

## ENGLISH FOR PRESENTATIONS AND SEMINAR

Good preparation is very important. Good preparation and planning will give you confidence. Your audience will feel your confidence and have confidence in you. This will give you control of your audience and of your presentation.

Remember anyone can give a good presentation. Don't worry if you are not naturally extrovert. Preparation and practice can be the keys to success!

### 1. PREPARATION AND PLANNING

#### 1 ESSENTIAL PREPARATION AND PLANNING CHECKLIST

This is a checklist of the essential elements to consider in preparing and planning an oral presentation. Use it yourself by filling in the boxes on the right under "My Ideas".

Questions to ask yourself	My ideas
<b>Objective</b> <i>'Why am I making this presentation?'</i> <i>Your objective should be clear in your mind.</i>	
<b>Audience</b> <i>'Who am I making this presentation to?'</i> <i>How many people?</i>	
<b>Venue</b> <i>'Where am I making this presentation?'</i> <i>A small meeting-room or a large conference hall?</i> <i>Facilities and equipment?</i> <i>Seating arrangements?</i>	
<b>Time and length</b> <i>'When am I making this presentation?'</i> <i>How long will it be?'</i>	
<b>Method</b> <i>'How should I make this presentation?'</i> <i>Formal or informal?</i> <i>Lots of visual aids or only a few?</i> <i>With or without anecdotes and humour?</i>	
<b>Content</b> <i>'What should I say?'</i> <i>Include only relevant information. Create a title for your presentation. The title will help you to focus on the subject. Prepare your visual aids, if any.</i>	
<b>Others</b> <i>How should I dress up?</i> <i>Are there any cultural aspects involved?</i> <i>Do I have any handout to give the audience?</i>	

You have only one chance to make the first impression, so be prepared!!!

## 2. STRUCTURE OF AN ORAL PRESENTATION

A good oral presentation is well structured; this makes it easier for the listener to follow. Basically there are three parts to a typical presentation: the beginning, the middle and the end (or introduction, body and conclusion). We are going to look at each part in turn and present the language needed to express both the structure and the content.

### 2.1 THE BEGINNING OR THE INTRODUCTION

The beginning of a presentation is the most important part. It is when you establish a rapport with the audience and when you have its attention.

#### A. *Get the audience's attention and signal the beginning.*

##### **Some useful expressions: Welcoming courtesies**

*It's nice to see you all here today...*

*Welcome to...*

*Good morning everyone. Thanks for coming.*

*It gives me a great pleasure to be here today...*

*It's an honour to have the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience.*

*First of all, let me thank you all for coming here today.*

*It's a pleasure to welcome you today.*

*I'm happy/delighted that so many of you could make it today.*

*It's good to see you all here.*

#### B. *Greet audience.*

It is important to greet the audience by saying something like

##### **Some useful expressions:**

*Good morning ladies and gentlemen.*

*Good morning the committee members.*

*Good afternoon all the distinguished guests*

*Good evening members of the board*

*Mr. Chairman/Chairwoman, Fellow colleagues*

*Thank you for your kind introduction*

#### C. *Introduce oneself, (name, position, and institution)*

Do this not only to give important information so people can identify you but also to establish your authority on the subject and to allow the audience to see your point of view on the subject (you are a student, researcher, responsible for, director of,)

##### **Some useful expressions:**

*Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce myself.*

*Good morning everyone, I'd like to start by introducing myself.*

*My name is...*

*I am a (4<sup>th</sup> year/ graduate) student from the Faculty of ....., majoring in.....*

*I am a doctoral candidate, from.....*

*I am ... (position)..... from .... (company).....*

*I am a researcher from ... I've been working on the subject now for ..... years.*

*I've had wide experience in the field of .....*

**Sample of self introduction**

*Good morning, my name is Pongsakorn Saard. I am a graduate student from the Faculty of Agriculture, majoring in horticulture, Chiang Mai University. Today, I would like to talk to you about some of my findings in a study I did on the cultured tissues.*

**D. Give title and introduce subject**

What exactly are you going to speak about? Situate the subject in time and place, in relation to the audience and/or its importance. Give a rough idea or a working definition of the subject.

**Some useful expressions:**

*Today, I plan to speak about...*

*Today I'm going to talk about...*

*The subject of my presentation is...*

*The theme of my talk is...*

*I've been asked to give you an overview of...*

*I'd like to talk about...*

*This morning I'd like to discuss (report on/give an overview/show/present)*

*I'm going to present (explain/inform you about/describe)....*

*I'm going to speak to you about....*

*The subject (focus) of my presentation (talk/paper) is....*

You may want to give acknowledgements here too. If you have been sponsored, supported or encouraged by a particular firm, organization, professor, etc. you may want to recognise their contribution. Your research and paper may have been the work of a collaborative effort and you should acknowledge this too giving the names of all the participants.

