

UNIT 5: PRESENTATION SKILLS

English Degree Entrance Preparation compiled by Carrie Molinski & Sue Slessor.

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PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

Introduction

Welcome to one of the most creative chapters that introduces the art of presentations. In this chapter, you will learn essential knowledge and strategies to ensure your presentations leave a lasting impact. You will begin to understand that all facets of preparing yourself, creating a presentation that includes content-connected slides, leveraging the art of practicing, and considering your audience create connections that are paramount to the end result.

Visual design plays a pivotal role in captivating your audience. In this chapter, you will learn the basics of visual design—where to find appropriate images and how to effectively storyboard your presentation—and discover critical aspects to consider during rehearsals to ensure that you are fully prepared to deliver a polished and confident presentation. You will also learn the value of dressing comfortably yet professionally as related to the audience to which you are presenting.

Learning Outcomes

- Use effective presentation strategies including creating slides and planning.
- Implement the FAST format as a framework for effective presentation skills.
- Develop a storyboard (outline) for your presentation.
- Recognize characteristics of effective speakers.

To Do List

- Read “Designing the Presentation” in *Student Success*.
- Read “Planning the Presentation” in *Student Success*.
- Complete Presentation Application Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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DESIGNING THE PRESENTATION

If your presentation includes slides and images, they must be clear, compelling and well-organized. In this chapter you'll learn the basics of visual design, where to find great images, and how to storyboard your presentation.

Getting Started

Before starting on your slides create a **storyboard** that's based on your presentation outline (for details on outlines see [How to Structure Great Presentations \[New Tab\]](https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/businesspresentationskills/chapter/creating-effective-presentations/) (<https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/businesspresentationskills/chapter/creating-effective-presentations/>) in "Business Presentation Skills" by Lucinda Atwood and Christian Westin). The storyboard helps you organize and plan your **slide deck**, including the order slides appear and what text or images you'll include on each slide.

We recommend using sticky notes to create your storyboard, with one sticky note representing one slide. Sticky notes help you organize your slides because they're so easy to move around, edit and delete. They'll save you lots of time!

In the example below you can see that you don't need to be an artist or expert to make an effective storyboard.

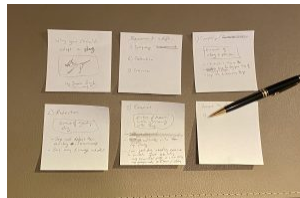


Image courtesy Christian Westin

Creating Slides

When making slides, make sure to include these five elements: organization, titles & text, visual design, content and user experience.

Need help making slides?

Georgian College students have access to free **tutoring** (<https://library.georgiancollege.ca/tutoring>). The tutors can help you with PowerPoint, Google Slides and other apps. They won't create your presentation for you, but they can help you get started, and answer specific questions.

Organization

Your slide deck must be logically organized to match the order of your presentation. Make sure that information is presented in a logical way. For example, if you're talking about something that happens in a sequence, make sure it's in the correct order in your slides. And present information based on its importance. The size and list format of key points, sub-points and sub-subpoints should be consistent with their importance.

Titles & text

Consistent—Throughout your slide deck, titles and text should be consistent in size, shape, placement, bullet and heading hierarchy, and formatting. If any of this does change, it should be an intentional design choice that reflects the presentation. Be especially careful with team projects—it's easy to lose consistency when more than one person creates the slides.

Brief—Your slides are not a script. If you include too much information on them, your audience will be reading, not listening to you. Slides should reinforce your key points, highlighting only the most important information. Share the rest verbally— anecdotes, smaller details and extra information.

Tip

There are two great ways to help you keep slides brief: The **1-6-6 Method** recommends that each slide have a maximum of 1 idea, 6 bullet points, and 6 words per bullet. The **1-3-5 Method** is similar: it suggests 1 idea and 3 bullet points per slide, with 5 words per bullet.

Fonts—Your audience might have less than perfect vision or a small device, so make type easy to read. If

you're not sure which font to use, avoid fancy decorative fonts and use a standard font like Arial, Helvetica or Times. Unless you're a trained designer, limit the number of fonts you use to about three per slide deck.

Use high-contrast colours for text, such as black on white, or white on navy blue. If you're placing text on an image, use a solid background colour in the text box.

We recommend using at least size 32 for your text. If you're using a font size smaller than 32, test your slides to make sure text is visible from the back of the room or on a small device.

Spelling & grammar—Check your spelling and grammar! (Most presentation apps include spell-check tools.) Typos and grammar errors make you look sloppy and unprofessional.

Animations—You can use the app's animation tools to move objects and text on, off or around a slide. You've probably seen slides with bullet points that appear one at a time. Animations are useful when you want to gradually reveal information. For example, if you want the audience to focus on one point at a time, or when you want to ask a question before showing the answer.

Limit the number of animations you use, and avoid whimsical or unnecessary ones—they can make your slides annoying and unprofessional.

Transitions—You can use transitions, like fade-in or fade-out, when you're moving from one slide to the next. To avoid distracting your audience, don't use too many different types of transitions, and avoid overly dramatic transitions. Just like animations, a little goes a long way.

Visual design

You don't have to be a designer to make professional slides; most apps include professionally designed templates, or you can start with a blank slide. Whichever you choose, make sure the visual design supports your content and strengthens your message. Slides should relate to each other visually: colours, layout, text and images should be consistent.

Consistent—All slides should have a consistent design as though they were created by one person, not cobbled together from multiple sources. If any of this does change, it should be an intentional design choice that reflects the presentation. Be especially careful during team projects—it's easy to lose consistency when more than one person creates the slides.

Alignment—Keep slides looking clean and professional by aligning various text or image elements. For example, text is almost always left-aligned (except captions and titles). Space text and images so they're balanced and visually pleasing. PowerPoint shows alignment markings to help with this.

Branding—Branded elements make your slides look professional. You can use your brand's colours and logo on the title page, and/or at the top or bottom of each slide. Your branding may include fonts, text size and colour. Whatever you choose, make sure all text is easy to read and not distracting.

Images—Human brains love images! Include images in your slides to add interest and explain key points. Make sure every image is high quality, high resolution, relevant and appropriate, large enough to be easily seen

from afar, not stretched or distorted, and free of watermarks. (More about watermarks in *Using Other People's Images* below)

Single images are generally better than collages because you want slides to be uncluttered. No matter how cute they are, *don't* include images that are unprofessional or unrelated to your subject—such as emojis, minion pictures and bad clip art.

Charts & graphs—Well-displayed information can enhance your audience's understanding and help to convince them that you're a professional expert. Charts and graphs are fantastic ways to show data, describe relationships, and help your audience understand a key point. Make sure the labels and titles are large enough to be easily read, and remove unnecessary details; you can verbally explain details and background information. If your presentation includes handouts, you can show the basic chart or graph on screen, and add a more detailed version in the handout. See *Which Graph, Chart, or Visual Should I Use?* below for examples and additional guidelines.

Content

Complete—Your presentation should include at least one slide for each key point. Make sure the most important information of your presentation is on your slides.

Makes sense—Information presented is well researched and makes sense. Your content should also be interesting or exciting.

Fits audience—Assume that your audience is smart like you, but doesn't have specialist knowledge. Take the time to explain anything that the majority of people might not know.

Citations and references—For facts, quotes, or other statistics, you may want to include your source on the slide, especially if it adds credibility. Otherwise, sources (including for images) are listed in 1) the notes section; and 2) in a list of sources at the end of your presentation.

Authorship—Include your full name at the start of your slides. You may want to include your name and contact information on your last slide.

Engages the left & right brain—Audience members engage and remember better when you engage the “left brain” (logic, facts, science, numbers, and hard data) and the “right brain” (emotion, colour, artistic and sensory information like music, videos, and other media).

Audience experience

This element is a bit different from the ones above because it focuses on the live integration of your slides and your presentation.

Slides enhance the presentation—Remember that you're the star of the show, and your slides are there to support your live delivery. For this reason, it's important to ensure that you don't use the slides as a teleprompter—always practice and know your entire presentation and slideshow thoroughly.

Number of slides is reasonable—As a general rule, 1–2 slides per minute is appropriate. Practise delivering your presentation to ensure you’re not rushing through too many slides, or forcing the audience to stare at the same slide for several minutes.

Agenda/Overview—Longer or more complex presentations often include an agenda or overview slide. Shorter presentations typically don’t use them.

Animations & transitions executed—When practicing your presentation, remember which slides have animations or transitions, and practice advancing your slides at the right time. Sometimes presenters get caught up in their content and forget to move the slides ahead. This is especially common during online presentations.

Using Other People's Images

You can use your own images in your presentations. You can also use downloaded images, but be careful to use copyright-free images, and credit them properly.

Many images that you see online are copyrighted, meaning you can’t use them without the creator’s permission. A lot of those images have watermarks to make sure people don’t use them, or pay to use them. Don’t use watermarked images—it’s illegal and unethical. A watermark looks like this:



Image courtesy of Lucinda Atwood.

Where to find images

Many high-quality images are freely available online. Here are some places to find them:

1. [OpenVerse \(https://openverse.org/\)](https://openverse.org/)

2. [Pexels \(https://www.pexels.com/\)](https://www.pexels.com/)
3. [Unsplash \(https://unsplash.com/\)](https://unsplash.com/)
4. [Pixabay \(https://pixabay.com/\)](https://pixabay.com/)
5. [Flicker – Creative Commons license \(https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/\)](https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/)
6. [Google \(https://www.google.com/\)](https://www.google.com/): Enter your search words and click *Search*. Then click *Images*, and *Tools* (underneath the search bar). Then click *Usage Rights* and select *Creative Commons Licenses*.

How to give credit

Always give credit to the creators of anything you didn't create—including images, charts, graphs, video, audio and gifs. You don't need to credit anything you made, but you might want to include a note so your instructor knows it's your creation.

1. List all your image credits on one blank slide
2. Make it the last slide in the **deck**
3. Select that slide and click “Hide Slide” so it won't show during your presentation

A Chicago style citation for images can use *any* of these formats:

Photograph by [creator's name] from [URL] *For example:* Photo by wsilver from <https://ccsearch.creativecommons.org/photos/73d7b905-f5ee-4571-8056-6ccfd4e450cb>

Or:

Image courtesy of [name of the organization] from [URL] *For example:* Image courtesy of wsilver from <https://ccsearch.creativecommons.org/photos/73d7b905-f5ee-4571-8056-6ccfd4e450cb>

Or:

[Title and embedded URL of the Creative-Commons-licensed image] by [creator's name] is licensed under CC BY [license type] *For example:* [More Puppies](#) by wsilver is licensed under CC BY Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Which Graph, Chart, or Visual Should I Use?

