when preparing for and delivering their presentation. This sounds obvious but we often tend to focus on ourselves as the presenter, on what we already know and what we think is interesting. It is often very easy to simply repeat things that you have learnt 'off by heart', but this can seem dull or lifeless to your audience. To make your presentation stand out you need to engage your audience by making them want to listen.



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Considering who your audience are and their expectations will help you choose the appropriate approach (formal, informal or interactive), the structure and the content (the level of detail and complexity).

Questions to consider

- Who are the members of the audience and what do they do? (e.g. assessors, peers, employers)
- How will the audience benefit from listening to your presentation?
- What do they already know about the subject?
- What is the relationship between yourself and the audience?
- What interests your audience?
- How will your content affect them? Will you shock or upset them?

How can you find out the answers to these questions?

There are common sense methods you can use to make decisions about how to approach your audience. If you already know them this should be easy for example, peers who are studying the same course as you are will have a similar level of understanding to your own; this should help you to gauge the appropriate level of content.

You may know enough about your audience to decide how formal or informal your presentation needs to be. If you do not know your audience a simple thing like asking them a question at the beginning (e.g. how many of you have experience of blogging?) and getting them to give a show of hands, will allow you to quickly gauge their prior knowledge and their interests. It will also encourage them to think about what you are saying, and show them that you are interested in them!

styles. If you are visually minded - you think and learn best when looking at pictures, diagrams, written aids - a mind map might be a great way to brainstorm your ideas. However, if you are more of an auditory learner you will learn best by hearing things. It may help you to talk through your ideas with others, or record yourself speaking.

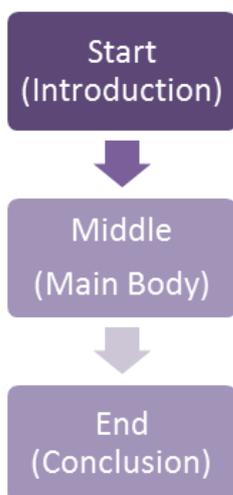
Some people are kinaesthetic, or tactile, learners. These people learn best through touching, moving or doing things. If that sounds like you it might help you to generate and organise your ideas by acting out your presentation until you perfect it.

Most people tend towards a combination of learning styles but it's important you find the best approach for you – try not to worry about what anyone else is doing. This will help you to achieve the best outcome from your presentation.

Organising the structure

As presenters our aim should be to structure our presentations in a clear, logical and coherent manner. It is helpful for your audience if you can give them an overview of what you will cover and in what order, to allow them to familiarise themselves with the topic and understand the journey you are taking them on.

It is important your presentation has a clear structure as detailed below:



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The introduction

- Smile! Opening with a smile will help you and your audience to feel more relaxed and you will appear confident
- Tell them who you are and why you are giving this presentation
- Tell them what the presentation is about and what you will be covering
- Tell them what you hope the outcome of the presentation will be, what you hope to make clear or what questions you plan to answer

- Use an opening attention grabber (image, quotes, shocking statistic etc.) if applicable
- Outline anything you will expect the audience to do, even if this is only asking questions at the end

The main body

- Ensure that your slides follow a logical order
- Link together each section before moving onto a new topic
- Use images or diagrams to illustrate your points - check to ensure that the image is taken from a copyright approved source and referenced correctly. See the Learning Resources Referencing guide for more information on copyright
- Back up all the claims that you made at the start with evidence from your research

The conclusion

- Summarise and highlight your main points
- State your solutions, options, conclusions etc. clearly, and explain why they help to develop the audiences understanding of the topic
- Add a reference/bibliography slide, if applicable
- Ask for questions
- Tell them how to get in touch with you
- Thank them for listening!

Creating your slides

If key information about your topic is not communicated fully, in a clear and logical way, the audience may not be convinced of your argument.

The purpose of each slide is to emphasise the main points you are covering. It should not be your script, and therefore, the use of bullet points is recommended.

The points on your slide should be there for you to talk around, so keep them to as small a number as possible on each slide.

Long sentences should be avoided where possible, as the audience will spend too much time reading from your slide and not enough time listening to you.

In addition, giving each slide a clear title is a good way of focusing the audience's attention and gives them a visual reference during the presentation.

