

Effective Oral Presentations

Oral presentations are a common requirement in many courses. They may be short or long, include PowerPoint slides or other visual aids, and be done individually or in a group. Planning and structuring an oral presentation is similar to the process of writing an essay, except you need to think about having a live audience and use spoken language instead of written. The major steps in oral presentations are planning, structuring, preparing and presenting.

Plan

Purpose

- Identify the purpose of your research. Research your subject to ensure that you are knowledgeable. This will help you to decide what the key focus of your presentation should be and what the main points that you want to convey are. Anticipate questions you may be asked and prepare answers to these.

Audience

- Who is the audience? Are they more or less knowledgeable on the topic than you? Pitch your presentation at the right level. What does your audience expect to gain from listening to you?

Structure

Like an essay, an oral presentation needs an introduction, body and conclusion.

- Introduce the topic, giving the scope and plan of the presentation. Set the mood of the talk (in accordance with the purpose).
- Present four or five main points in the body of the talk. Make sure they are ordered (choose a logical, chronological, special or topical sequence).
- Link your main points to create a smooth flow of ideas and use signposts when moving from one point to another (i.e. 'firstly', 'secondly' etc.).
- Use visual aids and audience activities to illustrate your main points and maintain interest and pace in your presentation.
- Conclude your presentation by summarising your main points. Include recommendations if you have been asked to do so.

Prepare

The more prepared you are, the less nervous you are likely to be. Think about:

- The time limit: find out the expected length of your presentation. Would there be time for questions and answers?
- Practise your presentation several times to improve, noting down the amount of time taken.
- Make sure you can fit the information into the time allowed, without rushing the presentation.

Present

Ways of presenting your information:

Create interesting **visual aids** that the audience can see clearly. Remember that visual aids support what you say, and do not replace what you say. These could include:

- A PowerPoint presentation
- Whiteboard drawings
- Photographs/Posters
- Video clips
- Role play

Consider making some worksheets to encourage audience participation and interaction.

Presenting your material:

- Establish and maintain rapport with your audience. Get audience attention with a stimulating opening statement. Be positive. Share your knowledge of and enthusiasm about your topic.
- Talk to your audience, using cue cards as prompts when needed.
- Use visual aids and audience activities to illustrate your main points and maintain interest and pace in your presentation.

Voice:

- Speak clearly and loudly enough to reach the back row. Use a microphone if one is available.
- Speak at a pace that allows your listeners to understand you easily.
- Vary the pitch of your voice; avoid speaking in a monotone.
- Speak confidently. Confidence grows with thorough preparation and effective rehearsals.
- Check the correct pronunciation of new or foreign words, technical words, and names.
- Use pauses and stress to emphasise your main points.

Physical presentation:

- Establish eye contact with the audience and move your eye contact around the room so that everyone feels that you are talking to them.
- Maintain good posture and use appropriate gestures with your hands (avoid gesturing too much though).
- Avoid distracting mannerisms or habits e.g. using “okay” to start most sentences.
- Ask for questions or invite discussion but be clear about the amount of time allocated.
- End confidently and leave your audience feeling positive about your presentation.

Nerves:

- Most people feel nervous at some point when asked to give an oral presentation.
- To calm down, take slow deep breaths.
- Remind yourself that your audience are usually interested in your topic and supportive of your presentation.
- Moreover, if you plan and practise your presentation well, it is likely to go smoothly.

For more information on oral presentations, refer to:

[Guided pathway: Oral Presentations \(Ara\)](#)

[Oral Presentations \(RMIT University\)](#)

[How to Prepare Well for an Oral Presentation](#) (A highly recommended video by Auckland University of Technology)

[How to Prepare for Group Oral Presentations](#) (Video and transcript by RMIT University)

(If you are using a hardcopy of this handout, locate its online version on <https://myara.ara.ac.nz/pages/academic-support/learning-resources> then click on its links to access the above info