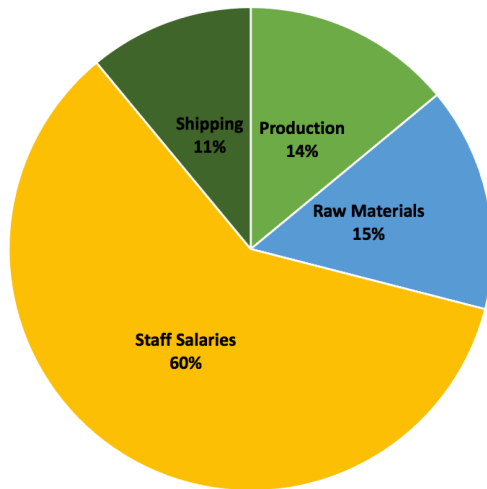
You can easily make charts and graphs for your presentation, using Excel or Google Spreadsheets. Add the data to the spreadsheet, then decide which type of chart or graph to use.

No matter what type you use, always include a title, clear labels, and high-contrast colours that are visible to all users. For example, many people can't see the difference between red and green, so avoid using them together.

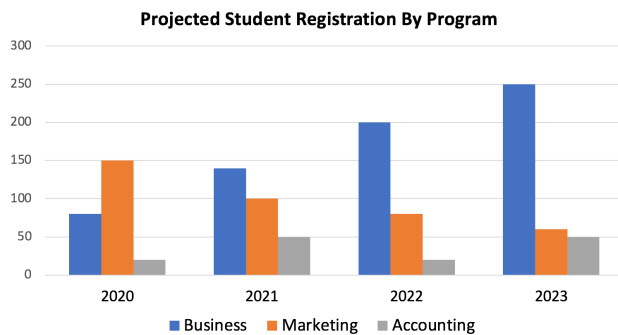
Here the most common types:

Pie chart: Shows percentages—portions of a whole. The total segments should add up to 100% or a complete whole. Pie charts are excellent for showing relationships. In the example below we quickly see that Staff Salaries are a huge portion of the company expenses.

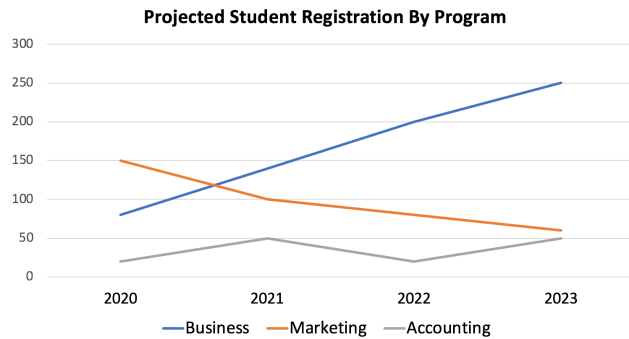
Projected 2021 Company Expenses



Bar graph: Allows comparison between different values, and can show changes over time (if the difference in values is large). The horizontal and vertical axis must always be labelled. This graph shows that the number of Business students is expected to rise, while the number of Marketing students will decrease.



Line graph: Shows a trend or progress over time. They can show small changes over time better than a bar graph. Note that the example below shows the same data used in the chart above, but emphasizes the trend of business registrations growing, marketing registrations declining, and accounting registrations remaining low with a bit of fluctuation. This would be better if you wanted to focus on changes over time.



Heatmap chart: Uses colour to convey the magnitude of certain values. Examples include a risk management heatmap showing low, medium, and high risk based on the likelihood and impact of various outcomes, or an atlas heatmap as displayed below. Because heatmaps depend only on colour—not shape or size—be very careful to use colours that all users can see.



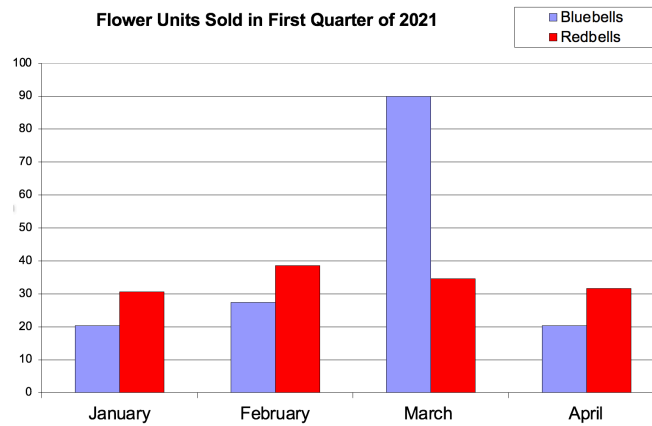
Which chart? An example

Imagine that our team is excited to share the success of our recent marketing campaign to promote bluebell flower sales during the month of March. Here are two ways we might display the data. Look at both and note your response: which one is easier to understand? Which do you prefer to look at?

Example 1

	January	February	March	April
Bluebells	20.4	27.4	90	20.4
Redbells	30.6	38.6	34.6	31.6

Example 2



Example 1 is harder to read because it's not visual. There are lots of percentages, no hierarchy or colour, and the heavy lines compete with the content. It's not easy for the viewer to quickly understand the information. This example also lacks a title or legend (a description of what the data is conveying).

Example 2 shows the same information, but in a way that's easy to quickly understand. This version emphasizes the dramatic success of our marketing campaign, which boosted sales of bluebells during March. Also notice the inclusion of a title, legend, clear axis labels, and colour coding—all of which help the audience's understanding.

Check your Understanding: Presentations

Presentations (Text Version)

1. The first step in creating a presentation is:
 - a. Ensuring you have selected the correct font and font size
 - b. Finding images
 - c. Designing charts and graphs for the slides
 - d. Creating a presentation outline and storyboard

2. Fill in the blanks using the following words:
 - watermarks
 - logos
 - contrast

When considering visual design, you should ensure enough _____ between text and the background. Branding can also be incorporated into the slide design, including font, colour use, and _____. When choosing images, avoid _____, which indicate that the image belongs to someone else.

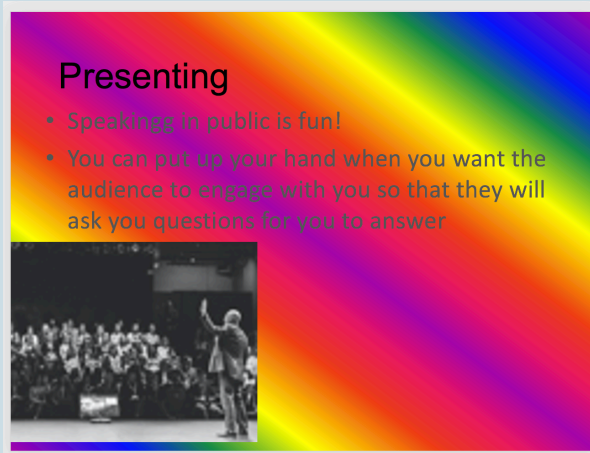


Image by Lucinda Atwood and Christian Westin, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

3. How could the slide above be improved? (select all that apply)
 - a. Correct the spelling error
 - b. Increase the contrast between the background and text & select a less distracting background
 - c. Use a higher quality image, and enlarge and align it more uniformly
 - d. Reduce the length of text used in the second bullet point
4. True or false: You should use your slides as a script that you can read from during your presentation.
5. When creating slides, the following elements should be considered first:
 - a. Organization, titles & text, visual design, content, and audience experience
 - b. Including as much text as is possible to demonstrate that you've done lots of research
 - c. Using watermarked images
 - d. Spelling, Brevity, Animations, Images

Check your answers ¹

Activity source: "Slides Quiz" by Lucinda Atwood and Christian Westin from "[How to make slides & visuals](#)" In *Business Presentation Skills* by Lucinda Atwood and Christian Westin, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#). / Converted into text version.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this section is adapted from “[11 How to make slides & visuals](#)” In *Business Presentation Skills* by Lucinda Atwood and Christian Westin, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

Notes

1.
 1. D
 2. When considering visual design, you should ensure enough **contrast** between text and the background. Branding can also be incorporated into the slide design, including font, colour use, and **logos**. When choosing images, avoid **watermarks**, which indicate that the image belongs to someone else.
 3. A, B, C, D
 4. False. Ideally, your slide text should be minimal, and should convey only your most important key messages. You are then available to convey additional details during your live presentation. Avoiding reading your slides is also important to ensure that you maintain proper eye contact with your audience.
 5. A

PLANNING THE PRESENTATION

To think about a strategy for your presentation, you must move from thinking only about your self to how you will engage with the world outside of you, which, of course, includes your audience and environment.

This section focuses on helping you prepare a presentation strategy by selecting an appropriate *format*, preparing an audience analysis, ensuring your style reflects your authentic personality and strengths, choosing an appropriate tone for the occasion.

Then, after you've selected the appropriate channel, you will begin drafting your presentation, first by considering the general and specific purposes of your presentation and using an outline to map your ideas and strategy.

You'll also learn to consider whether to incorporate backchannels or other technology into your presentation and, finally, you will begin to think about how to develop presentation aids that will support your topic and approach.

At the end of this chapter, you should be armed with a solid strategy for approaching your presentation in a way that is authentically you, balanced with knowing what's in it for your audience while making the most of the environment.

Preparing a Presentation Strategy

Incorporating FAST

You can use the acronym **FAST** to develop your message according to the elements of *format*, *audience*, *style*, and *tone*. When you are working on a presentation, much like in your writing, you will rely on FAST to help you make choices.

FAST Form

FAST Form (Text Version)

Download a copy of the [FAST Form template \[PDF\]](https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/2886/2019/07/FAST-Form.pdf) (<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/2886/2019/07/FAST-Form.pdf>) to fill out.

- **Format**—What type of document will you use? What are the elements of that document type?

- **Audience**—Who will receive your message? What are their expectations? What’s in it for them?
- **Style**—What personality does your writing have? Consider issues like word choice, sentence length and punctuation.
- **Tone**—How do you want your audience to feel about your message? Is your message formal or informal? Positive or negative? Polite? Direct or indirect?

