

Skills Guide

THE OCR GUIDE TO PRESENTATION SKILLS

www.ocr.org.uk

This guide on presentation skills has been produced by OCR to help you understand the skills and techniques you will need to develop, practise and use in a number of situations – public speaking, self-development, business, sales, training etc.

This guide has not been written to accompany a specific qualification but focuses on presentation skills that relate to many areas of both education and work environments. Other skills guides are available at <u>www.ocr.org.uk</u>.

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What is a presentation?

Every time you communicate with another person or group of people, you are presenting yourself; your opinions, thoughts, hopes, likes, dislikes, intentions and a variety of other aspects of your personality, to the other person.

Sometimes you will find yourself in a situation where you must formally present information – a team briefing, meeting or interview for example. Sometimes you will present in a more informal setting – persuading friends of the merits of one singer over another for example.

Regardless of the nature of the presentation or the environment in which it happens, the aim of all presentations is to share information with the audience with a view to selling a product or idea, persuading them to accept your way of thinking on a given subject, gaining good will, teaching something, spurring people into action or, more often than not, a combination of all of these objectives.

Key elements of a successful presentation

In order to be successful, your presentation should be **understandable**, **memorable** and **emotional**.

Understandable

Ask yourself what is the key message that you want the audience to take away with them from your presentation. Too many ideas, too much information and overly technical language will only serve to hinder the audience's understanding. Make sure you use language that is appropriate for the audience and give information in a clear, concise way.

Memorable

Research shows that the human brain is only capable of holding onto between three and seven facts in its short term memory, but three seems to be the 'magic number'. Successful presentations often use this fact to make them more memorable. You could think about splitting your presentation into three parts, giving three action points, highlighting three key facts and so on.

Emotional

Successful presentations tend to be those which connect with the audience on an emotional level. Using statistics and raw data may be factually accurate but is unlikely to move an audience to action or persuade them of the importance of the point you are making on a human level. Storytelling is a great way to help audiences feel connected to the points you are making and will increase the chances of them wanting to play their part in the story.

Different types of presentation

There are several different types of presentation, the most common are:

Informative – sharing information with the audience, for example the results of a research project

Demonstrative – demonstrating how to do something, for example a cookery demonstration

Persuasive – convincing listeners to accept your proposal, for example offering the solution to a problem, dispute or controversy

Decision making – motivating audience members to follow your suggested course of action, for example buying your product or donating money to a good cause.

The advertising and media industries recognise the importance of slogans and use them to capture people's interest and send out a clear message about the product. Some good examples include:

Minstrels – melt in your mouth, not in your hand

Apple iPhone – the internet in your pocket

Asda – saving you money everyday

Can you think of any other advertising slogans that sum up the unique selling point of a product in such a clear concise way?

Planning your presentation

Considering the audience

What you say and how you say it will depend on the makeup of the audience. Presenting to a group of primary school children will require a different approach from presenting to a group of local business people.

All presenters, regardless of who is in the audience, should:

- Introduce themselves
- Explain why they are there
- Share the aims of the presentation
- Manage the audiences expectations of the presentation

Questions to ask about the audience

Who are they (ages/gender etc.)?

How many will there be?

What is their background/where are they from?

What relevant knowledge/experience do they already have?

How have they been selected (have they chosen to attend)?

Deciding on the type of presentation

We have already seen that there are different types of presentation. Each of these different types of presentation is best delivered in a slightly different way. Most presentations will be a mixture of some or all of the types listed, but the information below should help you at the start of the planning process.

Informative – keep it brief and to the point, stick to the facts and avoid overly complicated information.

Demonstrative – explain why the skill is valuable to the audience, demonstrate and explain the process and then allow the audience to make/practice/ have a go for themselves.

Persuasive – gain the audience's attention straight away, explain the problem, describe how and why your proposal will offer the solution and end the presentation with a call to action.

Decision making – use storytelling to gain an emotional connection, explain the problem, compare and contrast two worlds (one without taking action and one where action has been taken), call the audience to action and explain how they can be part of the solution.