Slide design

Consider the following before you start:

- Font choice: keep it simple and easy to read
- Font size: 24 pt and above
- Try to avoid CAPITALISATION, *italics* and underlining
- Don't use complicated or distracting animations on your slides – the simpler, the better
- Left align your text to make it easy to read
- Don't use a font colour that blends in with the background
- Choose a colour theme and style and stick to it throughout
- Use a maximum of two or three colours
- All images should be from a copyright approved source and referenced
- Images or diagrams should only be used if they add to or highlight the points being made
- Avoid using detailed or small diagrams
- Videos or sound clips can be used but they must be relevant
- Above all, be consistent!

Bad slide design

- The text is obscured by the images
- Too much text on the page
- Colour scheme has not been kept clear and simple
- Text is too small
- Unclear images
- No copyright information or references provided

Good slide design

- Clear title
- Bullet points
- Limited text
- Simple colour scheme
- Relevant, copyright approved images with references

Here are some examples of **good** and **bad** slide design:

Learning Resources: New Way of Working



- Move away from traditional library service
- Open and flexible Learning Resources areas
- Staffing restructured to allow the delivery of new services
- Better links with academic staff and curriculum

Leading Learning, Inspiring Success



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Is London the World's Greatest City?

London is the capital city of England and the United Kingdom, and the largest city, urban zone and metropolitan area in the United Kingdom, and the European Union by most measures. Located on the River Thames, London has been a major settlement for two millennia. Its history going back to its founding by the Romans, who named it Londinium. London's ancient core, the City of London, largely retains its square-mile mediaeval boundaries. Since at least the 19th century, the name London has also referred to the metropolis developed around this core. The bulk of this conurbation forms the London region and the Greater London administrative area, governed by the elected Mayor of London and the London Assembly.

London is a leading global city, with strengths in the arts, commerce, education, entertainment, fashion, finance, healthcare, media, professional services, research and development, tourism and transport all contributing to its prominence. It is one of the world's leading financial centres and has the fifth- or sixth-largest metropolitan area GDP in the world depending on measurement. London has been described as a world cultural capital. It is the world's most-visited city as measured by international arrivals and has the world's largest city airport system measured by passenger traffic. London's 43 universities form the largest concentration of higher education in Europe. In 2012, London became the first city to host the modern Summer Olympic Games three times.



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Using sound and visual aids

Visual aids combined with your oral delivery can make your presentation more memorable, they are a good way to maintain your audience's interest and attention. Make sure they support and complement what you are saying and don't directly repeat, contradict with or distract from your speech.

Try and make sure any video or sound clips you use are short. If they are too long they will use up a lot of your time and this may affect your performance.

If the presentation must be delivered again or by someone else, using the notes function (hidden from the audience) is useful as this allows you to add more text to explain the slides and or your arguments.

- Open and flexible Learning Resources areas
- Staffing restructured to allow the delivery of new services
- Better links with academic staff and curriculum

Leading Learning, Inspiring Success



In 2011 we reconfigured library services to focus on proactively supporting learners in their learning and teaching, as apposed to be a reactive information service.
This coincided with the move to the new Gardyne Campus, which in turn meant merging five libraries into two.

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If you are unsure about using this function speak to your lecturer or a member of Learning Resources staff, they can help you to use PowerPoint more effectively.

Finally, get someone to check your slides to ensure that the formatting, spelling and grammar are correct.

Rehearsing your presentation

Rehearsing your presentation is essential for assessing your timekeeping, body language (such as eye contact and hand gestures), voice projection, pace of speech and logical order of content etc. It gives you a chance to amend your presentation and envisage how you will go about presenting on the day.

It may be useful to record your voice on a mobile phone, or video yourself and watch it back, noting good points and areas for improvement.

Things to think about when you rehearse:

- Ideally rehearse in the venue that your presentation will take place in, or at least visit it to familiarise yourself with your surroundings
- Ask friends or family to watch your presentation and to give feedback at the end
- Look at your watch or clock before and after your rehearsal to ensure you haven't gone over your allocated time
- Ask your friends to sit far back while you rehearse and assess whether you are loud and clear enough for them to hear and whether your visual aids are easy to see/read
- Practise using your visual aids and make sure any external web links are up-to-date
- Go through the presentation using a PC to ensure you are familiar with the order of the slides and know how to move forwards and backwards through them
- Practise using your prompt cards with keywords or phrases to help you remember what to say next - then edit them to make them more useful
- Ask friends to let you know if your gestures or movement are distracting
- Ensure that all the equipment you need is available and you feel confident about using it
- Reflect on your rehearsal presentation; think about which aspects you are happy with and how you will improve on it for the 'real thing'

Delivering your presentation

The way you deliver your presentation is just as important as the content. You need to think about your body language and your vocal delivery.