Source: “Performing a FAST analysis” from *Professional Communications OER* is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#).

First, you’ll need to think about the **format** of your presentation. This is a choice between presentation types. In your professional life you’ll encounter the verbal communication channels in the following table. The purpose column labels each channel with a purpose (I=Inform, P=Persuade, or E=Entertain) depending on that channel’s most likely purpose.

Presentation Communication Channels

Channel	Direction	Level of Formality	Interaction	Purpose
Speech	One to many	Formal	Low: one-sided	I, P, E
Presentation	One or few to many	Formal	Variable: often includes Q&A	I, P, E
Panel	Few to many	Formal	High: Q&A-based	I, P
Meeting	Group	Informal	High	I, P
Teleconference	Group	Informal	High	I, P
Workshop	One to many	Informal	High: Collaborative	I (Educate)
Webinar	One to many	Formal	Low	I
Podcast	One to many	Formal	Low: Recorded	I, P, E

There are some other considerations to make when you are selecting a **format**. For example, the number of speakers may influence the format you choose. Panels and presentations may have more than one speaker. In meetings and teleconferences, multiple people will converse. In a workshop setting, one person will usually lead the event, but there is often a high level of collaboration between participants.

The location of participants will also influence your decision. For example, if participants cannot all be in the same room, you might choose a **teleconference** or **webinar**. If **asynchronous delivery** (participants access the presentation at different times) is important, you might record a **podcast**. When choosing a technology-reliant channel, such as a teleconference or webinar, be sure to test your equipment and make sure each participant has access to any materials they need before you begin.

When your presentation is for a course assignment, often these issues are specified for you in the assignment. But if they aren't, you can consider the best format for your topic, content, and audience. Once you have chosen a format, make sure your message is right for your audience. You'll need to think about issues such as the following:

- What expectations will the audience have?
- What is the context of your communication?
- What does the audience already know about the topic?
- How is the audience likely to react to you and your message?

Audience Analysis Form

Audience Analysis Form (Text version)

Download the [AUDIENCE Analysis Form \(Job Aid\) \[PDF\]](https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/2886/2019/07/AUDIENCE-Analysis-Form-Job-Aid.pdf) (<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/2886/2019/07/AUDIENCE-Analysis-Form-Job-Aid.pdf>)

- **Analyze**—Who will receive your message?
- **Understand**—What do they already know or understand about your intended message?
- **Demographics**—What is their age, gender, education level, occupation, position?
- **Interest**—What is their level of interest/investment in your message? (What's in it for them?)
- **Environment**—What setting/reality is your audience immersed in and what is your relationship to it? What is their likely attitude to your message? Have you taken cultural differences into consideration?
- **Need**—What information does your audience need? How will they use the information?
- **Customize**—How do you adjust your message to better suit your audience?
- **Expectations**—What does your audience expect from you or your message?

Source: “[Audience Analysis Form](#)” from *Professional Communications OER: Foundations* is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Next, you'll consider the **style** of your presentation. Perhaps you prefer to present formally, limiting your interaction with the audience, or perhaps you prefer a more conversational, informal style, where discussion is a key element. You may prefer to cover serious subjects, or perhaps you enjoy delivering humorous speeches. Style is all about your personality!

Finally, you'll select a **tone** for your presentation. Your voice, body language, level of self-confidence, dress, and use of space all contribute to the mood that your message takes on. Consider how you want your audience to feel when they leave your presentation, and approach it with that mood in mind.

Presentation Purpose

Your presentation will have a general and specific purpose. Your general purpose may be to inform, persuade, or entertain. It's likely that any speech you develop will have a combination of these goals. Most presentations have a little bit of entertainment value, even if they are primarily attempting to inform or persuade. For example, the speaker might begin with a joke or dramatic opening, even though their speech is primarily informational.

Your specific purpose addresses *what* you are going to inform, persuade, or entertain your audience with—the main topic of your speech. Each example below includes two pieces of information: first, the general purpose; second, the specific purpose.

To **inform** the audience about my favourite car, the **Ford Mustang**.

To **persuade** the audience that **global warming is a threat to the environment**.

Timing

Aim to speak for 90 percent of your allotted time so that you have time to answer audience questions at the end (assuming you have allowed for this). If audience questions are not expected, aim for 95 percent. Do not go overtime—audience members may need to be somewhere else immediately following your presentation, and you will feel uncomfortable if they begin to pack up and leave while you are still speaking. Conversely, you don't want to finish too early, as they may feel as if they didn't get their "money's worth."

To assess the **timing** of your speech as you prepare, you can

- Set a timer while you do a few practice runs, and take an average.
- Run your speech text through an online speech timer.
- Estimate based on the number of words (the average person speaks at about 120 words per minute).

You can improve your chances of hitting your time target when you deliver your speech, by marking your notes with an estimated time at certain points. For example, if your speech starts at 2 p.m., you might mark 2:05 at the start of your notes for the body section, so that you can quickly glance at the clock and make sure you are on target. If you get there more quickly, consciously try to pause more often or speak more slowly, or speed up a little if you are pressed for time. If you have to adjust your timing as you are delivering the speech, do so gradually. It will be jarring to the audience if you start out speaking at a moderate pace, then suddenly realize you are going to run out of time and switch to rapid-fire delivery!

Incorporating Backchannels

Have you ever been to a conference where speakers asked for audience questions via social media? Perhaps one of your teachers at school has used Twitter for student comments and questions, or has asked you to vote on an issue through an online poll. Technology has given speakers new ways to engage with an audience in real time, and these can be particularly useful when it isn't practical for the audience to share their thoughts verbally—for example, when the audience is very large, or when they are not all in the same location.

These secondary or additional means of interacting with your audience are called **backchannels**, and you might decide to incorporate one into your presentation, depending on your aims. They can be helpful for engaging more introverted members of the audience who may not be comfortable speaking out verbally in a large group. Using publicly accessible social networks, such as a Facebook Page or Twitter feed, can also help to spread your message to a wider audience, as audience members share posts related to your speech with their networks. Because of this, backchannels are often incorporated into conferences; they are helpful in marketing the conference and its speakers both during and after the event.

There are some caveats involved in using these backchannels, though. If, for example, you ask your audience to submit their questions via Twitter, you'll need to choose a hashtag for them to append to the messages so that you can easily find them. You'll also need to have an assistant who will sort and choose the audience questions for you to answer. It is much too distracting for the speaker to do this on their own during the presentation. You could, however, respond to audience questions and comments after the presentation via social media, gaining the benefits of both written and verbal channels to spread your message.

Developing the Content

Creating an Outline

As with any type of messaging, it helps if you create an outline of your speech or presentation before you create it fully. This ensures that each element is in the right place and gives you a place to start to avoid the dreaded blank page. Here is an outline template that you can adapt for your purpose. Replace the placeholders in the *content* column with your ideas or points, then make some notes in the *verbal and visual delivery* column about how you will support or emphasize these points using the techniques we've discussed. This outline is appropriate for a presentation meant to inform or persuade. You'll note this is similar to an outline for a research paper.

Presentation Outline

Section	Content	Verbal and Visual Delivery
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention-grabber • Main idea • Common ground 	
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I. Main idea: Point 1 • Sub-point 1 • A.1 specific information 1 • A.2 specific information 2 • II. Main idea: Point 2 • Sub-point 1 • B.1 specific information 1 • B.2 specific information 2 • III. Main idea: Point 3 • Sub-point 1 • C.1 specific information 1 • C.2 specific information 2 	
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of main points 1–3 • Residual message/call-to-action 	

Introduction

The beginning of your speech needs an **attention-grabber** to get your audience interested right away. Choose your attention-grabbing device based on what works best for your topic. Your entire introduction should be only around 10 to 15 percent of your total speech, so be sure to keep this section short. Here are some devices that you could try for attention-grabbers:

Examples of Attention Grabbers

Attention Grabber	Purpose	Examples
Subject statement	A subject statement is to the point, but not the most interesting choice.	We are surrounded by statistical information in today’s world, so understanding statistics is becoming paramount to citizenship in the twenty-first century.
Audience reference	An audience reference highlights something common to the audience that will make them interested in the topic.	As human resource professionals, you and I know the importance of talent management. In today’s competitive world, we need to invest in getting and keeping the best talent for our organizations to succeed.
Quotation	Share wise words of another person. You can find quotations online that cover just about any topic.	Oliver Goldsmith, a sixteenth-century writer, poet, and physician, once noted that “the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them.”
Current event	Refer to a current event in the news that demonstrates the relevance of your topic to the audience.	On January 10, 2007, Scott Anthony Gomez Jr. and a fellow inmate escaped from a Pueblo, Colorado, jail. During their escape the duo attempted to rappel from the roof of the jail using a makeshift ladder of bed sheets. During Gomez’s attempt to scale the building, he slipped, fell 40 feet, and injured his back. After being quickly apprehended, Gomez filed a lawsuit against the jail for making it too easy for him to escape.
Historical event	Compare or contrast your topic with an occasion in history.	During the 1960s and ’70s, the United States intervened in the civil strife between North and South Vietnam. The result was a long-running war of attrition in which many American lives were lost and the country of Vietnam suffered tremendous damage and destruction. We saw a similar war waged in Iraq. American lives were lost, and stability has not yet returned to the region.
Anecdote, parable, or fable	An anecdote is a brief account or story of an interesting or humorous event, while a parable or fable is a symbolic tale designed to teach a life lesson.	In July 2009, a high school girl named Alexa Longueira was walking along a main boulevard near her home on Staten Island, New York, typing in a message on her cell phone. Not paying attention to the world around her, she took a step and fell right into an open manhole (Witney, 2009).
		The ancient Greek writer Aesop told a fable about a boy who put his hand into a pitcher of filberts. The boy grabbed as many of the delicious nuts as he possibly could. But when he tried to pull them out, his hand wouldn’t fit through the neck of the pitcher because he was grasping so many filberts. Instead of dropping some of them so that his hand would fit, he burst into tears and cried about his predicament. The moral of the story? “Don’t try to do too much at once” (Aesop, 1881).