The following questions will help you decide on the type of presentation that will best suit your needs. You may find that differing approaches are needed at different points in your presentation.

What is the main aim of your presentation?

What do you expect from your audience during the presentation?

What do you want the audience to learn/remember from your presentation?

What do you hope the audience will do at the end of/after your presentation as a result of listening to you?

Working within given parameters

There will be many aspects of your presentation that you are in control of and have choice over. There will, however, be other factors in which you may have little or no say. Things such as the venue, presentation space, room set up, available equipment, presentation time and so on may all be dictated to you, and you will have to plan and deliver your presentation within these given parameters. The key to successful presenting is finding out what these parameters are and planning your presentation within them. In this way you will not get a nasty shock when you arrive at the venue with your beautifully prepared PowerPoint presentation to find no computer or projector, or you will not plan a practical activity, only to find on the day that you are presenting in a lecture theatre with fixed tiered seating.



Questions to ask before you start planning

Where are you presenting?

What space do you have?

How is the room set up and can this be altered?

What AV (audio/visual) equipment will be available/what do you need to take with you?

What time limits are there?

What set up time will you get?

Who is your point of contact before/on the day?

Structuring the presentation

Organising and gathering presentation materials

The purpose of your presentation needs to be clear. A key skill in preparing an effective presentation is in knowing what to include and what to leave out.

Try this method to fine tune your ideas:

Write the purpose on a sheet of paper and then use postit notes to write down everything that you could tell the audience on this subject. Use one note per idea. When you have exhausted your ideas, sort the notes into three categories:

- What must I tell the audience?
- What should I tell them?
- What could I tell them?

Once you have established the purpose and main topic of your presentation, and considered the audience, setting and situation, your next step is to gather information and organise it so that it is interesting and appropriate for your listeners.

What information you need will depend on the type of presentation you are doing. You may need to find:

- Facts and figures relevant to your topic
- Results and/or analysis of research
- Expert opinions
- Dates of important events or developments
- Key agendas/targets
- Work that is already happening in the specific field
- Financial information (budgets, forecasts etc)
- Stories to tell

There are many places that this information can be found. It may be that you have personal experience of the topic you are presenting; for example you might have conducted a survey, carried out experiments, invented a product or been part of a research project. In this situation you have an advantage in that you can speak from experience; telling real stories and sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm with your audience.

If you are presenting a topic about which you don't have first-hand experience then you will have to find the information you need from alternative sources. These might include the internet, library, contacting relevant people, reading newspapers and journals or conducting interviews.

Writing your presentation

Consider carefully the structure of your presentation.

- It needs an introduction that clearly puts the audience in the picture. As with the story line of a good film or book, a good beginning will connect with the audience appropriately and grab their attention.
- There needs to be a main body to the presentation that has a logical order and flows well.
- A strong end to the presentation is as important as an attention grabbing start.

Introduction

In this section you should explain the content and purpose of your presentation. It is your chance to capture the interest of the audience, so it's vital that your introduction is upbeat and engaging.

Elements you might want to use in your introduction include:

- Who you are and where you are from
- What you plan to discuss/share/demonstrate during your presentation
- How you intend to explore the topic
- What you hope the outcome will be
- What you want the audience to do

Main content

This is the most important part of your presentation; the section where you will make the pertinent points and during which you hope to show/teach/persuade/inform the audience to the best of your ability.

When writing the main section you might find it helpful to:

- Produce a list or summary of the key points you want to communicate
- For each point on your list, ask yourself "what do I want the audience to learn from this point" and/or "what is the important message I want to get across"
- Arrange the key points in a logical order
- Embellish each of these key points with supporting information; this may include evidence, facts and figures, diagrams, film clips etc.

The number of key points you make will depend on the length of time you have to present. As a rough guide, you should aim for three key points in a 10 - 15 minutes presentation, six for a 30 minute presentation and eight in a 45 minute presentation.

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Conclusion

The conclusion should summarise the main points and reflect back on the aim that was stated in the introduction. This is your opportunity to make a positive lasting impression so make sure your conclusion is delivered confidently.

