Business Presentations &

Public Speaking in English

Introduction

All presentations have a common objective. People give presentations because they want to communicate in order to:

- **inform**
- **train**
- **persuade**
- **sell**

A successful presentation is one of the most effective ways of communicating your message. And because English is so widely used in international business, a working knowledge of the vocabulary and techniques used in an English language presentation is a valuable asset.

We will start by exploring

the importance of preparation.

After that, we will consider

what equipment to use.

Then we will look at

how to "deliver" a presentation.

After delivery, we will examine

the language of presentations,

before moving on to

the presentation itself.

Finally, we will conclude with

a review of what we have covered.

Afterwards, you will be invited to

take a test and ask questions.

Preparation

nervous. And your audience will **feel** your confidence. Your audience, too, will be confident. They will be confident in **you**. And this will give you **control**. Control of your audience and of your presentation. With control, you will be 'in charge' and your audience will **listen positively to your message**.

Objective

Before you start to prepare a presentation, you should ask yourself: "**Why** am I making this presentation?" Do you need to inform, to persuade, to train or to sell? Your objective should be clear in your mind. If it is not clear in your mind, it cannot possibly be clear to your audience.

Audience

"**Who** am I making this presentation to?" Sometimes this will be obvious, but not always. You should try to inform yourself. How many people? Who are they? Business people? Professional people? Political people? Experts or non-experts? Will it be a small, intimate group of 4 colleagues or a large gathering of 400 competitors? How much do they know already and what will they expect from you?

Venue

"**Where** am I making this presentation?" In a small hotel meeting-room or a large conference hall? What facilities and equipment are available? What are the seating arrangements?

Time and length

"**When** am I making this presentation and how long will it be?" Will it be 5 minutes or 1 hour? Just before lunch, when your audience will be hungry, or just after lunch, when your audience will be sleepy?

Method

How should I make this presentation?" What approach should you use? Formal or informal? Lots of visual aids or only a few? Will you include some anecdotes and humour for variety?

Content

"**What** should I say?" Now you must decide exactly what you want to say. First, you should brainstorm your ideas. You will no doubt discover many ideas that you want to include in your presentation. But you must be selective. You should include only information that is relevant to your audience and your objective. You should exclude all other ideas. You also need to create a title for your presentation (if you have not already been given a title). The title will help you to focus on the subject. And you

will prepare your visual aids, if you have decided to use them. But remember, in general, less is better than more (a little is better than a lot). You can always give additional information during the questions after the presentation.

Structure

A well organised presentation with a clear structure is easier for the audience to follow. It is therefore more effective. You should organise the points you wish to make in a logical order. Most presentations are organised in three parts, followed by questions:

Beginning	**Short introduction**	- welcome your audience - introduce your subject - explain the structure of your presentation - explain rules for questions
Middle	**Body of presentation**	present the subject itself
End	**Short conclusion**	- summarise your presentation - thank your audience - invite questions
Questions and Answers		

Notes

When you give your presentation, you should be - or appear to be - as spontaneous as possible. You should not read your presentation! You should be so familiar with your subject and with the information that you want to deliver that you do not need to read a text. Reading a text is boring! Reading a text will make your audience go to sleep! So if you don't have a text to read, how can you remember to say everything you need to say? With **notes**. You can create your own system of notes. Some people make notes on small, A6 cards. Some people write down just the **title** of each section of their talk. Some people write down **keywords** to remind them. The notes will give you confidence, but because you will have prepared your presentation fully, you may not even need them!

Rehearsal

Rehearsal is a vital part of preparation. You should leave time to practise your presentation two or three times. This will have the following benefits:

- you will become more familiar with what you want to say
- you will identify weaknesses in your presentation
- you will be able to practise difficult pronunciations

- you will be able to check the time that your presentation takes and make any necessary modifications

So prepare, prepare, prepare! Prepare everything: words, visual aids, timing, equipment. Rehearse your presentation several times and time it. Is it the right length? Are you completely familiar with all your illustrations? Are they in the right order? Do you know who the audience is? How many people? How will you answer difficult questions? Do you know the room? Are you confident about the equipment? When you have answered all these questions, you will be a confident, enthusiastic presenter ready to communicate the subject of your presentation to an eager audience.

Equipment

Easily your most important piece of equipment is...**YOU**! Make sure you're in full working order, and check your personal presentation carefully - if you don't, your audience will!
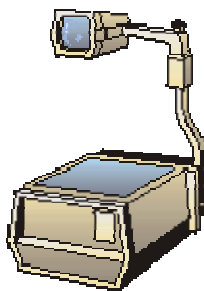
The **overhead projector** (**OHP**) displays **overhead transparencies** (**OHTs** or **OHPTs**). It has several advantages over the 35mm slide projector:

- it can be used in daylight
- the user can face the audience
- the user can write or draw directly on the transparency while in use
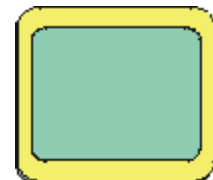
The **whiteboard** (more rarely **blackboard** or **greenboard**) is a useful device for spontaneous writing - as in brainstorming, for example. For prepared material, the OHP might be more suitable.

