

Module: Presentation Skills and Strategies

Level: M2/Literature and Civilization

Academic Year: 2024-2025

Lesson objectives:

By the end of the lecture, students will be able to:

- ✓ Prepare for a presentation.
- ✓ Decide on the structure/content of the presentation.

1. Preparation for a presentation

1.1. Preparing your material

- ✓ **Divide** your material into the essential points that you definitely want to make, and a little extra material you can use if there is time.
- ✓ **Organise** the material, so that it flows logically – help the audience follow your line of reasoning.
- ✓ **Introducing:** prepare your introduction, including a brief overview.
- ✓ **Include a ‘Hook’:** consider including a brief statement, image, quotation to hook your audience in at the start.
- ✓ **Ending:** prepare a strong closing summary that sums up your argument or recommendations.

1.2. Preparing for your audience

When preparing your own presentation or talk, it can be useful to consider the following points:

- ✓ As an audience’s attention tends to drift in and out, your key points could be missed. Repeat key messages or essential points, using slightly different words.
- ✓ An audience’s attention span is usually short. Divide your talk into a few sections, with a planned brief pause between each.
- ✓ Focus on your key points. Avoid unnecessary details. Do not break off into unplanned tangents – you may confuse your audience and throw out your timing.
- ✓ It can be challenging for an audience to follow a complex argument or a sequence of points when listening rather than looking. Slides, posters, charts or a handout help.

- ✓ Audiences usually like ‘stories’. Use a strong structure and relevant examples, images and case studies to engage their attention.
- ✓ If you run short of time, do not speed up to fit in more material or rush through slides at a great pace just to show them. Your purpose is to engage and inform, not ‘cover the material’. Instead, edit the talk to fit the available time.

2. Deciding on the structure/ deciding on the content

2.1. Deciding on the structure

Whether the audience can understand what you are trying to communicate will be determined by how you structure your presentation. You should focus on the development of a clear structure that will help to map out and guide you in your preparations and in your final delivery.

As a very general principle, the rule of three is offered.

- Tell them what you are going to tell them.
 - Tell them.
 - Tell them what you have told them.
1. An **introduction**, outlining the aim of your presentation and the areas your talk will focus on.
 2. The **main body**, containing the substance of your talk and developing the ideas outlined in the introduction.
 3. A **conclusion**, drawing together the main points and containing the ‘take home message’ for the audience.

1. Introduction:

- ✓ A strong introduction is crucial for a successful presentation.
- ✓ Introduce yourself and the topic while considering your audience's needs.
- ✓ Begin with something attention-grabbing, like a question, puzzle, picture, or story.
- ✓ Avoid offensive or overly familiar jokes.
- ✓ Outline the main points of your presentation to set expectations.

2. Main Presentation:

- ✓ Tailor the content and approach to the context, audience, and goals of the presentation.
- ✓ Choose between a broad overview or detailed focus.

- ✓ Limit main points to three or four for shorter presentations, or up to seven for longer ones.
- ✓ Use a mix of speech, text, images, and handouts strategically.
- ✓ Support key ideas with relevant examples and engaging content.

3. Conclusion:

- ✓ End your presentation with energy and clarity, avoiding rushed endings.
- ✓ Summarize key points and reinforce them visually if possible.
- ✓ Leave the audience with a memorable takeaway or invitation for discussion.
- ✓ Thank the audience and invite questions or further dialogue.

2.2. Deciding on the Content

Decide your topic and position:

To clarify your thinking and provide a focus, sum these up in one sentence. If you cannot, pause and think this through, to avoid a confusing presentation.

Research the topic well:

Know more about the topic than you can present – you will feel more confident about handling the talk and answering questions on the day.

Relevance:

Make sure all material fits the brief, your course, the audience, your title and argument.

Select carefully:

Choose material that lends itself well to the format of a presentation, such as key data, core points, images, short video clips.

Less is more:

Whittle material down. If you researched well, you will have more material than you need. Remember that, typically, it takes longer to say it than to read it, and also that you should speak more slowly to an audience, so they can absorb what they hear.

3. Common Forms of Presentations

3.1. Slide presentations

Tips for PowerPoint presentations:

- Avoid clutter slides at all costs.
- Select a clear font such as Arial or Helvetica.
- Use bold rather than underline and avoid italics.
- A dark background (deep blue or black) and light coloured text (white or yellow) for contrast will make your words stand out (Use of colour that detracts from the main content of the slide, or that makes reading the text difficult.)
- Use a font size of 20 or over: use a 36 point for titles and a 28 point for body text
- Spelling and /or grammar mistakes should be avoided.
- Use pictures and icons and beware of the special effects, e.g. spinning words or sound effects.
- Keep the presentation consistent, e.g. background and style. Do not suddenly switch fonts half way through. You may not notice, but your audience will.
- Less than 30 words per slide, 5–6 words for headings a maximum of five bullet points per slide.
- Keep the number of slides down to one per minute or even one per 40 seconds.

3.2. Handout material

Handouts are useful in three ways:

- ✓ To show data that are too detailed for a visual aid, such as transcript data from interviews, or mathematical calculations. If there is a lot of detail, the points you want to refer to in your presentation should be clearly highlighted in the handout. The handout is given immediately before the presentation, and then referred to.
- ✓ To provide a "signposting" framework to guide the audience through your talk. In this case, the hand-out will be a note-frame, which is given out before the presentation. Don't put too much into it, or the audience will read the handout instead of listening to you.
- ✓ To act as a record of your presentation, which the audience can take away. This could be either a note frame or a fuller text. For this 'record' type of handout, it is common practice to add your address and email address, so that people working in the same field can contact you later. Some presenters like to give out this type of handout at the end of their talk, so

that the audience listens with full attention. Others give it out at the start, as a support to listening. Keep your handout short - one page if possible.

Avoid giving handouts while you speak. The distribution of handouts while you are talking distracts people, and you will lose your audience.

3.3. Poster presentations

- ✓ Make posters large, visually appealing and informative: use images, colour and a strong structure.
- ✓ Do not neglect academic content.
- ✓ Use a simple, clear structure, so that it is obvious which order to read the information.
- ✓ Ensure the title and headings stand out.
- ✓ Avoid overloading the poster – leave spaces.