Important elements of a conclusion may include:

- Reviewing the purpose and topic of the presentation
- A summing up of the main points
- A review of the main findings/conclusions
- A suggestion for what the next stage(s) might be
- An invitation for listeners to ask questions
- Thanking the audience for their time and attention

Transitions

Although not a specific section in their own right, transitions have an important role to play in helping the audience navigate their way through a presentation. Transitions help to divide the presentation into manageable chunks. They link different aspects of your talk and help maintain the pace and flow of the presentation.

Examples include:

- "I would like to start by discussing..."
- "I will now move on to..."
- "Having explored... we can now see that..."
- "Moving on to look at..."
- "We can now shift the focus from... to..."



Preparing to present

Once you have written your presentation, there are still lots of things to think about, organise and prepare in order to maximise your chances of success.

Venue

Ideally, the type of presentation you want to do will dictate what type of venue you use, but you may find that in reality the venue is predetermined and it is this that ends up limiting the sort of presentation you can do.

If you do have a variety of different types of venue to choose from, then your presentation can make full use of this to be as exciting, interactive and practical as possible. If you are more limited in terms of space and room set up, but still want to use fun, interactive activities to help get your point across, then it's still possible; you may just need to be a bit more imaginative about how you do it.

The key to presenting successfully in any type of venue is to find all of the information you need before you get too far through the planning process (see questions in 'working within given parameters' on page 10) and to really explore how you can deliver an engaging and interactive presentation within the limitations of the environment.

Imagine you are delivering a presentation that is aiming to gain support for a new format of sports tournament. How might you get the audience to understand the new format you are pitching if you had the use of a sports hall, a classroom, a lecture theatre, a conference room or a coffee shop? Can you think of a way that the audience could get a real feel for your new style of sports tournament for themselves in these different environments?

Use of visual aids

Visual aids include things such as:

- Flip charts
- White boards and interactive white boards
- Computer presentation programmes
- Handouts
- Video

Visual aids can be of great benefit and, when used effectively, can help to maintain an audience's interest and to communicate pertinent points. Be aware, however, that poorly managed visual aids can ruin a presentation; to use no visual aids is better than using poor visual aids or using visual aids poorly!

Flip charts

Although 'low tech' the flipchart can still be a very useful delivery aid. It is particularly convenient when you wish

to record the audience's thoughts or opinions and is invaluable if you want the audience to complete some small group work of their own during your presentation.

Tips for using a flip chart

- Make sure you have a few different coloured flip chart pens and that they all work!
- If you know you will struggle to write in a straight line then draw faint pencil lines on the paper prior to your presentation
- If you are concerned about your spelling/neatness of writing you could ask someone else to scribe for you or try to make light of it ("I should have been a doctor with my handwriting" or "if you could answer in words of one syllable I stand more chance of spelling them")
- Try to position the flip chart so that you don't turn your back on your audience when you're writing on it (or again, have a scribe)
- Pre-prepare any necessary pages before your presentation, so you can just flip over to them at the relevant time
- Rip off any pages you think you will need to refer back to later in the presentation, and stick them to the wall



Whiteboards and interactive whiteboards

Whiteboards are useful for recording feedback from the audience and for expanding simple ideas and diagrams. If you have access to and plan to use an interactive whiteboard then make sure you are confident about how to use it and that you have sufficient time to set it up before your presentation. It may also be helpful to have a technically competent person (if that's not you!) on hand at the start of your presentation to help with any technical glitches that may occur.

Tips for using a whiteboard

- Bear in mind that whatever you write on the whiteboard will be there only temporarily (although you can always photograph the whiteboard if you do plan to use the information at a later date)
- Make sure you use only whiteboard/dry wipe pens and that they work
- You will (more than likely) have to turn your back to the audience to write on it
- The white background can cause some problems for people with a visual impairment

Computer presentation programmes

There are several different computer presentation programmes available such as Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, Prezi and CustomShow. All of these programmes allow users to create and display information as a 'slideshow'.

As with all visual aids, done well these programmes can be a hugely effective way to communicate ideas. Done badly, they can send an audience to sleep.