At some point you should ask a question or somehow try to determine the attitude and knowledge of the audience. How do they feel about the subject? You will then have to modify the contents, as you never know exactly what to expect. To get the audience's attention and perhaps to find out where they are you could introduce the subject by using these techniques:

**Amazing facts technique**

*Did you know that.....*

*Suppose that...*

*Have you ever heard of/seen X?*

*You've probably seen countless times...*

*You may have wondered..*

**Anecdote technique:**

*As an introduction to my lecture I'd like to tell you a short story...*

*You may already know...*

*I feel sure that some of you...*

*Every day you encounter...*

Cultural aspects may be important here; scientists want to demonstrate their work and findings while managers and humanities people want to share ideas and reflections with their audience. It may be the result of a desire to persuade and convince. It may be comparison of two or more products, plans or proposals. Why are you going to speak about it?

*I have chosen to speak about this because...*

*I was asked to speak about X because...*

**E. Give your objectives (purpose, aim, goals)**

The main purpose of an informative speech is to have the audience understand and remember a certain amount of information. You should therefore have two purposes: a general purpose and a specific one. The former is to inform: to give an overview, to present, to summarize, to outline; to discuss the current situation or to explain how to do something or how something is done. The latter is what you want the audience to take away with them after listening to you, what you want them to do, what they should remember.

**Some useful expressions:**

What I would like to do today is      to explain  
    to illustrate...  
    to give you the essential background information on...  
    to outline...  
    to have a look at...

What I want my listeners to get out of my speech is...

If there is one thing I'd like to get across to you today it is that...

**Sample:**

*My purpose in doing this paper is to give you a solid background on the subject of oral presentation skills. So that in the future, you can deliver a successful speech in front of a group.*

**F. Announce your outline.**

Once you have established your specific objectives you may go on to formulate your content. You want to keep the outline simple so 2 or 3 main points are usually enough. Concerning grammar the headings of the outline should be of the same grammatical form.

**Some useful expressions:**

*I have broken my speech down/up into ..... parts.*  
*I have divided my presentation (up) into ..... parts (sections).. They are ....*  
*This subject can be broken down into the following fields....*  
*I'm going to make some brief points about...*  
*Firstly, I'll talk about..... Then,....., and the last part is.....*  
*Next, I'll focus on.....*  
*Firstly/Secondly/Thirdly I'll talk about ..... and then we come to....*  
*Then I'll go on to...*  
*Lastly/Finally/Last of all ...*  
*I'll finish with...*  
*In the first part I give a few basic definitions.*  
*In the next section I will explain about.....*  
*In part three, I am going to show...*  
*In the last part I would like/want to give a practical example...*

**G. Announce your time frame.**

It is useful to give the listeners some idea of how long you will speak so as to maintain their attention better.

**Some useful expressions:**

*My talk/presentation will last about.....*  
*It will take me..... minutes for this presentation*

**H. Questions time and comments from the audience.**

You should also let the audience know at some point in the introduction when and whether they may ask questions.

**Some useful expressions:**

*If you have any questions, please save them at the end of my presentation.*

*I'd ask you to save your questions for the end.*

*Please feel free to interrupt me if you have questions.*

*There will be time for questions at the end of the presentation.*

*I'd be grateful if you could ask your questions after the presentation.*

*There will be plenty of time at the end of my speech for a discussion.*

*You may interrupt me at any moment to ask questions or make comments.*

*Please stop me if you don't understand any thing I say but could you keep any specific questions until after I've finished.*

**I. Make a transition between the introduction and the body.**

You should refer to your transparency or outline.

**Some useful expressions:**

*Present main part:*

*So, I'll start off by .....giving and overview of ...*

*.....outlining ...*

*.... highlighting....*

*.... discussing..*

*Now let us turn to point one.*

*I'd like to begin with...*

**3. THE BODY OF PRESENTATION**

The body is the 'real' presentation. If the introduction was well prepared and delivered, you will now be 'in control'. You will be relaxed and confident.

The body should be well structured, divided up logically, with plenty of carefully spaced visuals.

**A. Content.**

What information should you give in your speech? All your information should support your purpose. In most cases you will have to limit the content, as time is usually precious!

**B. Quantity**

How much information should you give? Is it enough to clearly develop your ideas? Don't forget to illustrate through examples.

