



Writing Centre

Oral Presentations

Planning Your Presentation

As a general rule, expect to cover much less content than you would in a written report. Make difficult points easier to understand by using plenty of examples and going back over them later. Leave time for questions within the presentation.

Give your presentation a simple and logical structure. Include an introduction where you outline the points you intend to cover and a conclusion where you go over the main points of your talk.

Delivering Your Presentation

People vary in their ability to speak confidently in public, but everyone gets nervous and everyone can learn how to improve their presentation skills by applying a few simple techniques.

Quality of your Voice

This involves attention to volume, speed, fluency, clarity and pronunciation. The quality of your voice in a presentation will improve dramatically if you are able to practice beforehand in a room similar to the one you will be presenting in.

Rapport with the Audience

Rapport with the audience involves attention to eye contact, sensitivity to how the audience is responding to your talk and what you look like from the point of view of the audience. These can be improved by practicing in front of people or video-taping your rehearsal.

Effective Use of Notes

Good speakers vary a great deal in their use of notes. Some do not use notes at all and some write out great detail. If you are not an experienced speaker, it is not a good idea to speak without notes



because you will soon lose your thread. You should also avoid reading a prepared text aloud or memorizing your speech.

The best solution may be to use notes with headings and points to be covered. You may also want to write down key sentences. Some speakers use overhead transparencies as notes. The trick in using notes is to avoid shifting your attention from the audience for too long. Your notes should always be written large enough for you to see comfortably.

Visual Aids

Visual aids help to make a presentation livelier. They can also help the audience follow your presentation and help you to present information that would be difficult to follow through speech alone.

The two most common forms of visual aids are overhead transparencies and computer slide shows (e.g. PowerPoint). Objects that can be displayed or passed around the audience can also be very effective and often help to relax the audience. Some speakers give printed handouts to the audience to follow as they speak. Others prefer to give their handouts at the end of the talk, because they can distract the audience from the presentation.

This module is adapted from materials written by English Centre Staff for the Business Communication (BBA) course and Lillian Wong's Presentation Skills summer course. <http://www4.caes.hku.hk/epc/presentation/>