

Oral presentations

Public speaking skills are highly prized in the employment market and are well worth taking time to develop. Oral presentations can have a greater impact than written presentations and require a wide range of skills, not only the skills required to stand up and deliver a talk, but also:

- skills in research
- the ability to organise ideas and construct logical arguments
- the ability to develop handouts and aids
- the ability to field impromptu questions from the audience.

Preparing the presentation (a)

Read the assignment task carefully.

.....**Insert Assignment Task**

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the intention of your presentation? What are you trying to achieve?
2. Who is your audience? What kind of knowledge can you presume on their part?
3. What is the venue of your presentation?
4. How much time do you have available to talk?

Preparing the presentation (b)

The following questions also relate to the assignment question:

1. How much research do you need to do? Where will you find the appropriate resources?
2. What kind of visual aids are you going to use (e.g. PowerPoints, cartoons, videos, etc.)?
3. Write a presentation outline, summarising in one or two sentences: your introduction; the body of your presentation; your conclusion. Indicate how much time you will allow for each of these.
4. Write your presentation notes and practice (e.g. in front of a mirror or in front of a friend or family member). Make sure you get the timing right!

For useful hints to help you prepare, look up the following USQ web address:

<<http://www.usq.edu.au/ltsu/alsonline/assessment/oralpresentations/preparation.htm>>.

Delivering the presentation

There are many useful hints about delivering oral presentations at the following USQ web address: <<http://www.usq.edu.au/ltsu/alsonline/assessment/oralpresentations/deliver.htm>>.

Research has shown that public speaking is the most frightening thing most people will ever do; some people are even more afraid of it than dying...So don't think you're the only one who is nervous. In fact, a few nerves are normal and good, because they help you focus. And the good news is that if you are well-prepared, there is little that can go wrong, so good preparation is the key to a good presentation.

Answering questions at the end

Answering questions at the end can cause some anxiety as well, because it is to some extent unpredictable. The same motto applies here: adequate preparation.

Once you have written/ prepared your presentation:

1. Write down as many potential questions that you think your audience might ask, based on the information you will give them.
2. Write down as many potential counter arguments to your central argument, and think about ways in which you may counter those arguments.

There are a number of 'golden rules' to keep in mind about question time:

- If you don't know the answer, say so; do **not** try to make up an answer. It is much better to be honest than to be caught out...
- If you don't know the answer, throw it back into the group (e.g. 'I'm not sure, but does any one else know this?' or 'Does anyone else agree or disagree with this?')
- Stay polite at all times (e.g. 'that's a good question, but...'), even if the question seriously annoys you.
- If the question is long, try to break it up in your mind. If you forget half the question, or you don't understand the question, don't be afraid to ask the person to repeat the question, or to explain what they mean by the question.

Finally, the following USQ web address provides some useful hints to help you prepare: <<http://www.usq.edu.au/ltsu/alsonline/assessment/oralpresentations/hints.htm>>.