Learning Enhancement Team

University of East Anglia

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICE

Planning a Presentation

This leaflet offers you an insight into the process of planning an effective presentation. It focuses on the importance of the presenter's relationship with the audience and suggests key strategies for making an impact.

Related guides: 'Delivering a Presentation' and 'Managing Anxiety in Presentations and Interviews'.

What makes a good presentation?

A good presentation makes the best use of the relationship between the presenter and the audience. It takes full consideration of the audience's needs in order to capture their interest, develop their understanding, inspire their confidence and achieve the presenter's objectives.

Careful planning is essential.

Seven stages in planning a presentation

Stage One - Preparation

Many factors affect the design of your presentation. A good presenter will acknowledge and address each of the following:

- objectives
- audience
- venue
- remit.

Objectives
Why you are making your presentation? Bear in mind what you want to achieve and what you want your audience to take away with them. Once you have decided upon your objectives, you are in a much better position to make strategic decisions about the design and tone of your presentation. For example, a presentation to a seminar group might require a balanced argument, whereas a charity appeal might require a more creative approach. Ask yourself:

- what do you want your audience to have understood?
- what action do you want your audience to take following your presentation?
- how can you best design your presentation to meet your objectives?

Audience

Your audience will have a variety of different experiences, interests and levels of knowledge. A good presenter will need to acknowledge these and prepare for and respond to them accordingly. Ask yourself:

• how much will your audience already know about your topic?
• how can you link new material to things they might already understand?
• will you need to win them over to a particular point of view?

You may not be able to answer these questions for each member of your audience but you should have enough information to ensure that you have targeted your material at the right level for their needs. This might involve avoiding technical jargon or explaining abstract concepts with clear practical examples. If you fail to consider your audience's needs, you will fail to appeal to their interest and imagination.

Venue

Where will you be making your presentation? What will the room be like? What atmosphere will the physical conditions create? A large lecture theatre might create a formal atmosphere. Similarly, a seminar room might create a less formal tone. Ask yourself:

• what kind of atmosphere do you wish to create?
• how might the room arrangement affect your relationship with the audience?
• can you do anything to change the arrangement of the room to suit your objectives?
• what audio-visual aids can you use?

Remit

You may well have been given a remit for your presentation; you will need to stick to this. For example, you may have been asked to present a paper at a conference in a certain style or meet certain assessment criteria on your course. Ask yourself:

• how much time have you been allocated?
• are you required to stick to a common format or style?
• have any guidelines been set regarding the content of your presentation (i.e. a predetermined title, or a fixed number of overhead transparencies)?

Stage Two - Choosing your main points

Once you have thought about the *design* of your presentation, you can define your main points. Try presenting no more than three main points in a ten minute presentation. Always allow time for an adequate introduction and conclusion. It is difficult for an audience to follow a more complex argument without significant help from the presenter. A powerful presentation delivers information in a logical, structured manner, building on the previous point and avoiding large jumps in sequence. Ask yourself:

• what are the main points you wish to make?
• are these points structured in a logical, coherent way?
• do these main points reflect your own objectives and take account of the needs of your audience?

Stage Three - Choosing your supporting information

The supporting information helps your audience understand, believe in and agree with your main points. This evidence might take the form of factual data, points of detail or an explanation of process. It might be presented in imaginative ways using diagrams, pictures or video segments. Think about:

- what will add *clarity* to your argument (explaining complex terms, reminding your audience of any supporting theories)?
- what will add *authority* to your argument (making connections with other people's work, quoting experts, offering evidence from your own research)?
- what will add *colour* to your argument (showing a video clip or a slide, using a practical example or a vibrant analogy)?

Stage Four - Establishing linking statements

The next stage is to develop the linear flow of your presentation. This can be achieved by using linking statements or 'signposts' to show clearly how your main points fit together. Common linking statements include:

- *"The next stage in our project was to …"*
- *"Another important issue of consideration was …"*
- *"By following this argument we can now see that …"*

Linking statements send signals to your audience, highlighting the next point in your argument, linking to earlier ideas or clarifying the stage you have reached in your argument overall. This may be of particular importance in a lengthy presentation where even the most effective presenter has to work hard to keep an audience involved.

Stage Five - Developing an opening

The introduction to your presentation is crucial. It is your first point of contact with your audience; you can either capture or lose your audience's interest in a matter of seconds. Use your introduction to lay a clear foundation for the presentation to follow. Try using the following structure:

- introduce yourself
- state *what* you will be talking about (a title or subject area)
- state *how* you will be talking about it (e.g. by comparing test results or reviewing the supporting literature)
- state what you intend to be the outcome of your presentation (an informed group, a lively discussion)
- state what you expect your audience to do (listen, take notes, read a handout, ask questions before/during/after).

Always give your audience a moment to absorb this information before moving into your first main point.

Stage Six - Developing a conclusion

Your conclusion is another important stage in your presentation. You can use it to remind your audience of your main points, draw these points to a stimulating conclusion and leave your audience with a lasting impression of the quality of your presentation. The following structure provides a powerful conclusion:

- a review of your title or subject area
  "In this presentation I wanted to explore the relationship between X and Y."
- a summary of your main points
  "We have discussed the following points…"
- a summary of the process you have been through
  "By looking at X we have found that Y …"
- a conclusion clearly drawn from your main points (this must be supported by the detail of your presentation)
  "It is clear that there can be no substantive relationship between X and Y"
- a parting statement to stimulate your audience's thoughts (this might be a question or a bold comment).

Stage Seven - Reviewing your presentation

Once you have written your presentation make sure that you review its content. Ask yourself:
- does the presentation meet your objectives?
- is it logically structured?
- have you targeted the material at the right level for your audience?
- is the presentation too long or too short?

Want to know more?

If you have any further questions about this topic you can make an appointment to see a **Learning Enhancement Tutor** in the **Student Support Service**, as well as speaking to your lecturer or adviser.

☯   Call: 01603 592761
🖥   Ask: ask.let@uea.ac.uk
☞   Click: https://portal.uea.ac.uk/student-support-service/learning-enhancement

There are many other resources to help you with your studies on our website.

Your comments or suggestions about our resources are very welcome.

	Scan the QR-code with a smartphone app for more resources.	**This guide is based on a study guide produced by Student Learning Development at the University of Leicester.**