The **duster** is used for cleaning the whiteboard. It is essential that the duster be clean to start with. You may consider carrying your own duster just in case.

Markers are used for writing on the whiteboard (delible - you can remove the ink) or flipchart (indelible - you cannot remove the ink). They are usually available in blue, red, black and green. Again, it's a good idea to carry a spare set of markers in case you are given some used ones which do not write well.
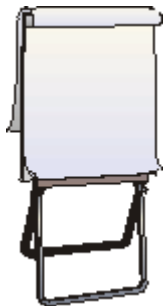
The **flipchart** consists of several leaves of paper that you 'flip' or turn over. Some people prefer the flipchart to the whiteboard, but its use is limited to smaller presentations.

The **Slide projector** - which must be used in a darkened room - adds a certain drama. Some slide projectors can be synchronised with audio for audio-visual (AV) presentations. These projectors are typically used for larger presentations. The majority take 35mm slides or transparencies (as seen here), but projectors for 6x6cm slides are also available.
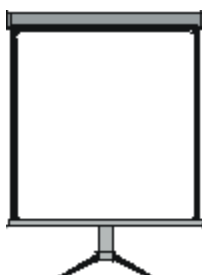
Transparencies are projected by an overhead projector or a slide projector onto a **screen** - in this case a folding screen which can be packed up and transported.

The **notebook computer** is increasingly being used to display graphics during presentations. It is often used in conjunction with an overhead projector, which actually projects the image from the computer screen onto the wall screen.

Handouts are any documents or samples that you 'hand out' or distribute to your audience. Note that it is not usually a good idea to distribute handouts *before* your presentation. The audience will read the handouts instead of listening to you.

Delivery

'Delivery' refers to the way in which you actually deliver or perform or give your presentation. Delivery is a vital aspect of all presentations. Delivery is at least as important as content, especially in a multi-cultural context.

Nerves

Most speakers are a little nervous at the beginning of a presentation. So it is normal if you are nervous. The answer is to pay special attention to the beginning of your presentation. First impressions count. This is the time when you establish a rapport with your audience. During this time, try to speak slowly and calmly. You should perhaps learn your introduction by heart. After a few moments, you will relax and gain confidence.

Audience Rapport

You need to build a warm and friendly relationship with your audience. Enthusiasm is contagious. If you are enthusiastic your audience will be enthusiastic too. And be careful to establish eye contact with each member of your audience. Each person should feel that you are speaking directly to him or her. This means that you must **look at** each person in turn - in as natural a way as possible. This will also give you the opportunity to detect signs of boredom, disinterest or even disagreement, allowing you to modify your presentation as appropriate.

Body Language

What you do not say is at least as important as what you do say. Your body is speaking to your audience even before you open your mouth. Your clothes, your walk, your glasses, your haircut, your expression - it is from these that your audience forms its first impression as you enter the room. Generally speaking, it is better to stand rather than sit when making a presentation. Be aware of and avoid any repetitive and irritating gestures. Be aware, too, that the movement of your body is one of your methods of control. When you move to or from the whiteboard, for example, you can move fast or slowly, raising or reducing the dynamism within the audience. You can stand very still while talking or you can stroll from side to side. What effect do you think these two different approaches would have on an audience?

Cultural Considerations

Because English is so widely used around the world, it is quite possible that many members of your audience will not be native English-speakers. In other words, they will not have an Anglo-Saxon culture. Even within the Anglo-Saxon world, there are many differences in culture. If we hypothetically imagine a German working for an Israeli company making a presentation in English to a Japanese audience in Korea, we can see that there are even more possibilities for cultural misunderstanding. You should try to learn about any particular cultural matters that may affect your audience. This is one reason why preparation for your presentation is so important. Cultural differences can also be seen in body language, which we have just discussed. To a Latin from Southern France or Italy, a presenter who uses his hands and arms when speaking may seem dynamic and friendly. To an Englishman, the same presenter may seem unsure of his words and lacking in self-confidence.

Voice quality

It is, of course, important that your audience be able to hear you clearly throughout your presentation. Remember that if you turn away from your audience, for example towards the whiteboard, you need to speak a little more loudly. In general, you should try to vary your voice. Your voice will then be more interesting for your audience. You can vary your voice in at least three ways:

- speed: you can speak at normal speed, you can speak faster, you can speak more slowly - and you can stop completely! You can pause. This is a very good technique for gaining your audience's attention.
- intonation: you can change the pitch of your voice. You can speak in a high tone. You can speak in a low tone.
- volume: you can speak at normal volume, you can speak loudly and you can speak quietly. Lowering your voice and speaking quietly can again attract your audience's interest.

