

# Oral Presentations

This module covers concepts such as:

- Characteristics of a successful oral presentation
- Strategies for effective, planning, preparation and practice of oral presentations
- Common assessment criteria for oral presentations



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# Oral Presentations

Speaking in public is a necessary part of university life. You will often be asked to explain and justify your ideas in tutorials and seminars.

This workshop looks at what makes for a successful oral presentation and arrives at a checklist which will help you deliver successful, entertaining and informative oral presentations.

You may also like to check out the [online version](#) of this module.

## **Presentation Criteria**

Think back to the best speeches, lectures or presentations that you have ever seen. What made those presentations successful?

*Try Activity 1* ✓

Here are the criteria for successful oral presentations that other students have suggested. Do some of your criteria appear in this list?

- Entertaining
- Relevant and useful
- Knowledgeable
- Involved the audience
- Well-organised
- Easy to understand
- Confident

You should make sure that you closely study the weightings and criteria your lecturer will use to assess your oral presentation. There is an example below and two others in the Activities.

| Criteria                      | Weighting |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Content knowledge             | 60%       |
| Evidence of planning/research | 10%       |
| Structure                     | 15%       |
| Use of visual aids            | 5%        |
| Non-verbal communication      | 5%        |
| Audience involvement          | 5%        |

*Try Activity 2* ✓

## **Public speaking? No worries!**

Apparently 3 out of 4 people (75%) suffer from speech anxiety; fear of public speaking is the #1 social phobia. Whatever you do, **don't stress!** Your lecturers, tutors, fellow students – just about everyone, including the Learning Advisers at JCU – want you to succeed. **So, relax.** Your public speaking audience is on your side – cheering from the sidelines.

## **Content Knowledge**

One of the best ways to overcome the nervousness of speaking publicly is to thoroughly know your topic. After all, this is primarily what your lecturer or tutor will be assessing. You will have to know your topic well enough to inform, debate, instruct or present an opinion – whatever is the purpose of your presentation.

Just as in planning any assignment, you will need to work to a timeline based on a process similar to that for Essay Writing. For oral presentations you will also have to allow for practice at delivering and demonstrating your content knowledge.

## **Structure and Organisation**

Structure your presentation according to the guidelines, facilities and time allocated. You must leave your audience with a sense that they have been given a well-structured and organised presentation.

### **Introduction**

Give an overview and what you intend to accomplish during the presentation.

### **Body**

This should be a logical sequence of information and should be well supported with evidence, visual aids and audience involvement.

### **Conclusion**

This is where you point out to the audience how you have achieved what you promised in the introduction.

## **Audio-Visual Aids**

Audio-visual aids can help with your presentation because they can help take the pressure off you and provide an opportunity for variety in your presentation. The use of PowerPoint slides for example, can not only take the focus off you but can also provide memory prompts.

### *PowerPoint Tips:*

- Use your first and last slide to list the key points or objectives of your presentation;
- Don't distract your audience from your main message by using too many wild transitions or animations;
- List key points only and use a font that is of a readable size from the back of the room;
- Make sure that your key points are consistent with what you say. Your audience will be confused if they are reading one thing and hearing another;
- If you have a long quote, let your audience read it for themselves and give them time to do this.

Other audio-visual aids you should consider using include music or video clips, slides, computer presentations, flip charts or materials that you can hand around.



### **Did you know?**

Most people tend to speak too quickly in an oral presentation – mainly because they are nervous! Keep this in mind and pace your presentation carefully. If in doubt, slow it down. Public speaking should be clear and more deliberate/planned than the rapid bursts of speech you are used to in everyday conversation.

**Another tip?** Nerves can lead some people to sound unsure of themselves, by having a rising intonation at the end of every sentence. Speak with confidence!

## **Audience Involvement**

How do you think audience involvement can be encouraged?

Here are some suggestions:

- Role play
- Demonstrations
- Group work

When should you try and get your audience involved?

### **Right from the start!**

Why not ask your audience what they already know about your topic and use this as a starting point? This way you will be tapping into the prior knowledge of the audience and you will be giving them a sense of involvement from the outset.