To watch a short video that shows what makes both good and bad presentations, go to:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5c1susCPAE

Body language

Relaxed but authoritative body language such as open hand gestures, an upright stance, pointing to visual aids and moving around rather than remaining stationary shows your familiarity and confidence, both with the content and with presenting to an audience.

Remember that a presentation is a performance, you might be nervous – even the most experienced

presenters get nervous – but as long as you don't seem nervous your audience will never know! Practicing is a great way to help with nerves; it will make you more confident as you will become more familiar with talking through your material.

Using your voice

There are three important aspects of your voice to be aware of and develop:

Volume: It is essential that everyone can hear what you are saying. If you are unsure, you could try asking the audience if they can hear you once you begin and adjust accordingly.

Pace: Aim to speak at an even pace that is comfortable to listen to, it should feel slower than when you are having a normal conversation. If you feel yourself speeding up pause, take a deep breath and continue at a slower pace. We often speak too quickly because we try to include too much in our allocated time!

Tone: Engaging speakers change their tone effectively, emphasising key words. Their vocal delivery is energised and conveys enthusiasm for their topic. Try to avoid employing a monotonous tone which can happen if you try to read word for word from a script.

Hints and tips

Here are a few suggestions to consider when delivering your presentation:

- Be careful not to stand in front of the screen and obscure the view of your audience
- Avoid reading from the large projector screen as this means you turn your back to the audience, obscuring eye contact and reducing projection of your voice - if you need to read directly from the text look at the PC or laptop screen
- Try making brief notes on card, including any details like dates, statistics or names that you need to get right
- Be sure to interact with the information on your visual aids by pointing to specific points or part of diagrams etc., this helps the audience make links between aids and your speech
- Think about what you want the audience to do with any handouts. If they need them during the session hand them out when necessary. If they are for future reference consider handing them out at the end to avoid distraction

Contingency plans

Whenever you use technology in a presentation you run the risk of technical problems. You can reduce this risk by:

- Making sure you have your PowerPoint presentation saved in a few formats (memory stick, CD, e-mailed to an easily accessible e-mail account)

- Prepare handouts in case technical issues mean that you can't use the computer
- If you want to show a website, you could include screen captures rather than going online, in case the internet is not available
- If you include any videos or internet links, check the URLs/links work before you start the presentation
- Make sure all the hardware and software you need will be available, e.g. speakers, access to internet, multimedia software etc.
- Practice with any multimedia you may be using, ideally in the venue where you will be presenting
- Be aware that PowerPoint presentations created on an Apple Mac operating system may not be compatible with the PC/laptop that you are required to present on - check the compatibility

Evaluating your performance

Once the presentation has taken place, many of us would prefer to forget all about it but this makes it difficult to learn from experience and to develop your skills further. Review your performance and consider what went well and identify ways you can improve for next time.

Suggestions for evaluating your performance

- Begin by focussing on what went well - there will always be something, even if you did not feel you had done your best
- Visualise your audience. Did they seem interested, engaged, bored or frustrated at particular points? Why might this have been?
- Think about whether there were any points on which you failed to convince your audience. Why was this?
- Ask yourself whether there were any points when you felt particularly nervous, and if you did, why?
- Ask your assessor, lecturer or friends who were in the audience for feedback
- Look through your visual aids and prompt cards. Think about how you used them during the presentation and whether you want to amend your approach next time.
- Ask yourself whether you felt you had enough time to prepare, or how you would spend your time planning your next presentation
- If your presentation was video recorded watch it back and note good points and areas of improvement
- Based on your reflection and the resources in this guide, make a list of action points to take to improve for next time

There will often be things that you think you did badly which no one else even noticed! Use the experience in a positive way and you will produce better presentations each time you do them.

Remember, even the most experienced presenter can improve upon their performance.