**C. Sequencing your ideas.**

Here are a few possibilities for organizing your ideas: logical; chronological order; from general to specific; from known to unknown; from accepted to controversial; cause/effect; problem/solution. Whatever sequencing you choose, the headings should be all of the same grammatical form.

**D. Keeping the audience's attention**

The beginning and the end or the first and last parts of a talk are what listeners will remember best. Think of ways you can keep the audience's attention throughout the rest of the speech.

**E. Signposting or signaling where you are**

Announce what you are going to say (give an example, reformulate etc.) and then say what you want to say. Indicate when you have finished one point and then go on to the next one. It is redundant in text but very useful in oral presentations.

*Remember these key points while delivering the body of your presentation:*

- do not hurry
- give time on visuals
- modulate your voice
- keep to your structure
- signpost throughout
- be enthusiastic
- maintain eye contact
- look friendly
- use your notes
- remain polite when dealing with difficult questions

**Listing information**

**Some useful expressions:** Vary your language whenever possible and avoid reading directly.

*There are three things we have to consider: one, two, and three. (A, B, C.)*

*Now let us look at the first aspect which is...*

*First of all,...*

*In the first place...*

**Linking ideas, sections/making transitions:** Indicate the end of one section and the beginning of the next.

**Some useful expressions:**

*That's all I would like to say about... (subject of part A) and now let us turn to ....*

*Now that we've seen... let us turn to...*

*Let's move/go on to...*

*Let us now move on to the second part, which is, as I said earlier....*

*I'd like to draw your attention to....*

*Let me now move on to...*

*Notice (observe) the fact that ....*

*In particular (especially/ in fact/ similarly/ in the same way)...*

**To be clear and concrete.** Use examples, rephrasing, summaries etc.:

**To give an example:**

Now let's take an example.  
An example of this can be found...  
To illustrate this, let's see...  
Let's see this through an example.  
For example,  
For instance,  
e.g.

**To rephrase:**

Let me rephrase that,  
In other words  
Another way of saying the same  
thing is  
That is to say  
i.e.

**To summarize:**

To summarize  
To sum up,  
Let me summarize by saying  
So that concludes my overview  
In conclusion  
Briefly said  
In short,  
What I've tried to show in this part...  
To recap what we've seen so far...

**To emphasize:**

What is very significant is...  
What is important to remember...  
I'd like to emphasize the fact that...  
I'd like to stress the importance of...  
    to highlight...  
    to underline...  
What I tried to bring out...  
What we need to focus on...

**To refer to what you have said previously:**

As I have already said earlier...  
As we saw in part one...  
To repeat what I've said already...

**To refer to what you will say:**

We will see this a little later on.  
This will be the subject of part .....  
We will go into more detail on that later.  
For now, suffice to say...

**To refer to what an expert says:**

I quote the words of ...  
In the words of...  
According to...  
Here I'd like to quote...  
As Mr. X says in his book...  
There is a famous quotation that goes...

**To refer to common knowledge:**

As you all may well know...  
It is generally accepted that...  
As you are probably aware (of)...

**Referring to graphs, tables:**

As you can see from the graphs/table...  
This bar graph/pie-chart shows...  
If we look to this transparency, we can see...  
As can be seen from the graph...  
According to the statistics (figures)...  
This graph shows you...  
Take a look at this...  
If you look at this, you will see...  
I'd like you to look at this...  
This chart illustrates the figures...  
This graph gives you a break down of...

## 4. THE END OR CONCLUSION

The end of a talk should never come as a surprise to an audience; it needs special consideration.

### A. Content

The end or the conclusion of your talk should include three parts:

- a. *A brief reminder of what you tried to show in your speech and how you tried to do so*
- b. *a short conclusion*
- c. *thanks to the audience for listening and invite questions, comments or open a discussion.*

**Brief reminder** : At the end of your presentation, you should summarise your talk and remind the audience of what you have told them:

*That brings me to the end of my presentation. I've talked about...*

*Well, that's about it for now. We've covered...*

*In brief, we...*

*To summarise, I...*

*To summarise the main points of my presentation ...*

*I'd like to summarize/sum up*

*At this stage I would like to run through/over the main points...*

*So, as we have seen today....*

### A short conclusion

#### **Some useful expressions:**

*In conclusion I would like to say that...*

*My final comments concern...*

*I would like to finish by reminding everyone that...*

*To conclude my presentation, ...*

*In conclusion, ...*

### **Handling questions**

*Would anyone like to ask any questions?*

*I'm ready to take any questions now.*

*If anyone has questions I'll be happy to answer them.*

*I'd be happy to answer any questions....*

*If there are any questions please feel free to ask.*

*Thank you very much for your attention and if there are any suggestions or comments*

*Thank you for listening – and now if there are any questions, I would be pleased to answer them.*

*That brings me to the end of my presentation. Thank you for your attention. I'd be glad to answer any questions you might have.*

It's useful to re-word the question, as you can check that you have understood the question and you can give yourself some time to think of an answer. By asking the question again you also make sure that other people in the audience understand the question.



