Clear presentations are an effective means of sharing facts and ideas and of practising speaking in front of an audience. Here are tips on preparing for and successfully delivering a presentation.

Presentation content

- Analyse your audience by asking who they are, what their level of knowledge of your subject is, and what their interests are. Pitch your presentation at this level.
- Gather the material you are going to present, find a focus, and structure it simply, clearly and logically.
- Frame your presentation with an introduction and a conclusion. A simple but effective maxim to remember is: "Tell them what you are going to tell them; tell them; tell them what you told them." (It never fails!)
- Use 'signpost' phrases like "Another point is...", "A contrary view to consider is...", "to sum up the first half of what I am saying...", and so on to guide your audience through the presentation.
- A handout giving an outline of your presentation will help the audience follow your points.
- Always remember that listening and reading are not the same thing; help your audience to retain the points you make by emphasising and repeating key issues, ideas and facts. Avoid over-complication and too much detail.
- Where possible, involve your audience in active participation.

Improving your performance

Here are a few points to remember when you give a class presentation:

- Your voice should be enthusiastic, audible, clear and correctly paced (if you are nervous you tend to speak too fast, so slow down).
- Your posture should be relaxed and confident.
- Your gestures should be natural, relevant (giving emphasis where it is appropriate), and non-distracting (don’t fiddle with jewellery, cuffs or earlobes). Keep gestures ‘open’ (crossing your arms creates a barrier between you and your audience).
- Your facial expression should be friendly and interested in both your material and your audience. Smile.
- Use eye contact to establish rapport with your audience. Scan the audience in a slow ‘z’ pattern from the front of the room to the back.
- Avoid reading. When you lower your head to read you lose eye contact with the audience and your voice loses projection. You may wish to have your script with you as a backup, but use palm cards with brief reminders of main points.
- Dress appropriately. Normally you will not have to dress formally for an in-class presentation, but you should carefully consider the image you want to project.
Presentation tools

There are several presentation tools available (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, Haiku Deck, etc.) that can help to further enhance your presentation through the use of visual and audio media. When using these tools, remember to keep the following in mind:

- When preparing screens/slides, all visual/audio information presented should help to support and emphasise your main points.
- Keep information on each screen.slide simple and clear. Don't crowd them with detail. Use bullet points or short sentences, and try to avoid going over one line for each point. Use appropriate spaces around and between each point or group of information.
- Use an appealing, but non-distracting, theme or template that is appropriate for your presentation.
- Use appropriate font styles (Helvetica or Arial) and size (e.g., a 50mm letter on the projected screen is readable from 6 metres). Avoid conflicting background colours and images that make the text difficult to read – colours will project differently than what appears on your computer screen.
- Use graphics only to help explain your points and not for just ‘eye-candy’.
- Remember to check the grammar and spelling.
- Check out the room before you begin your presentation. Make sure you are conversant with the technology you will be using in the room. Make sure the equipment is working – preload your presentation before the audience arrives.
- Make sure you don’t block your audience’s view of the screen.
- Your words should relate directly to the information presented on the screens/slides.
- Don’t just read from the screen. Practise speaking from the points on the screen – the points should be a cue for the presenter.
- Each time you deliver your presentation, take note of whether the audience is focusing too much on the screen – there may be too much information or the information is confusing and difficult to follow or not fitting with your words. Learn from your observations and make adjustments as needed.
Controlling stage fright

- Prepare notes thoroughly
- Check your slides carefully
- Rehearse adequately
- Use the Checklist to make you are fully prepared
- Use the Contingency Plan so that you have strategies to deal with any potential disaster
- Before your presentation (and off stage!) use tension-releasing techniques, such as abdominal breathing, head rolls and shoulder-shrugs
- Establish eye contact with sympathetic/interested members of the audience
- Smile. (This not only encourages reciprocal smiles from the audience but also reduces facial tension)
- Remember that every member of your audience will have her/his turn to present, and so is likely to be tolerant of any 'glitches' in your presentation.

Contingency plans

Work out strategies to overcome potential disasters. You will feel more confident if you know you are prepared for the worst (which probably won't happen).

- What if the technology doesn't work?
- What will I do if the audience members become restless?
- What will I do if I forget the point I am trying to make?
- What if I get tongue-tied?
- What if I lose my notes?
- What if I lose my place in my notes?

Class presentation checklist

Apply this checklist to your prepared presentation and make adjustments where you need them.

- Have I fulfilled the requirements of the presentation assignment?
- Is my message pitched at an appropriate level?
- Can I complete my presentation in the time allotted?
- Is my presentation clearly framed, structured, and 'sign-posted'?
- How will I actively involve the audience?
- Is my tone of voice appropriate to the topic and the audience?
- Is my pace of delivery effective?
- Are my slides well designed?
- What stress reducing techniques will I use before my presentation?
- Have I rehearsed adequately?