Surprising statement	A strange fact or statistic related to your topic that startles your audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Boeing 747 airliner holds 57,285 gallons of fuel. • The average person has over 1,460 dreams a year. • There are no clocks in any casinos in Las Vegas. • In 2000, Pope John Paul II became the most famous honorary member of the Harlem Globetrotters.
Question	You could ask either a question that asks for a response from your audience, or a rhetorical question, which does not need a response but is designed to get them thinking about the topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise your hand if you have ever thought about backpacking in Europe. • If you prick us, do we not bleed? (Shakespeare, <i>Merchant of Venice</i>)
Humour	A joke or humorous quotation can work well, but to use humour you need to be sure that your audience will find the comment funny. You run the risk of insulting members of the audience, or leaving them puzzled if they don't get the joke, so test it out on someone else first!	<p>“The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless.” —Nicolas Chamfort, sixteenth-century French author</p>
Personal reference	Refer to a story about yourself that is relevant to the topic.	<p>In the fall of 2008, I decided that it was time that I took my life into my own hands. After suffering for years with the disease of obesity, I decided to take a leap of faith and get a gastric bypass in an attempt to finally beat the disease.</p>
Occasion reference	This device is only relevant if your speech is occasion-specific, for example, a toast at a wedding, a ceremonial speech, or a graduation commencement.	<p>Today we are here to celebrate the wedding of two wonderful people.</p>

The above provides several options for attention-grabbers, but remember you likely only need one. After the attention-getter comes the rest of your introduction. It needs to do the following:

- Capture the audience's interest
- State the purpose of your speech
- Establish credibility
- Give the audience a reason to listen
- Signpost the main ideas

Body

For post-secondary students, your class presentation is likely to fulfill an assignment such as presenting the findings of a research paper or summarizing a class unit. It is important to realize that your presentation does

not need to include *all* of your information. In fact, it is unwise (and very boring) to read your whole research paper in your presentation. Choose the important and interesting things to highlight in your presentation.

Your audience will think to themselves, *Why should I listen to this speech? What's in it for me?* One of the best things you can do as a speaker is to answer these questions early in your body, if you haven't already done so in your introduction. This will serve to gain their support early and will fill in the blanks of *who, what, when, where, why, and how* in their minds.

You can use the outline to organize your topics. Gather the general ideas you want to convey. There is often more than one way to organize a speech. Some of your points could be left out, and others developed more fully, depending on the purpose and audience. You will refine this information until you have the number of main points you need. Ensure that they are distinct, and balance the content of your speech so that you spend roughly the same amount of time addressing each. Make sure to use parallel structure to make sure each of your main points is phrased in the same way. The last thing to do when working on your body is to make sure your points are in a logical order, so that your ideas flow naturally from one to the next.

Practical Examples

Depending on the topic, it is often useful to use practical examples to demonstrate your point. If your presentation is about the impacts of global warming, for example, it would be wise to mention some familiar natural disasters that are linked to global warming. If your presentation is about how to do a good presentation, you could mention several specific examples of things that could go wrong if the presenter isn't organized. These practical examples help the audience relate the content to real life and understand it better.

Using Humour

If appropriate, using humour in the presentation is often a welcome diversion from a serious topic. It lightens the mood, often helps relieve anxiety, and creates engagement with the audience. It needs to be used sparingly and tastefully. Humour is often an area that can offend, so run your ideas past others before incorporating it into your presentation.

Presentation Conclusion

You will want to conclude your presentation on a high note. You'll need to keep your energy up until the very end of your speech. In your conclusion, you will want to reiterate the main points of your presentation. This will help to tie together the concepts for your audience. It will also help them realize you are wrapping it up. It is often a good idea to leave them with a final thought or call to action, depending on the general purpose of your message. Lastly, remember to be clear that it is the end of your presentation. Don't end it by throwing one last piece of information or it will seem like you've left it hanging. End with a general statement about the

topic or a thought to ponder. Ending with “thank you” also lets them know it’s the end. Once you have completed your question, you can invite questions and comments from the audience if appropriate.

In this section you considered the importance of FAST and AUDIENCE tools in helping to lay out a strategy that incorporates your own understanding with the needs of the audience. You learned about how to use an outline to stay organized and keep track of your ideas, as well as general and specific purposes. You learned the importance of sustaining your audience’s attention throughout the presentation with key approaches you can take as you write your introduction, body, and conclusion. You should now be prepared to take your strategy to the next level by ensuring you next consider whether and how to incorporate high-quality presentation aids.

Check Your Understanding: Presentation Planning

1. You have been asked to present the pros and cons of living in student residence which will be followed by a group discussion with your classmates. The general purpose and approach you should use is:
 - a. To entertain
 - b. To inform
 - c. To persuade
 - d. To terrify
2. Why should you consider timing when preparing for a presentation?
 - a. To avoid running out of time and having to cut short important content
 - b. To make sure that the rate at which you speak gives the desired effect
 - c. To make sure you have correctly timed technological elements such as slides
 - d. All of the above
 - e. Only (a) & (c)
3. The three main general purposes of speaking are to:
 - a. Entertain, persuade, and debate
 - b. Persuade, inform, and perpetuate
 - c. Celebrate, perpetuate, and inform

- d. Inform, persuade, and entertain
 - e. Deliberative, epideictic, and forensic
4. If you are delivering a presentation without any additional assistance and would like to make use of backchannels, an effective strategy would be:
- a. Have an extra laptop available so you can keep track of comments as they come in
 - b. At natural breaks in the presentation, minimize your other visual aids and display the comment feed
 - c. Wait until after the presentation to view the comments and reply to questions via the backchannel
 - d. Select a person in the room to monitor the backchannel and cue you into questions
5. A successful introduction should:
- a. Establish your credibility
 - b. Explain the relevance of your topic to your audience
 - c. Lay out a simple map of your speech
 - d. All of the above
6. Which of the following best describes the role of a conclusion in a speech?
- a. To help the audience remember the primary message from the speech
 - b. To summarize the main points of the speech
 - c. To lead into a Q&A session
 - d. All of the above
 - e. Only (a) & (b)
7. You have been invited to speak to the Student Association on ways to avoid spreading germs in the college. Which of the following would be the most effective way to get their attention at the beginning of your speech or presentation?
- a. Pretend to sneeze into your hands several times as you walk up to a student. Then wipe the back of that hand across your nose before extending it to the student for a handshake.
 - b. Ask them “How many of you like catching colds?”
 - c. Tell a story about the time you got to skip school for a week because you caught a bad cold.
 - d. Provide data that show two percent of all colds progress to life-threatening conditions

like pneumonia or pleurisy.

8. Which of the following principles of outline creation is INCORRECT?
 - a. Your outline should include all the details of your presentation.
 - b. Your outline should show your plan for an introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - c. Your outline should show that you adequately supported your main points.
 - d. Your outline should show that you have presented similar ideas in parallel ways.

9. Which of the following is NOT a function shared by BOTH the introduction and the conclusion of a speech?
 - a. Identify the main points
 - b. Get the audience's attention
 - c. Make the topic important to the audience
 - d. Present the speech's thesis

Summary

In this module, you were introduced to the basics of presentations and explored a variety of presentation formats. You read and watched videos exploring the importance of the author's main message, persuasive techniques, and the audience in planning presentations.

Attribution & References

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CREATING PRESENTATIONS

Introduction

In this module, you will learn the other side of the presentation: the actual presentation. As you progress through this module, you will acquire the essential skills necessary to captivate your audience, communicate with confidence, and leave a lasting impression. Having honed your preparation skills, you will learn the nuances of rehearsals, discover key practices including significance of dressing comfortably and professionally. Enhancing your presentations using various visual aids is a cornerstone of effective communication. Whether it be handouts, whiteboard drawings, PowerPoint slides, memes, or short video clips, you will explore a multitude of visual aid options. By strategically selecting and incorporating these aids, you will provide references, illustrations, and images that bolster your audience's understanding and aid in their retention of your key points.

Addressing anxiety is an integral part of successful presentation delivery. You will discover effective approaches to manage anxiety, ranging from coping with your body's reactions to handling unexpected surprises or mistakes that may arise during your speech or due to external distractions. By mastering these techniques, your confidence will increase allowing your message to shine through. You will also learn how to read audience cues, so you can tailor your delivery to their needs by developing your skills to be able to critically reflect and analyze your own presentation delivery through self-analysis. This skill will give you the power to receive constructive verbal and non-verbal feedback, developing your ability to continuously improve and refine your presentation skills.

Learning Objectives

- Acquire essential skills to captivate your audience to leave a lasting impression.
- Apply presentation skills to give an audience-forward message using multi visual aids.
- Identify the benefits of rehearsing a presentation in advance.
- Apply strategies for reducing anxiety about public speaking.
- Implement a self-reflective process to receive and implement improvements.
- Describe the purpose and structure of a reading reflection and experiential assignment.

To Do List

- Read “Delivery” in *Student Success*.

- Read “Giving Presentations” in *Writing for Success*.
- Complete Video Essay Presentation Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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GIVING A PRESENTATION

By this time, you have already completed much of the preparation for your presentation. You have organized your ideas and planned both the textual and visual components of your presentation. Still, you may not feel quite ready to speak in front of a group.

Public speaking is stressful. In fact, some researchers have found that a large percentage of people surveyed rate public speaking as their number one fear. Most people feel at least a little bit nervous at the prospect of public speaking.

At the same time, it is an increasingly necessary skill in the workplace. A human resource manager presents company policies and benefits plans to large groups of employees. An entrepreneur presents the idea for a new business to potential investors. A nurse might chair a staff meeting to introduce new hospital procedures. A police officer might present crime-prevention tips at a community meeting. In some fields, such as training and teaching, speaking in public is a regular job requirement.

In this section, you will learn strategies for becoming a confident, effective speaker. You have already taken the major steps toward making your presentation successful, as a result of the content planning you did in the previous chapters. Now, it is time to plan and practice your delivery.

What Makes a Speaker Effective?

Think about times you have been part of the audience for a speech, lecture, or other presentation. You have probably noticed how certain traits and mannerisms work to engage you and make the experience enjoyable. Effective speakers project confidence and interest in both their audience and their subject matter. They present ideas clearly and come across as relaxed but in control.

In contrast, less effective speakers may seem anxious or, worse, apathetic. They may be difficult to hear or understand, or their body language may distract from their message. They have trouble making a connection with their audience. This can happen even when the speaker knows his or her material and has prepared effective visual aids.