The important point is not to speak in the same, flat, monotonous voice throughout your presentation - this is the voice that hypnotists use to put their patients' into trance!

Visual aids

Of all the information that enters our brains, the vast majority of it enters through the eyes. 80% of what your audience learn during your presentation is learned visually (what they see) and only 20% is learned aurally (what they hear). The significance of this is obvious:

- visual aids are an extremely effective means of communication
- non-native English speakers need not worry **so** much about spoken English - they can rely more heavily on visual aids

It is well worth spending time in the creation of good visual aids. But it is equally important not to overload your audience's brains. Keep the information on each visual

aid to a minimum - and give your audience time to look at and absorb this information. Remember, your audience have never seen these visual aids before. They need time to study and to **understand** them. Without understanding there is no communication.
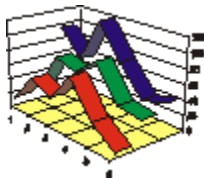
Apart from photographs and drawings, some of the most useful visual aids are charts and graphs, like the 3-dimensional ones shown here:

Piecharts are circular in shape (like a pie).
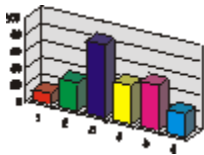
Barcharts can be vertical (as here) or horizontal.

Graphs can rise and fall.

Audience Reaction

Remain calm and polite if you receive difficult or even hostile questions during your presentation. If you receive particularly awkward questions, you might suggest that the questioners ask their questions after your presentation.

Language

Simplicity and Clarity

If you want your audience to understand your message, your language must be **simple** and **clear**.

Use short words and short sentences.

Do not use jargon, unless you are certain that your audience understands it.

In general, talk about concrete facts rather than abstract ideas.

Use active verbs instead of passive verbs. Active verbs are much easier to understand. They are much more powerful. Consider these two sentences, which say the same thing:

1. Toyota sold two million cars last year.
2. Two million cars were sold by Toyota last year.

Which is easier to understand? Which is more immediate? Which is more **powerful**? N°1 is active and N°2 is passive.

Signposting

When you drive on the roads, you know where you are on those roads. Each road has a name or number. Each town has a name. And each house has a number. If you are at house N° 100, you can go back to N° 50 or forward to N° 150. You can look at the signposts for directions. And you can look at your atlas for the structure of the roads in detail. In other words, it is easy to navigate the roads. You cannot get lost. But when you give a presentation, how can your audience know where they are? How can they know the structure of your presentation? How can they know what is coming next? They know because **you tell them**. Because you put up **signposts** for them, at the **beginning** and **all along the route**. This technique is called '**signposting**' (or 'signalling').

During your introduction, you should tell your audience what the structure of your presentation will be. You might say something like this:

"I'll start by describing the current position in Europe. Then I'll move on to some of the achievements we've made in Asia. After that I'll consider the opportunities we see for further expansion in Africa. Lastly, I'll quickly recap before concluding with some recommendations."

A member of the audience can now visualize your presentation like this:

Introduction	- Welcome - Explanation of structure (**now**)
Body	- Europe - Asia - Africa
Conclusion	- Summing up - Recommendations

He will keep this image in his head during the presentation. He may even write it down. And throughout your presentation, you will put up signposts telling him which point you have reached and where you are going now. When you finish Europe and want to start Asia, you might say:

"That's all I have to say about Europe. Let's turn now to Asia."

When you have finished Africa and want to sum up, you might say:

"Well, we've looked at the three continents Europe, Asia and Africa. I'd like to sum up now."

And when you finish summing up and want to give your recommendations, you might say:

"What does all this mean for us? Well, firstly I recommend..."

The table below lists useful expressions that you can use to signpost the various parts of your presentation.

Signposting	
Function	**Language**
Introducing the subject	- I'd like to start by... - Let's begin by... - First of all, I'll... - Starting with... - I'll begin by...

Function	Language
Finishing one subject...	• Well, I've told you about... • That's all I have to say about... • We've looked at... • So much for...
...and starting another	• Now we'll move on to... • Let me turn now to... • Next... • Turning to... • I'd like now to discuss... • Let's look now at...
Analysing a point and giving recommendations	• Where does that lead us? • Let's consider this in more detail... • What does this mean for ABC? • Translated into real terms...
Giving an example	• For example,... • A good example of this is... • As an illustration,... • To give you an example,... • To illustrate this point...
Dealing with questions	• We'll be examining this point in more detail later on... • I'd like to deal with this question later, if I may... • I'll come back to this question later in my talk... • Perhaps you'd like to raise this point at the end... • I won't comment on this now...
Summarising and concluding	• In conclusion,... • Right, let's sum up, shall we? • I'd like now to recap... • Let's summarise briefly what we've looked at... • Finally, let me remind you of some of the issues we've covered... • If I can just sum up the main points...