Tips for using computer presentation programmes

- Don't write everything you want to say onto a slide the slide is there as a prompt for you and to give the 'headlines' to the audience
- Don't read out the slide if you write in full sentences you will find yourself simply reading to an audience who are perfectly capable of reading for themselves!
- 'Whizzy' effects are fine, but not if they start to detract from the messages you are trying to give or if it just becomes a way to show off your technological skills

Handouts

A handout is a way for the audience to take away the salient points from your presentation, to jog their memories and/or share with others at a later date.

Handouts come in many shapes and sizes. You may decide to type up and print out every word you plan to say or you might print out the slides from your presentation programme. You could give facts and figures in the form of charts or graphs or you may give listeners the 'headlines' and encourage them to make their own notes.

Handouts are also a useful 'back up' – at least if you have your presentation on a handout you and the audience still have something to work from if the computer won't turn on!

Tips for using handouts

- In the same way that you would not simply read to the audience from a slide, do not read to them from the handout.
- The audience and type of presentation will affect the format of handout that your opt for. Think about what you want the audience to take away with them, when they will get a chance to write notes and how you will present the key points.

Video

There is now more opportunity than ever to include video clips in your presentation. Websites such as YouTube have such a vast range of footage that you may well find a clip that backs up the points you are making. Including video can make your presentation more interesting and help to reinforce the messages you are giving.

Tips for using video

- Keep video clips short and to the point
- Ensure that any clips you show are not subject to copyright restrictions
- Use clips that are appropriate for the type of audience you have



Different learning styles

Different audience members will learn in different ways; some people will learn best by listening to what you say, some will prefer to see what you are telling them and others would rather experience for themselves the points you are making.

The most effective presentations will take these different learning styles into account and try to cater for them all by:

- Explaining using clear concise language and summarising key points
- Using pictures, diagrams, charts, video clips and so on to reinforce the important messages
- Allowing listeners to 'have a go' for themselves where appropriate

Plan B

As part of your planning, it is sensible to take into account what you might do should 'something' not go to plan. Of course, you can't legislate for every possible eventuality, but you can take simple steps to ensure that your presentation runs as smoothly as possible.

Simple 'plan B' steps might include:

- Taking extra flip chart/white board pens (that you know work) with you
- Taking your computer presentation backed up on a memory stick
- Taking an electrical extension cable
- Taking your presentation as a paper copy in case of computer issues.

Using notes

Unless you have a photographic memory and the power of total recall, the chances are you will need to use notes of some kind to help you in the delivery your presentation. There are several different options when it comes to using notes:

• Writing your presentation out in long hand and read word for word from your notes.

dynamic and more stilted than it should ideally be. You will have to look down at your notes all the time so will struggle to make eye contact and therefore build rapport with the audience and you may come across as lacking in confidence.

Using cue/prompt cards

This is where you write the key points you want to include on note cards, normally with a different card for each key point, in case you forget what you'd plan to say. You should rehearse your presentation so that you can try to speak without looking at the prompts and use them as back up. The good thing about this method is that you can interact with the audience whilst expanding upon the main points. However, you do need to make sure you keep the cards in the correct order – and whatever you do, don't drop them!

Using notes on the computer

Computer presentation programmes such as PowerPoint have a 'notes' feature. This allows you to type your notes at the bottom of each slide so you can read them on the computer screen but they don't appear on the projection screen behind you.

Whilst this may feel like the safest thing to do, the chances are you will deliver a presentation that is less



Managing the presentation

Communicating with the audience

Communicating your message effectively and building rapport with your audience will be vital in delivering a successful presentation. It doesn't matter how thoroughly you know your subject matter or how encouraging your facts and figures appear to be; if you don't communicate in an enthusiastic, engaging, clear, confident way, then all of your research and planning will be diminished.

8 steps to effective communication

First impressions

We make judgements about people in the first five seconds, so it is important that the first impression you give is as positive as possible. Smile, make eye contact and give a firm (but not too firm!) handshake. Be aware that the way you dress, your hair, shoes and general air of confidence will all be noted by the audience in those vital first seconds.