In both cases, two factors contribute to your overall impression of the speaker: voice and body language. The following sections discuss specific points to focus on.

Finding Your Voice

Most people do not think much about how their voices come across in everyday conversations. Talking to

other people feels natural. Unfortunately, speaking in public does not, and that can affect your voice. For instance, many people talk faster when they give presentations, because they are nervous and want to finish quickly. In addition, some traits that do not matter too much in ordinary conversation, such as a tendency to speak quietly, can be a problem when speaking to a group. Think about the characteristics discussed in the following section and how your own voice might come across.

Resonance

One quality of a good speaking voice is resonance, meaning strength, depth, and force. This word is related to the word *resonate*. Resonant speech begins at the speaker's vocal cords and resonates throughout the upper body. The speaker does not simply use his or her mouth to form words, but instead projects from the lungs and chest. (That is why having a cold can make it hard to speak clearly.)

Some people happen to have powerful, resonant voices. But even if your voice is naturally softer or higher pitched, you can improve it with practice.

- Take a few deep breaths before you begin rehearsing.
- Hum a few times, gradually lowering the pitch so that you feel the vibration not only in your throat but also in your chest and diaphragm.
- Try to be conscious of that vibration and of your breathing while you speak. You may not feel the vibration as intensely, but you should feel your speech resonate in your upper body, and you should feel as though you are breathing easily.
- Keep practicing until it feels natural.

Enunciation

Enunciation refers to how clearly you articulate words while speaking. Try to pronounce words as clearly and accurately as you can, enunciating each syllable. Avoid mumbling or slurring words. As you rehearse your presentation, practice speaking a little more slowly and deliberately. Ask someone you know to give you feedback.

Volume

Volume is simply how loudly or softly you speak. Shyness, nervousness, or overenthusiasm can cause people to speak too softly or too loudly, which may make the audience feel frustrated or put off. Here are some tips for managing volume effectively:

- Afraid of being too loud, many people speak too quietly. As a rule, aim to use a slightly louder volume

for public speaking than you use in conversation.

- Consider whether you might be an exception to the rule. If you know you tend to be loud, you might be better off using your normal voice or dialing back a bit.
- Think about volume in relation to content. Main points should usually be delivered with more volume and force. However, lowering your voice at crucial points can also help draw in your audience or emphasize serious content.

Pitch

Pitch refers to how high or low a speaker's voice is. The overall pitch of people's voices varies among individuals. We also naturally vary our pitch when speaking. For instance, our pitch gets higher when we ask a question and often when we express excitement. It often gets lower when we give a command or want to convey seriousness.

A voice that does not vary in pitch sounds monotonous, like a musician playing the same note repeatedly. Keep these tips in mind to manage pitch:

- Pitch, like volume, should vary with your content. Evaluate your voice to make sure you are not speaking at the same pitch throughout your presentation.
- It is fine to raise your pitch slightly at the end of a sentence when you ask a question. However, some speakers do this for every sentence, and as a result, they come across as tentative and unsure. Notice places where your pitch rises, and make sure the change is appropriate to the content.
- Lower your pitch when you want to convey authority. But do not overdo it. Questions should sound different from statements and commands.
- Chances are, your overall pitch falls within a typical range. However, if your voice is very high or low, consciously try to lower or raise it slightly.

Pace

Pace is the speed or rate at which you speak. Speaking too fast makes it hard for an audience to follow the presentation. The audience may become impatient.

Many less experienced speakers tend to talk faster when giving a presentation because they are nervous, want to get the presentation over with, or fear that they will run out of time. If you find yourself rushing during your rehearsals, try these strategies:

- Take a few deep breaths before you speak. Make sure you are not forgetting to breathe during your presentation.
- Identify places where a brief, strategic pause is appropriate—for instance, when transitioning from one

main point to the next. Build these pauses into your presentation.

- If you still find yourself rushing, you may need to edit your presentation content to ensure that you stay within the allotted time.

If, on the other hand, your pace seems sluggish, you will need to liven things up. A slow pace may stem from uncertainty about your content. If that is the case, additional practice should help you. It also helps to break down how much time you plan to spend on each part of the presentation and then make sure you are adhering to your plan.

Tip

Pace affects not only your physical presentation but also the point of view; slowing down the presentation may allow your audience to further comprehend and consider your topic. Pace may also refer to the rate at which PowerPoint slides appear. If either the slide or the animation on the slide automatically appears, make sure the audience has adequate time to read the information or view the animation before the presentation continues.

Tone

Tone is the emotion you convey when speaking—excitement, annoyance, nervousness, lightheartedness, and so forth. Various factors, such as volume, pitch, and body language, affect how your tone comes across to your audience.

Before you begin rehearsing your presentation, think about what tone is appropriate for the content. Should you sound forceful, concerned, or matter-of-fact? Are there places in your presentation where a more humorous or more serious tone is appropriate? Think about the tone you should project, and practice setting that tone.

Check Your Understanding: Oral Delivery

1. Set up a microphone to record yourself. (You may use a webcam if you wish.) For this

- exercise, assess yourself on your verbal delivery only, not your body language.)
2. Rehearse and record your presentation.
 3. Replay the recording and assess yourself using the following criteria: resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine which areas are strengths and which areas you need to improve.
 4. If you wish, ask another person to evaluate your presentation.

The Power of Body Language

The nonverbal content of a presentation is just as important as the verbal delivery. A person's body language—eye contact, facial expressions, posture, gestures, and movement—communicates a powerful message to an audience before any words are spoken.

People interpret and respond to each other's body language instinctively. When you talk to someone, you notice whether the other person is leaning forward or hanging back, nodding in agreement or disagreement, looking at you attentively or looking away. If your listener slouches, fidgets, or stares into space, you interpret these nonverbal cues as signs of discomfort or boredom. In everyday conversations, people often communicate through body language without giving it much conscious thought. Mastering this aspect of communication is a little more challenging, however, when you are giving a presentation. As a speaker, you are onstage. It is not easy to see yourself as your audience sees you.

Think about times you have been part of a speaker's audience. You have probably seen some presenters who seemed to own the room, projecting confidence and energy and easily connecting with the audience. Other presenters may have come across as nervous, gloomy, or disengaged. How did body language make a difference?

Three factors work together powerfully to convey a nonverbal message: eye contact, posture, and movement.

Eye Contact and Facial Expressions

“Maintain eye contact” is a common piece of public-speaking advice—so common it may sound elementary and cliché. Why is that simple piece of advice so hard to follow?

Maintaining eye contact may not be as simple as it sounds. In everyday conversation, people establish eye contact but then look away from time to time, because staring into someone's eyes continuously feels

uncomfortably intense. Two or three people conversing can establish a comfortable pattern of eye contact. But how do you manage that when you are addressing a group?

The trick is to focus on one person at a time. Zero in on one person, make eye contact, and maintain it just long enough to establish a connection. (A few seconds will suffice.) Then move on. This way, you connect with your audience, one person at a time. As you proceed, you may find that some people hold your gaze and others look away quickly. That is fine, as long as you connect with people in different parts of the room.

Pay attention to your facial expressions as well. If you have thought about how you want to convey emotion during different parts of your presentation, you are probably already monitoring your facial expressions as you rehearse. Be aware that the pressure of presenting can make your expression serious or tense without your realizing it.

Tip

If you are speaking to a very large group, it may be difficult to make eye contact with each individual. Instead, focus on a smaller group of persons or one row of people at time. Look in their direction for a few seconds and then shift your gaze to another small group in the room.

Posture

While eye contact establishes a connection with your audience, your posture establishes your confidence. Stand straight and tall with your head held high to project confidence and authority. Slouching or drooping, on the other hand, conveys timidity, uncertainty, or lack of interest in your own presentation.

It will not seem natural, but practice your posture in front of a mirror. Take a deep breath and let it out. Stand upright and imagine a straight line running from your shoulders to your hips to your feet. Rock back and forth slightly on the balls of your feet until your weight feels balanced. You should not be leaning forward, backward, or to either side. Let your arms and hands hang loosely at your sides, relaxed but not limp. Then lift your chin slightly and look into your own eyes. Do you feel more confident?

You might not just yet. In fact, you may feel overly self-conscious or downright silly. In time, however, maintaining good posture will come more naturally, and it will improve your effectiveness as a speaker.

Tip

Nervousness affects posture. When feeling tense, people often hunch up their shoulders without realizing it. (Doing so just makes them feel even tenser and may inhibit breathing, which can affect

your delivery.) As you rehearse, relax your shoulders so they are not hunched forward or pushed back unnaturally far. Stand straight but not rigid. Do not try to suck in your stomach or push out your chest unnaturally. You do not need to stand like a military officer, just a more confident version of yourself.

Movement and Gestures

The final piece of body language that helps tie your presentation together is your use of gestures and movement. A speaker who barely moves may come across as wooden or lacking energy and emotion. Excessive movement and gestures, on the other hand, are distracting. Strive for balance.

A little movement can do a lot to help you connect with your audience and add energy to your presentation. Try stepping forward toward your audience at key moments where you really want to establish that personal connection. Consider where you might use gestures such as pointing, holding up your hand, or moving your hands for emphasis. Avoid putting your hands in your pockets or clasping them in front of or behind you.

Writing at Work

When you give a presentation at work, wearing the right outfit can help you feel more poised and confident. The right attire can also help you avoid making distracting gestures. While you talk, you do not want to be tugging on necktie tied too tight or wobbling on flimsy high-heeled shoes. Choose clothing that is appropriately professional and comfortable.

Check Your Understanding: Body Language

In this exercise, present the same oral presentation from Check Your Understanding: Oral Delivery but this time, evaluate your body language.

1. Set up a video camera to record yourself, or ask someone else to evaluate you.
2. Rehearse and, if applicable, record your presentation.

3. Replay the recording and assess yourself (or have your companion assess you) on the following criteria: eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures. Rate yourself from one to five on each criterion, with five being the highest rating. Determine in which areas you have strength and in which areas you need to improve.

Rehearsing Your Presentation and Making Final Preparations

Practice is essential if you want your presentation to be effective. Speaking in front of a group is a complicated task because there are so many components to stay on top of—your words, your visual aids, your voice, and your body language. If you are new to public speaking, the task can feel like juggling eggs while riding a unicycle. With experience, it gets easier, but even experienced speakers benefit from practice.