## **Non-verbal Communication**

Be aware of your gestures, tone of voice, movement and facial expressions.



Many students are surprised when told that they didn't appear nervous at all! You can learn to put on a confident and brave front while still feeling nervous inside. One of the best ways to do this is to practise.

### *Practice Points:*

- Take every opportunity to practise your oral presentation skills (join Toastmasters, attend Effective Speaking courses, practise in front of your partner, friends, the cat...);
- Video yourself and assess your presentation using the criteria provided in these workshop notes;
- Familiarise yourself with the room and equipment;
- Time yourself.

Try Activity 3

## Your Turn: Activities

1. See if you can compile a list of “the top 10 features of a successful presentation”. Consider the most effective teaching or information sessions you have attended. What made them effective?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Search online for “Ted talks education” and choose a presentation that is about 10 minutes long. Use the criteria provided below to assess the presentation. Alternatively, use the criteria to assess your best lecturer!

| CRITERIA   | Excellent | Good | Fair | Needs Work | COMMENTS |
|--|-----------|------|------|------------|----------|
| <b>(1) ORGANISATION</b>                                    |           |      |      |            |          |
| • talk was well-prepared                                   |           |      |      |            |          |
| • topic clearly stated                                     |           |      |      |            |          |
| • structure & scope of talk clearly stated in introduction |           |      |      |            |          |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| • topic was developed in order stated in introduction        |  |  |  |  |  |
| • speaker summed up main points in conclusion                |  |  |  |  |  |
| • speaker formulated conclusions and discussed implications  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>(2) CONTENT</b>   |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Speaker:</b>  |  |  |  |  |  |
| • was in control of subject matter                           |  |  |  |  |  |
| • covered what s/he intended to cover                        |  |  |  |  |  |
| • displayed knowledge of topic by referring to other sources |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>(3) CONFIDENCE</b>  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Speaker:</b>  |  |  |  |  |  |
| • looked relaxed and confident                               |  |  |  |  |  |
| • controlled nervous hand movements                          |  |  |  |  |  |
| • used appropriate body language                             |  |  |  |  |  |
| • established good eye contact initially                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| • maintained eye contact throughout talk                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| • was aware of the audience response                         |  |  |  |  |  |
| • speaker's movement and posture were relaxed                |  |  |  |  |  |

| CRITERIA                                       | Excellent | Good | Fair | Needs Work | Comments |
|--|-----------|------|------|------------|----------|
| <b>(4) SPEECH</b>                              |           |      |      |            |          |
| •pace was varied and not too rushed            |           |      |      |            |          |
| •volume was appropriate                        |           |      |      |            |          |
| •intonation varied & appropriate               |           |      |      |            |          |
| •pronunciation and articulation were clear     |           |      |      |            |          |
| •grammar accurate                              |           |      |      |            |          |
| <b>(5) VISUAL AIDS</b>                         |           |      |      |            |          |
| •equipment handled with confidence             |           |      |      |            |          |
| •introduced at appropriate times               |           |      |      |            |          |
| •were legible                                  |           |      |      |            |          |
| •did not contain too much information          |           |      |      |            |          |
| •showed appropriate use of diagrams            |           |      |      |            |          |
| <b>(6) TIMING/MODE OF DELIVERY</b>             |           |      |      |            |          |
| •talk was well-timed                           |           |      |      |            |          |
| •time was divided appropriately                |           |      |      |            |          |
| •speaker spoke from notes                      |           |      |      |            |          |
| •speaker read text in spoken style             |           |      |      |            |          |
| <b>(7) DISCUSSION MANAGEMENT</b>               |           |      |      |            |          |
| <b>Speaker used appropriate strategies to:</b> |           |      |      |            |          |

|                          |   |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | initiate discussion                               |  |  |  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | control flow of questions and focus of discussion |  |  |  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | respond confidently                               |  |  |  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | deflect difficult or irrelevant questions         |  |  |  |  |  |