Eye contact

Eye contact gives an impression of confidence and is the most obvious way of forming a link between you and the audience. If you stare at the floor or the ceiling your audience will assume that you are not confident (or worse still, bored or just rude!), will not feel part of the presentation and will not form a positive relationship with you. Try to shift your gaze around the room so as to include as many people as possible and so that you don't keep staring at one member of the audience. If you feel uncomfortable making eye contact, try looking at people's foreheads instead; it will look to everyone else like you are making direct eye contact.

Body language

Body language can say a great deal more than the words we use and it can also cancel or reinforce what is said verbally – so the two sets of messages need to agree! Standing up straight exudes confidence and purpose so try not to slouch. Using your arms to gesture shows energy and enthusiasm (although too much will look like you are directing traffic!). Using open gestures which move away from your body towards the audience will help them feel included. Mirroring other people's movements (subtly) can help to create empathy, whilst matching their movements can show that you are 'in tune' with them.

Volume

No matter how wonderful your voice is, it will be wasted if your audience cannot hear you. It is possible to project your voice using a low or high level of volume so that the audience can hear comfortably. It goes without saying that the audience need to be able to hear you but that you shouldn't be shouting at them. The volume you speak at will depend on the size of audience, size of the presenting space, where you are in relation to the listeners and if there is any background noise you have to compete with. The important thing is to use volume effectively. Raising your voice can show the importance of and/ or your passion for a specific point. Sometimes a stage whisper can be conspiratorial and draw an audience in whilst a sudden shout can make people sit up and listen.

Pace

If you speak too quickly the audience will struggle to follow what you are saying whilst speaking too slowly may frustrate and bore listeners. Feel free to play around with your pace - a faster section can convey enthusiasm whilst a slower section can add emphasis – but aim for a 'happy medium' when it comes to pace.

Voice

The quality of a speaker's voice is an important factor in how successful a presentation will be. If the speaker's voice is dull and uninteresting, the audience may switch off and it may be difficult to get them to pay attention to, or understand, the message. When speaking, always bear in mind the three P's:

- Pitch This simply means the note at which you speak. A musical instrument is not good to listen to if only one or two notes are played nor is the voice if the speaker has a restricted range.
- Pace This is the rate at which you speak. Varying the rate at which you speak adds interest to what you are saying.
- Pause Pauses are necessary in speech to:
 - o give the speaker time to think,
 - o give the audience time to absorb information,
 - o make the speaker appear in control, authoritative and confident, and useful for dramatic effect.

Think how pauses are used in quizzes and talent shows on television.

It is important to vary the pitch and tone of your voice in order to maintain the audience's interest and to sound enthusiastic. Speaking in a monotone way will sound boring and will not inspire or engage an audience. Explore different ways to add enthusiasm and stress different points when you practice your delivery. Consider also how you say something, rather than what you say. The way in which something is said can completely change the meaning. Without intonation it is difficult to understand the expressions and thoughts that go with the words.

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Breathe

There is sometimes a tendency to want to deliver a presentation as quickly as possible and when we are nervous breathing can become fast and shallow. Try to breathe slowly and deeply to combat nerves and to slow your presentation down. You can always pause and take a couple of breaths before continuing if you feel like you are speaking too quickly.

Language

We have already discussed the use of language that is appropriate for the audience; not overly technical or jargon heavy. You can, however, also use language to draw an audience into your presentation and make them feel part of what you are saying.

Using phrases such as "so what we can learn from that is...", "you will see for yourselves that..." are examples of inclusive phrases.

Interacting with the audience

If you work hard to interact with your audience early in the presentation (or even before it starts if this is possible) you will make life easier for yourself down the line. Make contact with as many listeners as possible; ask and use people's names, ask for opinions and feedback, smile, make eye contact and nod in agreement as people are speaking.

Dealing with questions

Whilst you are speaking, you are in control of the situation. Once the audience starts to ask questions, you relinquish some of that control and this can be a bit frightening. By planning for questions you can feel more confident to handle this situation.