Take the time to rehearse your presentation more than once. Each time you go through it, pick another element to refine. For instance, once you are comfortable with the overall verbal content, work on integrating your visuals. Then focus on your vocal delivery and your body language. Multiple practice sessions will help you integrate all of these components into a smooth, effective presentation.

Practice in front of another person (or a small group) at least once. Practicing with a test audience will help you grow accustomed to interacting with other people as you talk, and it will give you a chance to get feedback from someone else's perspective. Your audience can help you identify areas to improve.

Just as important as identifying areas for improvement, your audience can encourage you not to be too hard on yourself. When preparing for an oral presentation, many people are their own worst critics. They are hyperconscious of any flaws in their presentation, real or imagined. A test audience can provide honest feedback from a neutral observer who can provide support and constructive critique.

Managing Your Environment

Part of being a good presenter is managing your environment effectively. Your environment may be the space, the sound levels, and any tools or equipment you will use. Take these factors into account as you rehearse. Consider the following questions:

- Will you have enough space to move around in? Consider whether you might need to rearrange chairs or tables in the room in advance.
- Do you have enough space to display your visual aids? If you are using slides, where will you project the

images?

- Will the lighting in the room need to be adjusted for your presentation? If so, where are the light switches located? How are window coverings opened or closed?
- Will your audience be able to hear you? Does the environment have any distracting noises, such as heating or cooling vents, outside traffic, or noisy equipment or machines? If so, how can you minimize the problem? Will you need a microphone?
- Do you have access to any technical equipment you need, such as a laptop computer, a projector, or a CD or DVD player? Are electrical outlets conveniently placed and functional?

You may not be able to control every aspect of the environment to your liking. However, by thinking ahead, you can make the best of the space you have to work in. If you have a chance to rehearse in that environment, do so.

Engaging Your Audience: Planning a Question-and-Answer Session

Rehearsing your presentation will help you feel confident and in control. The most effective presenters do not simply rehearse the content they will deliver. They also think about how they will interact with their audience and respond effectively to audience input.

An effective way to interact is to plan a brief question-and-answer (Q&A) session to follow your presentation. Set aside a few minutes of your allotted time to address audience questions. Plan ahead. Try to anticipate what questions your audience might have, so you can be prepared to answer them. You probably will not have enough time to cover everything you know about the topic in your presentation. A Q&A session can give you an opportunity to fill in any gaps for your audience.

Finally, accept that interacting with your audience means going with the flow and giving up a little of your control. If someone asks a question you were not anticipating and cannot answer, simply admit you do not know and make a note to follow up.

Writing at Work

Increasingly, employees need to manage a virtual environment when giving presentations in the workplace. You might need to conduct a webinar, a live presentation, meeting, workshop, or lecture delivered over the web; run an online Q&A chat session; or coordinate a conference call involving multiple time zones.

Preparation and rehearsal can help ensure that a virtual presentation goes smoothly. Complete a test run of any software you will use. Ask a coworker to assist you to ensure that both you and the audience have all the tools needed and that the tools are in working order. Make sure you have contact information for all the key meeting attendees. Finally, know whom to call if something goes wrong, and have a backup plan.

Check Your Understanding: Presenting and Providing a Q&A Session

If you have not yet rehearsed in front of an audience, now is the time. Ask a peer (or a small group of people) to observe your presentation, provide a question-and-answer session, and have your audience provide feedback on the following:

- The overall quality of your content (clarity, organization, level of detail)
- The effectiveness of your visual aids
- Your vocal delivery (resonance, enunciation, volume, pitch, pace, and tone)
- The effectiveness of your body language (eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movement, and gestures)
- Your response to questions the audience posed during the question-and-answer session

Use your audience's feedback to make any final adjustments to your presentation. For example, could you clarify your presentation to reduce the number of questions—or enhance the quality of the questions—the audience asked during the question-and-answer session?

Coping with Public-Speaking Anxiety

The tips in this chapter should help you reduce any nervousness you may feel about public speaking. Although most people are a little anxious about talking to a group, the task usually becomes less intimidating with experience and practice.

Preparation and practice are the best defenses against public-speaking anxiety. If you have made a serious

effort to prepare and rehearse, you can be confident that your efforts will pay off. If you still feel shaky, try the following strategies:

- Take care of your health. In the days leading up to your presentation, make sure you get plenty of sleep and eat right. Exercise to help cope with tension. Avoid caffeine if it makes you jittery.
- Use relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, and stretching to help you feel calm and focused on the day of your presentation.
- Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation. Image yourself succeeding. It will make you feel more confident.
- Put things into perspective. What is the worst that could happen if anything went wrong? Many people have given less-than-perfect presentations and lived to tell about it! Of course, you should make your best effort, but if something does go wrong, you can use it as a learning experience.
- Understand that you may not be able to overcome your nervousness completely. Feeling a little anxious can help you stay alert and focused. If you do not feel confident, try to “fake it until you make it.”

Check Your Understanding: Coping with Public-Speaking Anxiety

To practice overcoming public-speaking anxiety, ask a family member, coworker, or peer to view a rehearsal of the presentation. Schedule the rehearsal at a time that works for you, and plan to get plenty of rest the night before. After the presentation, answer the following questions.

1. When did you feel most nervous during the presentation? Make a note on your outline of the most nervous moments. Next to this note, add one strategy that may ease your anxiety. For example, you could add a reminder to relax, such as, “Take a deep breath here!” or a few words of encouragement, such as, “You are doing a great job!”
2. Ask your rehearsal audience for feedback on which moments of the presentation seemed most nerve wrecking for you. What nonverbal or verbal clues indicated to your audience that you were nervous? Which were most distracting to the audience? Make a note of these clues and practice the presentation again; be aware of how you show your anxiety and try to lessen these distractions.

Watch It: Digital Presentations

Giving a Presentation (Text Version)

Watch the following videos to learn more about creating a digital presentation:

Watch Microsoft PowerPoint for beginners – Complete course (52 minutes) on YouTube

(<https://youtu.be/KqgyvGxISxk>)

Watch How to use free Windows 10 video editor (28 minutes) on YouTube

(<https://youtu.be/t6yOwLuoO3w>)

Watch ScreenPal tutorial for beginners (5 mins) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/6-PEL_lxpMg)

Watch Students: Getting started with Flipgrid (45 seconds) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/kR1FxlMNPSS>)

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Check Your Understanding: Information Presentation

For your assignment go to Blackboard and review the instructions for information presentation.

Attribution & References

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DELIVERING THE PRESENTATION

Preparing to Present

Rehearsing

To deliver your presentation to the best of your ability, and to reduce your nerves once you take the stage, you need to practise by **rehearsing**. As you do, try to identify the weaknesses in your delivery to improve on them. For example, do you often mis-speak the same words (e.g., *pacific* for *specific*; *axe* for *ask*) or do your hands or feet fidget? Use your practice time to focus on correcting these issues. These sessions should help you get comfortable and help you remember what you want to say without having to constantly refer to notes.

Try practising in front of a mirror, or even recording yourself speaking to a camera and playing it back. It's also helpful to get feedback from a supportive audience at this stage. Perhaps a few family members or friends could watch you give your presentation and provide some feedback.

If at all possible, access the room where you will be presenting. This way you can get a feel for its setup and decide how you will stand or move during your presentation.

Dress for Success

While there are no definitive guidelines for how you should dress for your presentation, your appearance is an important part of your audience's first impression. If you want them to take you seriously, you'll need to look the part. While you don't have to wear a suit each time you present, there are some scenarios where this would be expected; for example, if you are presenting to a corporate audience who wear suits to work, you should do the same. You should dress one step above your audience. If your audience is going to be dressed casually in shorts and jeans, then wear nice casual clothing such as a pair of pressed slacks and a collared shirt or blouse. If your audience is going to be wearing business casual attire, then you should wear a dress or a suit. If you are presenting to your instructor and classmates, dress better than you normally would in class, to demonstrate you are taking this seriously and you are adding a level of formality.

Another general rule is to avoid distractions in your appearance. Clothing with loud colours and bold patterns, overly tight or revealing garments, or big jangling jewellery can distract your audience's attention from your message.

Setting Up Your Environment

Depending on the circumstances of your speech or presentation, you may have some choices to make about the environment. Perhaps you have a choice of meeting rooms that you can use, or perhaps you have only one option.

If you have some flexibility, it is helpful to think about what sort of environment would best help you get your message across. For example, if you are running a workshop, you might want to assemble participants in a circle to encourage collaboration and discussion. If you are holding a webinar, you'll need a quiet location with a strong internet connection and a computer system. It is imperative that you think about what facilities you need well before the day of your presentation arrives. You may have to book equipment or classrooms. Arriving to find that the equipment you expected isn't available is not a nice surprise for even the most experienced speaker!

If you have access to the location beforehand, you may need to move tables or chairs around to get things just the way you want them. You might choose to have a **podium** brought in, if you are aiming for a formal feel, for example, or you may need to position your flip chart. Double check that you have all the equipment you need, from whiteboard markers to speakers. It is far better if you can get comfortable with the room before your audience arrives, as this will make you feel more prepared and less nervous.

If you are using technology to support your presentation (i.e., PowerPoint slides or a projector), test everything before you begin. Do a **microphone check** and test its volume, view your slides on the computer you will be using, check any web links, play videos to test their sound, or make a call to test the phone connection prior to your teleconference. Your audience will get restless quickly if they arrive and are expected to wait while you fix a technical problem. This will also make you seem disorganized and hurt your credibility as an authoritative speaker.

Contingency Planning

Well before the day of your presentation, ask yourself, *What could go wrong?* This might sound like a way for a novice presenter to stress oneself out, but it can actually be very helpful. If you anticipate the worst-case scenario and are prepared for it, problems on the day of your presentation are less likely to bother you.

Many of the possible problems can be avoided with **preparation**. Make sure you have notes with you in case you need them. Dress professionally so that you feel good about how you are presenting yourself. Getting there early to set up and test the equipment will prevent many technical issues, but having a handout with you will make you feel even more comfortable in case you have problems with your slides. Bring a bottle of water in case your throat becomes dry or you need a moment to pause.