Downloaded from: [http://www.ug.it.usyd.edu.au/~isys3015/s1\\_2004/tutorials/presentation.htm](http://www.ug.it.usyd.edu.au/~isys3015/s1_2004/tutorials/presentation.htm)

3. Video your next presentation and use the following rubric to assess yourself.

| Criteria  | Below expected level   | At expected level  | Above expected level  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Introduction of topic</b>                                | Topic introduced.  | Topic introduced clearly, and purpose of talk was made clear.  | Topic introduced clearly and in an interesting way. Purpose of talk was made clear. Outline of points was given.  |
| <b>Development of topic</b>                                 | Some understanding of topic shown. Some links and connections made between ideas. Points are usually developed with minimum detail. Information is usually relevant. | Good understanding of topic shown. Links and connections between ideas made clear. Information was relevant and expressed in own words. Points were developed with sufficient and appropriate details. | A very good understanding of the topic shown. Links and connections between ideas made clear. Information was relevant and well expressed in own words. Points were well-organised and developed with sufficient and appropriate details.         |
| <b>Ability to engage and involve audience</b>               | Some eye contact was made.<br>Techniques used to engage audience were minimal, or mainly ineffective.  | An interesting approach taken to topic. Speaker used techniques such as visual aids and props, anecdote, surprising facts, direct audience participation.  | Speaker monitored audience and adapts presentation accordingly. An interesting or original approach taken to the topic. Speaker used techniques such as visual aids and props, anecdote, humour, surprising facts, direct audience participation. |
| <b>Suitability of presentation for purpose and audience</b> | Attempts were made to tailor the presentation content to the intended purpose of informing,  | The presentation content and structure was tailored to the audience and to the intended purpose of   | The presentation content, structure and delivery were closely tailored to the audience and to the   |

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
|   | interesting or persuading.  | informing, interesting or persuading.   | intended purpose of informing, interesting or persuading.   |
| <b>Voice: clarity, pace, fluency</b>              | Presenter occasionally spoke clearly and at a good pace.  | Presenter usually spoke clearly to ensure audience comprehension. Delivery was usually fluent.  | Presenter spoke clearly and at a good pace to ensure audience comprehension. Delivery was fluent and expressive.  |
| <b>Vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar</b>    | The vocabulary of the presentation was mainly appropriate for the topic. The presentation content was occasionally grammatically correct. | The vocabulary of the presentation was appropriate for the topic. Sentence structures were usually correct. The presentation content was usually grammatically correct. | The vocabulary of the presentation was appropriate for the topic. A variety of phrases and sentence structures were used. The presentation content was grammatically correct.             |
| <b>Pronunciation</b>                              | Pronunciation occasionally correct, but often hesitant and inaccurate.  | Pronunciation and intonation is usually correct.  | Pronunciation and intonation is correct and confident.  |
| <b>Cultural conventions for oral presentation</b> | Greetings and general presentation are not culturally inappropriate.  | Greetings are culturally appropriate. Questions are answered appropriately.   | Greetings are culturally appropriate. Gestures, stance and eye contact are appropriate. Questions are answered appropriately.   |
| <b>Use of visual aids</b>                         | No visual aids were used;<br>OR<br>Visual aids were occasionally appropriate and related to the spoken message.                           | Visual aids supported the presentation effectively. They clarified and reinforced the spoken message.   | Visual aids were carefully prepared and supported the presentation effectively. They clarified and reinforced the spoken message. The aids added impact and interest to the presentation. |
| <b>Conclusion of topic</b>                        | An attempt was made to conclude the presentation.   | The presentation was summed up clearly.   | The presentation was summed up clearly and effectively, with key points emphasised.   |
| <b>Answering questions from audience</b>          | Not all questions could be answered. Questions answered with difficulty, and little knowledge of the topic was demonstrated.              | Most questions answered. Answers showed good knowledge and understanding of the topic. Language was mainly correct.   | Questions answered with little difficulty. Very good knowledge of the topic was demonstrated. Language was correct and fluent.  |