*Thanks for your question ...*

*Good question. I think ...*

*That's an interesting question! As I see it ...*

*Yes, that's an interesting point ...*

*Thank you. So you would like further clarification on our strategy?*

*That's an interesting question. How are we going to get voluntary redundancy?*

*Thank you for asking. What is our plan for next year?*

After you have answered your question, check that the person who asked you is happy with the answer.

*Does this answer your question?*

*Do you follow what I am saying?*

*I hope this explains the situation for you.*

*I hope this was what you wanted to hear!*

### **Asking questions to the participant when you are unclear with the questions**

*Excuse me. Could you ask again please?.*

*Could you repeat your question?*

*Excuse me. I cannot hear your question. Could you speak louder please?*

*I didn't catch what you asking about .... Can you repeat it please?*

*Are you asking that ...?*

### **Dealing with difficult questions**

If you don't know the answer to a question, say you don't know. It's better to admit to not knowing something than to guess and maybe get it wrong. You can say something like:

- *Hmm, that's a good question. I don't have the information to answer that question right now, but I'd be happy to find out and get back to you later.*
- *I don't think we have enough time to go into that right now, but I'll be happy to speak to you one-to-one after the presentation if you would like.*
- *That's an interesting point, but I do think I have shown that ...*
- *That's an interesting question. I don't actually know off the top of my head, but I'll try to get back to you later with an answer.*
- *I'm afraid I'm unable to answer that at the moment. Perhaps I can get back to you later.*
- *That's a very good question. However, we don't have any figures on that, so I can't give you an accurate answer.*
- *Unfortunately, I'm not the best person to answer that.*

#### **Rehearsal**

Practise your presentation two or three times so that you:

- become more familiar with what you want to say
- identify weaknesses in your presentation
- can practise difficult pronunciations
- can check the time that your presentation takes and make any necessary modifications

## Summary: Outline of Presentation

### Structure

Organise your presentation in a logical structure. Most presentations are organised in three parts, followed by questions:

#### 1 Introduction

- welcome your audience
- introduce your subject
- explain the structure of your presentation
- explain rules for questions

#### 2 Body of presentation

- present the subject itself

#### 3 Conclusion

- summarise your presentation
- thank your audience
- invite questions

+ Questions

## 5. VISUALS AIDS

80% of what we learn is learned visually (what we see) and only 20% is learned aurally (what we hear). This means that:

- visual aids are an extremely effective means of communication
- non-native English speakers do not need to worry so much about spoken English since they can rely more heavily on visual aids

*What are visuals?*

graphs charts	maps photos
drawings images	models video/film
objects	

*What media are used?*

transparencies/slides	Power Point slides
video projection/projector	handouts

*It is often a good idea to give out a paper copy, called a handout, an outline, a glossary of key words, sources, any other visuals you plan to use, so people can take them away, not waste time in taking notes on key concepts.*

*What is the vocabulary of the equipment used?*

blackboard	whiteboard
paperboard	chalk, felt tip pen or marker, eraser
podium, lectern, overhead, screen	overhead projector system (OHP)
microphone, mike	pointer
	opaque projector

*What should you put on a visual?*

key words	technical words
lists	examples
diagrams	charts

*Vocabulary of graphs/chart*

line graph (algorithmic, linear curve, line)	bar chart
flip chart	diagram
pie chart (segment, slice of the pie)	flow chart
organization chart	

*Why use visuals?*

- to focus the audience's attention
- to illustrate points easier to understand in visual form but difficult in a verbal form (e.g. statistics)
- to reinforce ideas
- to change focus from aural/oral to visual
- to involve and motivate the audience
- to involve all the senses
- to serve as logical proof
- to save time and avoid putting information on a board
- to avoid turning your back to the audience when writing on a board
- to help the speaker

*Text to put on a visual*

- name, conference/company and company logo, date, title of presentation. Try to do this consistently but not to the detriment of a table or image.
- full sentences are not to be used, unless a quote is given, give round figures
- N.B. keep text to a minimum

*Size, layout, font (typeface) and size, colors.*

- keep text to a minimum
- Size - A4
- Layout should be pleasant and easy to read: horizontal/landscape layout is preferable.
- Font size - maybe 20 or more depending on the size of the room you will be speaking in. A good idea is to use different sizes for different types of text: i.e. 20 for main headings, 16 for subheadings, 14 for other text.
- Use CAPITAL LETTERS, bold face, italics, underlining, reverse (white on black) or shading to highlight.
- If possible, use color transparencies (unless you are just showing text).