- Decide when you will take questions is it ok for listeners to ask questions during your presentation or would you rather take questions all together at the end? Make this clear to the audience from the start in order to avoid any confusion.
- Don't worry if you're not sure of an answer it is far better to say "that's a great question, I'm not too sure of the answer, can I get back to you after I have spoken to my colleague/found out for you" than waffle or bluff your way through
- It's fine to ask someone to rephrase their question if you don't understand what they are asking. Chances are the other members of the audience will be glad you asked for a recap
- Sometimes an opinion can be dressed up as a question, you can simply thank the person for their input and agree that they make a good point without feeling you need to provide an 'answer' for them

Dealing with nerves

It is normal to feel nervous before you get up to speak in front of a group of people and even seasoned presenters admit to feeling nervous. There is nothing wrong with feeling nervous – indeed you will probably deliver a better presentation if you are a bit nervous than someone would if they were over confident and cocky.

There are a few tried and tested techniques you can use to minimise the negative effects of nerves

- Breathe taking slow deep breaths will make your body think you are calmer and will, in turn, slow your breathing and heart rate and make you feel calmer
- Drink water nerves can dry your mouth, so taking regular sips of water will help to counteract this.
 Sipping water will also help to regulate your breathing and therefore calm you down
- Smile smiling is a natural relaxant and sends positive chemical messages to your brain. Smiling at the audience will also encourage them to smile back, which should help to make you feel less nervous
- Use visualization techniques if you imagine you are calm, confident and delivering a successful pitch, then you increase your chances of doing so.



Presentation checklist

Use the checklist below to make sure you have remembered everything you need to know and do to make your presentation as successful as possible.

Pre-planning

- Topic decide on any specific focus/key points
- Purpose are you informing, persuading etc.
- Audience who they are, what is their background, how many will attend, why are they there
- Venue where, type of room, size of room, audiovisual availability
- Time how long will the presentation last

Planning

- Finalise key points to make
- Gather presentation materials facts and figures, numbers, important dates etc
- Allocate order and time to each key point
- Write supporting information
- Plan and write introduction and conclusion
- Add transitions
- Decide on delivery aids and create handouts, slides
 etc

Practise

- Practise out loud including slides and so on
- Rehearse in front of other people if possible
- Video yourself and watch footage in order to highlight aspects in need of development
- Visit the venue and note the location of electrical sockets etc
- Make contact with venue support staff and ask any relevant questions

Delivery

- Gather together all resources including pens, paper, delivery aids, notes etc
- Arrive early
- Use techniques to calm nerves
- Greet people as they arrive big smile, hand shake, look confident
- Use positive verbal and non-verbal communication strategies

After delivery

- Self-evaluate what went well, what didn't go so well, what do you need to work on for next time
- Peer evaluate (if possible)
- Gain feedback from the audience
- Follow up any leads
- Find the answers to any questions and/or get back to people as agreed
- Explore appropriate places to publish your presentation

Useful Links and resources

Presentation skills

www.businessballs.com/presentation.htm

http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/presentation/planning-presentation

Presentations skills activity

https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/skillswise/giving-a-presentation/zvhjgwx

www.skillsconverged.com/FreeTrainingMaterials/tabid/258/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/809

http://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills-presentation#activate-planning_your_presentation

Articulation

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z8jr2p3/revision/1

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z8jr2p3/test

Intonation

http://esol.britishcouncil.org/teaching-pronunciation/intonation

www.slideshare.net/shtyfurak/intonation-and-its-functions

Body language

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zshwnbk/revision/1

www.businessballs.com/body-language.htm#body-language-analysis

www.mindtools.com/pages/article/Body_Language.htm

Responding to questions

www.strathman.com/pdf/answering.pdf

https://www.surrey.ac.uk/academic-skills-and-development/student-academic-development/online-academic-skills

www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/presentation/questions

Computer presentation programmes

Microsoft PowerPoint <u>http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/powerpoint</u>

Apple Keynote <u>https://www.apple.com/uk/keynote/</u>

Prezi <u>http://prezi.com</u>

CustomShow www.customshow.com

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