Most other problems can be prevented with practice. Rehearse so that you are not reliant on your notes. This way, if a note card goes missing, it's no big deal. During your rehearsals you'll get used to pacing yourself,

pausing for breath, and monitoring the timing of your speech so that this comes more naturally once you get onstage.

During the Presentation

Managing Anxiety

Studies show that presenters' nervousness usually peaks at the anticipation stage that occurs one minute before the presentation. They further found that as the speech progresses, **nervousness** tends to go down. Here are some things you can do to help you manage your anxiety before the presentation:

- Practice/rehearse in similar conditions/setting as your speech
- Be organized
- Think positively
- Analyze your audience
- Adapt your language to speaking style



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During the presentation itself, there are four main areas where you can focus attention in order to manage your anxiety:

1. Your body's reaction
2. Attention to the audience
3. Keeping a sense of humour
4. Common stress management techniques

Your Body's Reaction

Physical movement helps to channel some of the excess energy that your body produces in response to anxiety. If at all possible, move around the front of the room rather than remaining imprisoned behind the **lectern** or gripping it for dear life (avoid pacing nervously from side to side, however). Move closer to the audience and then stop for a moment. If you are afraid that moving away from the lectern will reveal your shaking hands, use note cards rather than a sheet of paper for your outline. Note cards do not quiver like paper, and they provide you with something to do with your hands. Other options include **vocal warm-ups** right before your speech, having water (preferably in a non-spillable bottle with a spout) nearby for a dry mouth, and doing a few stretches before going on stage.

Deep breathing will help to counteract the effects of excess adrenaline. You can place cues or symbols in your notes, such as “slow down” or ☺, that remind you to pause and breathe during points in your speech. It is also a good idea to pause a moment before you get started, to set an appropriate pace from the onset. Look at your audience and smile. It is a reflex for some of your audience members to smile back. Those smiles will reassure you that your audience members are friendly.

Attention to the Audience

During your speech, make a point of establishing direct **eye contact** with your audience members. By looking at individuals, you establish a series of one-to-one contacts similar to interpersonal communication. An audience becomes much less threatening when you think of them not as an anonymous mass but as a collection of individuals.

A gentleman once shared his worst speaking experience: right before the start of his speech, he reached the front of the room and forgot everything he was supposed to say. When asked what he saw when he was in the front of the room, he gave a quizzical look and responded, “I didn’t see anything. All I remember is a mental image of me up there in the front of the room blowing it.” Speaking anxiety becomes more intense if you focus on yourself rather than concentrate on your audience and your material.

Keeping a Sense of Humour

No matter how well we plan, unexpected things happen. That fact is what makes the public speaking situation so interesting. When the unexpected happens to you, do not let it rattle you. At the end of a class period late in the afternoon of a long day, a student raised her hand and asked the professor if he knew that he was wearing two different-coloured shoes, one black and one blue. He looked down and saw that she was right; his shoes did not match. He laughed at himself, complimented the student on her observational abilities, and moved on with the important thing, the material he had to deliver. People who can laugh at themselves often endear themselves to their audience.

Stress Management Techniques

Even when we use positive thinking and are well prepared, some of us still feel a great deal of anxiety about public speaking. When that is the case, it can be more helpful to use stress management than to try to make the anxiety go away.

Here are two main tools that can help:

- **Visualization:** Imagine the details of what a successful speech would look and sound like from beginning to end; a way of hypnotizing yourself into positive thinking by using your mind’s eye to make

success real.

- **Systematic desensitization:** Gradual exposure to the thing that causes fear—in this case, giving a speech—can ultimately lead to decreased anxiety. Basically, the more practice you get speaking in front of people, the less fear and anxiety you'll have about public speaking. Organizations like Toastmasters, that help people confront their fears by providing a supportive environment to learn and practice, are a good option if you have a true phobia around presenting or public speaking.

Using a Microphone

Conditions such as the size of the room and how far away your audience will be sitting should determine whether or not you need a microphone. Many people make the mistake of thinking they don't need a mic because they can talk loud enough for everyone to hear. They are usually wrong. Unless the crowd is very small, it benefits you to use a microphone. It is very frustrating for people to be watching a presentation that they can't hear.

If you are using a microphone during your speech, there are a few cautions to be aware of. First, make sure you do a sound check and that you know how the microphone works—how to turn it on and off, how to mute it, and how to raise or lower it. If possible, have it positioned to the height you need before you go onstage. Make sure the microphone does not block your face.

Make sure to find the optimum distance from the microphone to your mouth. This will vary with different sound equipment. For some, the mic needs to be right up against the mouth to get good sound quality. For others, this will cause screeching feedback or will pick up your breathing noises. If you will be using a clip-on microphone (called a lavalier, or lav., mic), you'll need to wear something with a lapel or collar that it can be clipped to. Make sure your hair and jewelry are out of the way to avoid rustling noises, and place the lavalier microphone 8 to 10 inches below your chin.

If the microphone is on a stand, make sure it is set to the appropriate height. If it is set too high, it is distracting to the audience and if it's too short, it will cause you to hunch over it, creating bad posture and an uncomfortable position. Often you can take the mic off the stand and use it as a handheld model, which allows you to move around a little more. Doing a sound check and getting comfortable with the equipment before you go onstage will prevent the majority of errors when using a microphone.

Coping with Mistakes and Surprises

Even the most prepared speaker will encounter unexpected challenges from time to time. Here are a few strategies for combating the unexpected in your own presentations.

Speech Content Issues

What if a note card goes missing or you skip important information from the beginning of your speech? While situations like these might seem like the worst nightmare of a novice public speaker, they can be overcome easily. Pause for a moment to think about what to do. Is it important to include the missing information, or can it be omitted without hindering the audience's ability to understand your speech? If it needs to be included, does the information fit better now or in a later segment? If you can move on without the missing element, that is often the best choice, but pausing for a few seconds to decide will be less distracting to the audience than sputtering through a few "ums" and "uhs." Situations like these demonstrate why it's a good idea to have a glass of water with you when you speak. Pausing for a moment to take a sip of water is a perfectly natural movement, so the audience may not even notice that anything is amiss.

Technical Difficulties

Technology has become a very useful aid in public speaking, allowing us to use audio or video clips, presentation software, or direct links to websites. But it does break down occasionally! Web servers go offline, files will not download, or media contents are incompatible with the computer in the presentation room. Always have a **backup plan** in case of **technical difficulties**. As you develop your speech and visual aids, think through what you will do if you cannot show a particular graph or if your presentation slides are garbled. Your beautifully prepared chart may be superior to the verbal description you can provide; however, your ability to provide a succinct verbal description when technology fails will give your audience the information they need and keep your speech moving forward.

External Distractions

Unfortunately, one thing that you can't control during your speech is **audience etiquette**, but you *can* decide how to react to it. Inevitably, an audience member will walk in late, a cell phone will ring, or a car alarm will go off outside. If you are interrupted by external events like these, it is often useful and sometimes necessary to pause and wait so that you can regain the audience's attention.

Whatever the event, maintain your **composure**. Do not get upset or angry about these **glitches**. If you keep your cool and quickly implement a "plan B" for moving forward, your audience will be impressed.

Reading Your Audience

Recognizing your audience's mood by observing their body language can help you adjust your message and see who agrees with you, who doesn't, and who is still deciding. With this information, you can direct your attention—including eye contact and questions—to the areas of the room where they can have the most impact.

As the speaker, you are conscious that you are being observed. But your audience members probably don't think of themselves as being observed, so their body language will be easy to read.

Questions and Discussion

As a presenter, it's a good idea to allow a little time at the end of your presentation to invite questions from the audience and to facilitate a little discussion about the topic. If possible and applicable you can include a bit of interactivity with the audience during the presentation. This goes a long way to getting the audience engaged and interested in the topic.

There are three important elements to think about when incorporating Q&A's as part of your presentation:

Audience Expectations

At the beginning of your speech, give the audience a little bit of information about who you are and what your expertise on the subject is. Once they know what you do (and what you know), it will be easier for the audience to align their questions with your area of expertise—and for you to bow out of answering questions that are outside of your area.

Timing of Q&A's

Questions are easier to manage when you are expecting them. Unless you are part of a panel, meeting, or teleconference, it is probably easier to let the audience know that you will take questions at the end of your presentation. This way you can avoid interruptions to your speech that can distract you and cause you to lose time. If audience members interrupt during your talk, you can then ask them politely to hold on to their question until the Q&A session at the end.

Knowing How to Respond

Never pretend that you know the answer to a question if you don't. The audience will pick up on it! Instead, calmly apologize and say that the question is outside of the scope of your knowledge but that you'd be happy to find out after the presentation (or, suggest some resources where the person could find out for themselves).

If you are uncertain about how to answer a question, say something like "That's really interesting. Could you elaborate on that?" This will make the audience member feel good because they have asked an interesting question, and it will give you a moment to comprehend what they are asking.

Sometimes presenters rush to answer a question because they are nervous or want to impress. Pause for a moment, before you begin your answer, to think about what you want to say. This will help you to avoid **misinterpreting** the question, or taking **offense** to a question that is not intended that way.

A final tip is to be cautious about how you answer, so that you don't offend your audience. You are presenting on a topic because you are knowledgeable about it, but your audience is not. It is important not to make the audience feel inferior because there are things that they don't know. Avoid comments such as "Oh, yes, it's really easy to do that..." Instead, say something like "Yes, that can be tricky. I would recommend..." Also, avoid a bossy tone. For example, phrase your response with "What I find helpful is..." rather than "What you should do is..."

Critiquing a Presentation

Self-Analysis

It is often said that we are our own worst critic. Many people are hard on themselves and may exaggerate how poorly a speech or presentation went. Other times, there's not much exaggeration. In both cases it helps to examine your performance as presenter after the presentation.

You may want to ask yourself:

- Did you make the most of your unique voice? Did the audience seem to understand you?
- Did you make the most of using body language? Did your body confidently support what you were saying?
- Did you use a coherent structure? Did the audience seem to make sense of your presentation? Was it logical?
- Did you show enthusiasm? Did you show the audience you cared about your presentation?
- Did you demonstrate expertise? Did you show your credibility by citing reliable sources and making a distinction between facts and your opinion?
- Did you show that you practised and prepared? Did your confidence show because you implemented a plan that included sufficient rehearsal, contingency plans, and other success strategies?