*How many?*

One every two minutes is sufficient. To show too many slides is worse than none at all.

*General and miscellaneous tips.*

- Have the slides ready and in order.
- Check to see if the OHP is plugged in, in working order and in focus.
- Test the visual to see if people at the back of the room can see it.
- Stand to the side of the screen and face the audience.
- Mask to reveal only what you want the audience to see.
- Use a pointer or a pen to draw attention to a specific point.
- Visuals should be adjusted to the audience.
- Visuals should supplement the spoken message.
- Large enough for everyone to see. (Good idea to give out a paper copy, i.e. a handout, not at the same time though, as the audience may not look at you)
- Don't display too much information, too many colors or typefaces.
- Does the layout work?
- Are there any spelling mistakes or grammatical errors? Remember they are going to be in plain view all the time of your visual.

**6. BODY LANGUAGE**

*The golden rule is "Be natural and relax!"*

*What is body language?*

Eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movements, gestures.

*Why is it useful?*

*It is a natural part of communication:*

- to clarify meaning; it is very visual
- to vent nervousness
- to maintain interest
- to emphasize and regulate

Below are just a few examples of both positive and negative body language:

*Positive body language*

- eye contact to keep audiences' attention (Asian audience might feel aggressed.)
- facial expressions should be natural and friendly. Don't forget to smile.
  - raise eyebrows to show surprise
  - open eyes wide
  - squint your eyes
  - knit your eyebrows to show consternation or puzzlement
- posture – stand straight but relaxed (do not slouch or lean)
- movement - to indicate a change of focus, keep the audience's attention
  - move forward to emphasize
  - move to one side to indicate transition
- gesture
  - move forward to emphasize
  - up and down head motion or other movements to indicate importance
  - pen or pointer to indicate a part, a place (on a transparency).
  - hands - back and forth = two possibilities, more or less
  - arm - movement back, forth

### *Negative body language*

- posture – stand straight but relaxed (do not slouch or lean)
- loss of eye contact: looking at notes, looking at screen, at the board, at the floor
- don't stare, or look blankly into people's eyes
- swaying back and forth like a pendulum
- back turned to the audience
- nervous ticks
- hands in pockets

## 7. LANGUAGE

### **Simplicity and Clarity**

If you want your audience to understand your message, your language must be simple and clear:

- use short words and short sentences
- do not use jargon, unless you know that your audience understands it
- talk about concrete facts rather than abstract ideas
- use active verbs instead of passive verbs

Active verbs are much easier to understand. They are much more powerful. Consider these two sentences, which say the same thing:

Sentence 1: Toyota sold two million cars last year.

Sentence 2: Two million cars were sold by Toyota last year.

Which is easier to understand? Which is more immediate? Which is more powerful?

Sentence 1 is active and Sentence 2 is passive.

## 8. VOICE AND PRONUNCIATION

Correct pronunciation is important if one is to be understood correctly. Incorrect pronunciation is perhaps the first cause of communication breakdown. If the listener is not accustomed to the speaker's native language, he/she will not understand a mispronounced word.

Mispronunciation also tires the listener's ear and he/she will perhaps even stop trying to understand the speaker if it becomes too difficult.

Your audience must be able to hear you clearly. In general, you should try to vary your voice. Your voice will then be more interesting for your audience. You can vary your voice in at least three ways:

1. **Speed:** you can speak at normal speed, you can speak faster, you can speak more slowly, and you can stop completely! Silence is a very good technique for gaining your audience's attention.
2. **Intonation:** you can change the pitch of your voice. You can speak in a high tone. You can speak in a low tone.
3. **Volume:** you can speak at normal volume, you can speak loudly and you can speak quietly. Lowering your voice and speaking quietly can again attract your audience's interest.

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## Web sites

- [http://people.engr.ncsu.edu/txie/publications/oral\\_presentation\\_skills.pdf](http://people.engr.ncsu.edu/txie/publications/oral_presentation_skills.pdf)
- <http://www.boldsky.com/insync/pulse/2012/body-language-presentation-200112.html>
- <http://www.it-sudparis.eu/lsh/ressources/ops8.php>
- <http://www.english-at-home.com/business/vocabulary-and-phrases-for-making-presentations/>
- <http://alumnus.caltech.edu/~natalia/studyinus/guide/statement/phrases.htm#Useful Expressions:>
- <http://services.unimelb.edu.au/academicsskills/speaking/presentations>