Function	Language
Ordering	- Firstly...secondly...thirdly...lastly... - First of all...then...next...after that...finally... - To start with...later...to finish up...

The Presentation

Most presentations are divided into 3 main parts (+ questions):

1	INTRODUCTION	Questions
2	BODY	
3	CONCLUSION	
	Questions	

As a general rule in communication, repetition is valuable. In presentations, there is a golden rule about repetition:

1. Say what you are going to say,
2. say it,
3. then say what you have just said.

In other words, use the three parts of your presentation to reinforce your message. In the introduction, you tell your audience what your message is going to be. In the body, you tell your audience your real message. In the conclusion, you summarize what your message was.

We will now consider each of these parts in more detail.

Introduction

The introduction is a very important - perhaps the most important - part of your presentation. This is the first impression that your audience have of you. You should concentrate on getting your introduction right. You should use the introduction to:

1. **welcome your audience**
2. **introduce your subject**
3. **outline the structure of your presentation**
4. **give instructions about questions**

The following table shows examples of language for each of these functions. You may need to modify the language as appropriate.

Function	Possible language
1 Welcoming your audience	• Good morning, ladies and gentlemen • Good morning, gentlemen • Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman • Good afternoon, everybody
2 Introducing your subject	• I am going to talk today about... • The purpose of my presentation is to introduce our new range of...
3 Outlining your structure	• To start with I'll describe the progress made this year. Then I'll mention some of the problems we've encountered and how we overcame them. After that I'll consider the possibilities for further growth next year. Finally, I'll summarize my presentation (before concluding with some recommendations).
4 Giving instructions about questions	• Do feel free to interrupt me if you have any questions. • I'll try to answer all of your questions after the presentation. • I plan to keep some time for questions after the presentation.

Body

The body is the 'real' presentation. If the introduction was well prepared and delivered, you will now be 'in control'. You will be relaxed and confident.

The body should be well structured, divided up logically, with plenty of carefully spaced visuals.

Remember these key points while delivering the body of your presentation:

- do not hurry
- be enthusiastic
- give time on visuals
- maintain eye contact
- modulate your voice
- look friendly

- keep to your structure
- use your notes
- signpost throughout
- remain polite when dealing with difficult questions

Conclusion

Use the conclusion to:

1. **Sum up**
2. **(Give recommendations if appropriate)**
3. **Thank your audience**
4. **Invite questions**

The following table shows examples of language for each of these functions. You may need to modify the language as appropriate.

Function	Possible language
1 Summing up	- To conclude,... - In conclusion,... - Now, to sum up... - So let me summarise/recap what I've said. - Finally, may I remind you of some of the main points we've considered.
2 Giving recommendations	- In conclusion, my recommendations are... - I therefore suggest/propose/recommend the following strategy.
3 Thanking your audience	- Many thanks for your attention. - May I thank you all for being such an attentive audience.
4 Inviting questions	- Now I'll try to answer any questions you may have. - Can I answer any questions? - Are there any questions? - Do you have any questions? - Are there any final questions?

Questions

Questions are a good opportunity for you to interact with your audience. It may be helpful for you to try to predict what questions will be asked so that you can prepare your response in advance. You may wish to accept questions at any time during your

presentation, or to keep a time for questions after your presentation. Normally, it's your decision, and you should make it clear during the introduction. Be polite with all questioners, even if they ask difficult questions. They are showing interest in what you have to say and they deserve attention. Sometimes you can reformulate a question. Or answer the question with another question. Or even ask for comment from the rest of the audience.

Review

In this seminar, you have learned:

- to allow plenty of time for preparation
- to ask the all-important question-words, why? who? where? when? how? and what?
- to structure your presentation into introduction, body, conclusion and questions
- to write notes based on keywords
- to rehearse your presentation several times and modify it as necessary
- to select the right equipment for the job
- to use equipment effectively
- to make use of clear, powerful visual aids that do not overload your audience
- to use clear, simple language, avoiding jargon
- to use active verbs and concrete facts
- to explain the structure of your presentation at the beginning so that your listeners know what to expect
- to link each section of your presentation
- to signpost your presentation from beginning to end so that your listeners know where they are
- to say what you are going to say, say it, and say what you have just said
- to overcome your nerves
- to establish audience rapport
- to be aware of your body language
- to understand cultural differences
- to control the quality of your voice
- to maintain interest by varying the speed, volume and pitch of your voice
- to deal with listeners' questions politely
- to respond to your audience positively

(http://www.englishclub.com/speaking/presentations.htm, 4 August 2007)