**The Art and Science of Presentations**

**How to Present Effectively**

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| **AIMS**:   * To provide students with guidance and advice on preparing and making presentations. |

**Lecture**

At some stage during your academic career you will be expected to participate in a presentation. Sometimes you will be required to present alone, at others within a group. Presentations are not only important because they may be graded, but because they teah you to formulate and articulate arguments and knowledge effectively. Beyond life on campus, presenting effectively will assist you in successfully attending job interviews, challenging political figures in public forums and, naturally, when you will need to present ideas and concepts during your career.

This presentation provides a simple explanation of the art (i.e. using your creativty to make presentations entertaining and therefore gain better audience attention) and science (i.e. tips on improving the effectiveness of your approach) that can result in successful presentations.

Definitions?

The Aims of Presentations

Preparation

Who, what, how

Slides vs Notes

The Presentation

Slideshow

Projection

**SECTION ONE: Definitions [XX minutes]**:

There is often some confusion about the idea of a presentation. So how would you define the following terms:

To present

A presentation

A PowerPoint presentation - This is not a presentation in and of itself. It is just one of many commercially available softwares that can be used by a presenter to display information and make the presentation easier to follow or understand.

**SECTION TWO: The Aims of Presentations [XX minutes]**:

To impart knowledge and information.

Clearly and concisely.

To demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

To consolidate team work.

To prepare students for public speaking (inc. Job interviews).

**SECTION THREE: The Preparation [XX minutes]**:

Your preparation needs to start by defining the who, the what and the how of your presentation:

Firstly you need to understand who your audience will be. This will help you determine the level that you will need to pitch your presentation at. Are they new to the subject matter? Academics with considerable experience? Have you been asked to clarify a new concept to a group of peers, or demonstrate an indepth understanding of a subject area for assessment purposes? You might actually have a mixed audience and may even trying to achieve a number of aims, such as explaining and demonstrating knowledge of a concept. You need to know your audience.

It should go without saying that you will need to research subject thoroughly and ensure that your research is going into sufficient depth for your audience.

You will also want to be prepared to answer broader questions that your presentation may not be able to cover, but may bring up in the question time at the end of the presentation. For example, whilst you may have been asked to present an historic account of a recent interethnic conflict, the audience may ask about relevant theoretical background.

Once you have cemented your knowledge of the audience and the subject matter, the next phase of the preparation is in determining how your will present. As we covered when considering the relevant definitions, it is important to distinguish between the information needs of your slides and your notes.

Graphics are a very useful tool for presenting ideas, both complex and simple. They can illustrate a point far better than a page of bullet points might.

How you choose to script your presentation is a personal matter. Some of us work well from bullet point notes, that allow you to freeform or adlib the content, while others prefer to write out the presentation in full. You should test each method to see which works best for you.

Which ever you choose, it is essential that once your have prepared the presentation, your make a number of run-throughs to measure how long it takes, to check that you can pronounce everything fluidly and correctly and that it actually makes sense to the audience.

Whichever script method you choose, you must also make sure that you can keep your delivery lively and engaging. No one will stay awake through 10 pages of notes mumbled in a monotone drone as you try to follow your carefully crafted script, nor will the audience be able to understand a random ramble around the subject as you try to fill in on your parsimonious notes.

**SECTION FOUR: The Presentation [XX minutes]**:

This first slide was touched upon in the section on preparation, but it is worth noting twice and in a bit more detail. Because…a PowerPoint presentation should never be the full content of your presentation. You will know from experience that a slide packed with writing is difficult to read and to note take, it distracts you from listening to the presenter and usually it is plain boring.

The slides should be used to emphasis key points of your presentation, be they arguments, ideas of concepts that you are expanding upon. You can highlight these by presenting key words on the screen. Words that will signify to the audience the important points to note.

However, slides also give you an opportunity to highlight these key points graphically, either as images, cartoons, graphs, charts or myriad other illustrative forms.

If you are using graphs, or tables of data, check whether they remain legible when projected on the big screen. If not then highlight the key figures either graphically (perhaps by over writing the graph with the key figure in a large text box) or as bullet points on a subsequent slide. Your aim is always to allow the audience to concentrate on your voice, and to reinforce what you are saying with simple, clear images or figures.

Therefore it is imperative that you speak at a steady pace, tailored to your audience. Maintain a steady rhythm so that the audience becomes accustomed to your speed and can follow more easily. If you speak to slowly, some members of the audience will drift off, perhaps even to sleep. If you speak too quickly, much of your research will be wasted, as many won’t be able to follow what you are saying. If you notice that a particular point seems to have caused everyone to take notes, it might be worth a small pause, or repetition, to enable them to keep up.

Don’t forget how important it is to dress appropriately. This is for two reasons, firstly you may be required to simulate a situation in which business attire might be appropriate, or you may also want to consider what you wear so that your outfit does not inappropriately distract the audience. Secondly, what you wear can have a dramatic impact on your projection. Bulky clothing can restrict your chest (and thereby your diaphragm), hats and scarves may prevent you from holding your shoulders and head upright to enable your throat and mouth to act efficiently as a megaphone.

Never wear sunglasses to present. Sunglasses will alienate your audience and prevent them engaging with you through appropriate amounts of eye contact. This is important, you should try to engage with as many of your audience as possible, and you glances should be light. Whilst it is always tempting to focus on the one friendly face in the audience, staring someone down may become uncomfortable for them and cause the rest of the audience to switch off.

Keep a degree of mobility, moving your head around to face different parts of the audience, turn and point to the slides to highlight key terms. All of these actions will prevent you from looking like a rabbit caught in the headlights and you are less likely to slip into a monotone delivery.

Finally, when measuring your presentation, always leave time for questions. Depending on the type of presentation, you may think it appropriate for these to be raised throughout the performance (for it is a performance), or you may tell the audience to raise them at the end. You are more likely to lose track of where you are in your presentation and to run over time if you allow questions throughout, plus it can be annoying if questions are asked on areas that will be covered later in the presentation anyway.

So…any questions?

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