

**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:

- ✓ Develop their pre-presentation skills.
- ✓ Manage nerves
- ✓ Manage audience questions

**1. Pre-presentation skills**

**1.1. Practise! Practise! Practise! Practise**

- ✓ Your talk several times: note and amend anything that doesn't seem to flow well.
- ✓ Time yourself speaking at a reasonable, calm speed. If the talk is too long, edit it down until you are confident that you can deliver it comfortably in the time available.
- ✓ Don't assume things will sort themselves on the day. Make the process easier on yourself by taking control of the talk from start to finish. Reduce the chances of unwanted surprises.

**1.2. Have a 'dress rehearsal'**

Ask 2 or 3 friends from a different course to observe your presentation when it is ready to test out on a 'mock' audience. They don't need to be experts in the subject. Decide in advance which kinds of specific feedback from them would help you most. Ask for an honest opinion. Run through the talk or presentation exactly as you intend to on the day.

**1.3. 'Mock audience' evaluation:**

The following key questions can help you in gaining useful feedback from your mock audience. Alternatively, use some or all of the questions on the more detailed checklist provided for your own assessment of whether the talk is ready.

- What worked best? What did they enjoy, find interesting or engaging? (Aim to retain those aspects.)
- Did the main message come across clearly? (Check that they can tell you what it was. If they can't, that is a priority to clarify for your next audience.)

- Did anything sound confused or hard to follow or understand? What would have helped them make more sense of what was being said?
- Was anything annoying or irritating for the audience?
- Was the material presented at about the right pace?
- What, if anything, could be better about the style of presenting (such as how you greeted the audience)? Did the talk fizzle away at the end or finish on a strong note?
- Could any slides or materials be improved? For group presentations
- Did the talk come across as well- coordinated?
- Did it flow well when one person took over from another?
- Did you all come across as an effective team?

## **2. Managing nerves**

Nervousness is probably the biggest problem that most inexperienced speakers face. So how can nerves be managed?

- Practice, practice, practice (again). Rehearse in front of the mirror, or with friends. Feeling prepared goes a long way to alleviating your nerves.
- Name your fears. Write down exactly what it is you're afraid of, then you can devise strategies to cope.
- What is the worst-case scenario? Thinking of the worst-case scenario often puts things back in perspective.
- Relaxation techniques. Regular deep breathing gives your body the oxygen it needs to burn off excess adrenalin, thus calming you down. A walk should have the same effect.

## **3. Managing audience questions**

- ✓ Focus on engaging with the audience rather than just focusing on yourself as the speaker.
- ✓ Establish rapport by standing straight, making eye contact, and smiling.
- ✓ Encourage interaction by asking questions, giving activities, and checking for understanding.
- ✓ Be open to unexpected questions as opportunities for further discussion.
- ✓ Use humor judiciously to enhance engagement.
- ✓ Facilitate discussions by assigning group activities or discussion points.

- ✓ Handle questions effectively by providing time for Q&A sessions during or after the presentation.
- ✓ View questions as opportunities to clarify, expand on, or challenge the presentation content.
- ✓ Prepare for questions in advance and anticipate probable queries.
- ✓ Manage question sessions by setting limits and clarifying the scope of questions you'll address.
- ✓ Listen carefully to questions, write down key points if needed, and seek clarification if necessary.
- ✓ Respond tactfully to questions, acknowledging valid points and seeking suggestions for improvement.
- ✓ Stay calm and composed when faced with rude or hostile questions, avoiding retaliation and focusing on constructive responses.