Honestly asking yourself these questions with the intention of uncovering your strengths and weaknesses should help you to become a better presenter. While it is important to review other kinds of feedback, whether from the audience, your peers, or an instructor, it is also useful to have a realistic understanding of your own performance. This understanding is part of gaining experience and improving as a presenter.

Feedback from Others

As well as doing some self-analysis, it is a good idea to get feedback from others. If your presentation was for your class, you will likely get feedback from your instructor who is marking you. You may also get some feedback from classmates. It would also be wise to ask someone that you trust, who was in the audience, to

give you feedback. You can learn a lot from what others tell you. They may have noticed a distracting habit such as twirling your hair, or putting your hands in your pockets, or a lot of ummms. They may also have noticed some real strengths of your presentation that you may not have considered. Whether the comments are positive or constructive criticism, they can be helpful for focusing on, in your next presentation.

Receiving Feedback

Being open to receiving feedback is the only way to have a better picture of your performance as a presenter or speaker. Combining self-analysis with the feedback of your audience or peers is your opportunity to better understand your strengths as a presenter and what resonated well with your audience.

When receiving and making sense of feedback, it is very important to be self-aware and honest with yourself. This honesty will help you distinguish between an environmental situation, a situation that lies with the audience member, or a situation with the presenter.

Summary

In this section you learned about useful tools, such as rehearsing, dressing appropriately, and having a contingency plan, that helps you prepare to present to a live audience. You examined approaches that would be useful during the presentation itself, such as keeping a good sense of humour and focusing your attention on your audience to manage anxiety, and what steps to take for a critical review afterwards to close the feedback loop.

Check Your Understanding: Presentation Delivery

1. Why should you dress appropriately for the occasion at which you are speaking?

- a. To give the audience confidence in your abilities
 - b. To show that you are easy-going and approachable
 - c. To play up your physical attractiveness
 - d. All of the above
2. While managing a Q&A session following his presentation, Eric finds himself unable to answer a question posed by one of the audience members. Which of the following tactics should Eric take to maintain control of the session?
 - a. Improvise and make up an answer
 - b. Commit to provide a more thorough answer at a later time
 - c. Spend significant time on the question before responding
 - d. Become hostile and defensive
3. Starting a presentation with a joke is a good technique for any presentation and presenter.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. Making mistakes in a presentation mean that the presenter “blew it.”
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. The natural state of the audience is empathy, not antipathy. They generally want the presenter to succeed.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. If you write out your presentation word for word and memorize it, you’re golden.
 - a. True
 - b. False
7. The audience will always be able to tell when the presenter is nervous.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Attribution & References

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PRESENTATION AIDS

Presentations can be enhanced by the effective use of visual aids. These include handouts, drawings on the whiteboard, PowerPoint slides, memes, short video clips, and many other types of props. Once you have chosen a topic, consider how you are going to show your audience what you are talking about. Visuals can provide a reference, illustration, or image to help the audience to understand and remember your point.

Visual aids accomplish several goals:

- Make your speech more interesting
- Enhance your credibility as a speaker
- Guide transitions, helping the audience stay on track
- Communicate complex information in a short time
- Reinforce your message
- Encourage retention

Emphasis, Support, and Clarity

The purpose for each visual aid should be clear and speak for itself. If you can't quickly link the purpose of a visual aid to the verbal message, consider whether it should be used. Visual aids can be distracting or confusing if they are not clearly connected to what you are saying.

Perhaps you want to highlight a trend between two related issues, such as socioeconomic status and educational attainment. You might show a line graph that compares the two, showing that as socioeconomic status rises, educational attainment also rises. People learn in different ways. Some of us learn best using visual stimuli; others learn by taking notes or by using tactile objects. So, by using visuals to support your presentation and, if possible, tactile aids or demos, you can help a more significant proportion of the audience learn about your topic.

Clarity is key in the use of visual aids. Limit the number of words on your slides. Some people even state their rule of thumb is no more than 10 words per slide, with a font large enough to be read at the back of the room or auditorium. Generally, you should include no more than five to seven lines of text per slide. People often make the mistake of trying to cram too much information on a slide, which causes the audience to zone out. Test that your slides are readable in the environment you will be using.

Methods and Materials

Slide Decks

The most common visual aid used in presentations, **slide decks**, may be developed using software such as PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, or Google Slides. These tools allow you to show text, images, and charts and even to play audio or video files. They are an excellent enhancement to your presentation, but they do sometimes encounter a glitch. Computers sometimes fail to work as planned, so make sure you have a whiteboard or handout as a backup in case of any technical issues. Minimize the risk by testing out equipment ahead of time.

Also, remember that these are an *aid* to your central, verbal message. Resist the urge to read directly from them with your back to the audience, or to pack slides full of text in lieu of speaking all of the information you want to get across.

Flip Charts, Whiteboards, and Large Prints

Flip charts and whiteboards are a good choice when you don't have access to a computer and projector. Alternatively, you can print some visual aids like charts and graphs in large sizes and show them during your presentation. If you plan to get a lot of audience input and want to write or draw things out, then a whiteboard is an ideal choice. But make sure your writing is large enough to be seen at the back of the room and that it is easy to read.

Handouts

If it will be helpful for your audience to refer to the information you're sharing at a later date, they'll appreciate it if you leave them with a handout. Decide whether it is better to give handouts to the audience at the beginning or end of your speech. If your handout is comprehensive and they have detailed notes in front of them, they can be distracted by reading and tune you out, so it's better to wait until the end to distribute them. Let the audience know at the beginning of the speech that you'll provide it at the end. This will relieve them from having to capture all your content by taking notes, and keep their attention focused on you while you speak. If your handouts are the presentation slides with just the main points, it may be better to hand them out at the beginning so that your audience can use them to add in additional points.

Demonstrations and Tactile Aids

If your presentation is about how to do something, for example, how to cook a particular dish or how to use a tool, you will want to show the audience a demonstration. Sometimes it is helpful to pass around a tactile aid, for example, a model. These can be very helpful if you want your audience to learn by doing. Make sure to pass items around during pauses in your presentation so that you don't lose the audience's attention. If audience members need to move around to use a tactile aid, make sure the location has enough space to make this possible.



Visual aids capture interest and demonstrate concepts. **Source:** “Using Visuals” by Marnie Landon is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Using Visual Aids

Designing Slide Decks

Using PowerPoint or a similar program, you'll be able to import, or cut and paste, words from text files, images, or video clips to represent your ideas. You can even incorporate web links.

At first, you might be overwhelmed by the possibilities, and you might be tempted to use all the bells, whistles, and sounds, not to mention the flying and animated graphics. If used wisely, a simple transition can be effective, but if used indiscriminately, it can annoy the audience to the point where they cringe in anticipation of, for example, the sound effect at the start of each slide.

Stick to one main idea per slide. The presentation is for the audience's benefit, not yours. Pictures and images can be understood more quickly and easily than text, so you can use this to your advantage as you present.

If you develop a slide deck for your presentation, test these out in the location beforehand, not just on your own computer screen, as different computers and software versions can make your slides look different than you expected. Allow time for revision based on what you learn.

Your visual aids should meet the following criteria:

- **Big**—Make it legible for everyone, even the back row.
- **Clear**—The audience should “get it” the first time they see it.
- **Simple**—Simplify concepts rather than complicating them.
- **Consistent**—Use the same visual style throughout.

Font

Another consideration that you'll need to make when designing your slide decks is font. As previously mentioned, think about the people at the back of the room when choosing the size of your text, to make sure it can be read by everyone.

A common mistake that presenters make is to use decorative fonts, or to incorporate many different fonts in their slides. This not only creates a mixed message for the audience but also makes your message difficult to read. Choose legible, common fonts that do not have thin elements that may be difficult to see.

Colour

When considering your choice of colours to use, legibility must be your priority. Contrast can help the audience read your key terms more easily. Make sure the background colour and the images you plan to use complement each other. Repeat colours, from your graphics to your text, to help unify each slide. To reduce visual noise, try not to use more than two or three colours.

Blue-green colour blindness, and red-green colour blindness are fairly common, so avoid using these colour combinations if it is important for the audience to differentiate between them. If you are using a pie chart, for example, avoid putting a blue segment next to a green one. Use labelling, so that even if someone is colour blind, they will be able to tell the relative sizes of the pie segments and what they signify.

Helpful Hints

Visual aids can be a powerful tool when used effectively but can run the risk of dominating your presentation. Consider your audience and how the portrayal of images, text, graphic, animated sequences, or sound files will contribute or detract from your presentation. Here are some hints to keep in mind as you prepare yours:

- Keep it simple.
- Use one idea per slide.
- Avoid clutter.
- Use large, bold fonts that can be read from at least 20 feet away.
- Use colours that work well together.
- Avoid using clip art. It can look hokey.
- Proofread each slide with care.
- Test in the presentation room beforehand.
- If you are using a computer and/or projector for your visual aids, test it beforehand. Have a hard copy of your presentation in case the computer has technical difficulties.
- Mark the floor with tape beforehand to mark the best spot to have the projector once you've tested it.

Check Your Understanding: Presentation Aids

1. Which of the following presentations would be more effective with the use of a physical or animate object?
 1. A slide presentation on a new employment policy
 2. A slide presentation on the different features of a mountain bike
 3. A personal finance workshop on real estate investing tips
 4. A lecture on the psychological effects of pharmaceutical drugs
2. All of the following should be practiced for designing an effective slide presentation, except:
 1. Limiting text to one or two fonts
 2. Bolding, italicizing, and capitalizing important information
 3. Presenting no more than five to seven lines of text per slide
 4. Using a font colour that blends in well with the background
3. If a presenter is using slides in a well-lit room, which of the following colour schemes should be used on the slides to maximize legibility?
 1. A dark background with light text and visuals
 2. A dark background with dark text and visuals
 3. A light background with dark text and visuals
 4. A light background with light text and visuals

Summary

Using visual aids takes time and practice. The more you practice before your speech, the more

comfortable you will be with your visual aids and the role they serve. Know your material well enough that you refer to your visual aids, not rely on them.

Attribution & References

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Original Text Attributions

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- “[Presenting in a Professional Context](#)” in *Professional Communication OER* by Olds College OER Development Team. Adapted by Mary Shier. [CC BY 4.0](#). (The Olds College chapter itself is a remix that incorporates content for multiple sources. For a full list, refer to the Olds College chapter.)