

Assignment Types: Presentations

Giving great presentations



Presentations are becoming an increasingly popular assessment tool, partly because most of us tend to be better at speaking than academic writing, but also because presentations are a fundamental aspect of many professions.

In this guide we will examine the four Ps of presentation. They are

1. planning
2. preparing
3. practising
4. presenting

Finally we will provide some advice on dealing with nervousness as well.

1. Planning

I. Time

- What is your time limit?
- How will you fit the topic into the time you have been allowed?
- What will you include? What will you leave out?

II. Purpose

- What is the purpose of your presentation?
- What do you want the audience to know when you have finished?
- How will you get your audience to this point?
- How can your topic be most effectively presented?

III. Audience

- What can you expect your audience to know about the topic before you start?
- What language, tone and style will be right for this audience?
- What arguments and evidence will they understand and/or relate to?
- How will your audience react to this topic?
- What audiovisuals will work with this audience?
- What questions might they ask? What answers will you give?

2. Preparing

Action Plan – What will you do, read, search for, and make to get your presentation ready?

I. A suggested process

- Brainstorm your ideas
- Research your topic
- Plan a rough outline
- Organise content and materials, including visuals

II. Organising the content

An effective presentation must be easy for the audience to follow. Begin by breaking the presentation into clear sections.

The Introduction (write this last to ensure accuracy)

1. Capture your audience's attention.
2. Begin with a question, comment, anything that will make them think.
3. State your purpose.
4. Say exactly what you are there to do.
e.g. *This morning I want to explain/describe...*
5. Present an outline or plan of your talk.
e.g. *The focus of this presentation will be...*
e.g. *First I will ..., Then, ... , and finally, ...*

The Body

1. The body should be divided into a limited number of sections. The topic and purpose of each section should be clear. The beginning and end of each section must be clearly indicated.
2. The main points should be presented one by one in logical order, using examples where appropriate to explain or support the points made.

The Conclusion

1. The conclusion draws the whole presentation together.
2. It should restate the main points.
3. In the conclusion you thank people for listening.
4. Lastly the conclusion opens question time.

3. Practising

- I. Refine and polish.
- II. Learn the presentation by rehearsing it.
- III. Proof-read handouts and slides.

4. Presenting

There are several key issues to consider when delivering your presentation:

I. Language

- Keep language simple. The aim is to communicate.
- Emphasise the main points.
- Check pronunciation of words.

II. Voice

- DO NOT READ. Use the points on your presentation slides as prompts to talk about.
- Speak loudly enough for everyone in the room to hear.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Nervousness will accelerate your rate of speech!
- Modify your voice. Speak with expression!
- Slow down and articulate key points.
- Use pauses to highlight significant points in your presentation.

III. Body Language

- Act with confidence, even if you aren't necessarily feeling confident. Hold your head up and eye contact the audience.
- Stand straight and comfortably.
- Use gesture as you would normally do in communication.
- Do not put your hands in your pockets, fidget or fiddle with pens, etc.

IV. Audience Interaction

- Be aware of how your audience is interacting.
- If they appear confused, ask them if they need clarification.
- Stop if necessary and re-explain.
- Don't be afraid to ask the audience if they are following.
- Be open to questions as they indicate that the audience is interested and listening.
- Be prepared for question time and in the event that no one asks a question, have some discussion points or questions of your own to ask.

Dealing with nervousness

1. Know the room by familiarising yourself with the venue. Arrive early and walk around the room. Stand where you will be presenting from and speak into the microphone. Familiarise yourself with the equipment.
2. Know the audience and, if possible, greet some of the audience as they arrive. It is easier to address a group of friends than a group of strangers.
3. Know your material. Practise your material as often as possible, until you are very familiar with it and can present it with ease.
4. Learn how to relax. Learn exercises which help you to release tension and relax. e.g. sit comfortably with your back straight and take a slow, deep breath and hold for 3 or 4 seconds and then exhale slowly.
5. Visualise yourself speaking. Imagine yourself walking confidently to the lectern. Imagine yourself speaking with a loud, clear self-confident voice. When you visualise yourself as successful, you will be successful.
6. People want you to succeed. All audiences want speakers to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They do not want you to fail.
7. Don't apologise for being nervous. Most of the time nervousness will not show. Don't call attention to your nervousness; it is likely that no one will notice.
8. Concentrate on your message. Don't focus on the audience or yourself; focus on your message and away from the things that cause you anxiety.
9. Turn nervousness into positive energy. Nervous energy can give you an edge if you learn to turn it into passion and enthusiasm.
10. Gain experience as this will build confidence. Take advantage of every opportunity to give a presentation.