

Presentations

Presentation assessments require you to research a particular topic and then prepare and deliver an oral presentation on the topic. Some presentation assessments are completed in a small group and require teamwork. Presentations are often accompanied by slides projected onto a screen, or shown as part of a video or webinar presentation.

Content

The content of your presentation will be centred around your research of the topic. For example, you may be asked to research a particular issue or a specific organisation, so you will need to read about that issue/organisation and collect relevant information. Then, the information will need to be organised and conceptualised clearly for your audience.

Preparing the content of a presentation is a process, just like preparing a written assignment:

1. Analyse the task and brainstorm ideas about the topic
2. Research your topic to find by reading and taking notes
3. Create an outline of your presentation with clear sections. Keep the time limit in mind.
4. Write each section of your presentation.
5. Summarise your draft into points to write on notecards.
6. Plan and prepare your visuals. Ensure your ideas are conceptualised clearly.
7. Ensure information from sources is referenced correctly using APA Style or Harvard Style.
8. Rehearse your presentation and get the length right.



Structure

A presentation follows the usual structure; it has an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

In your introduction, outline what you are going to talk about, how your talk is going to be structured, and perhaps what you are intending to achieve with the talk. You can engage the audience and begin strongly by using strategies such as a powerful quotation, surprising statistics or information, or a question.

In the body of your presentation, you should have clearly defined sections with supporting evidence and examples. You may also have some tables, graphs or images as visual support material. You should deliver information step-by-step so that your audience can follow your ideas.

In your conclusion, recap the main points and reinforce the importance of your topic. You could go for a 'big finish' by inviting questions from the audience – try to predict these questions in preparation for your responses. Alternatively, you can present some questions or issues to your audience to create further discussion. This is a useful strategy to have up your sleeve in case your audience has no questions to ask you.

Style

When people take things in by ear they need to be reminded of the direction your talk is taking, and how the major points link up. Therefore, it's a good idea to use signal phrases, repeat the main points, and summarise what you have said. Use devices like 'So, where do we go from here?', 'That brings me to my next point ...', 'So far, we've looked at...'

Using visual aids

Most presentations require some visual aids, such as a PowerPoint or Prezi. Well thought out visual aids can enhance your presentation and can help capture the audience's attention. Always ensure your visual aids are relevant, easy to read/see, well conceptualised and well formatted. Visual aids should be written using academic English with correct APA or Harvard referencing.

Tips for using PowerPoint

- Avoid having too many words on each slide as people will tend to read rather than listen. Aim for five or six lines of text per slide with a maximum of 10.
- Use slides for key messages, quotes, examples, simple diagrams/charts and images.
- Aim to use one slide for every 1-2 minutes of talk.
- Use size 32 to 36 font for headings and size 18 to 28 for the body text.
- Choose a professional design and colours. The templates under the 'Design' tab in PowerPoint contain some good options.
- Avoid using animations, sound effects, flashy graphics and distracting backgrounds; this detracts from what you are saying.



Delivering with confidence

Presentations need to be effectively delivered in order to convey your content in the most powerful way possible. Keep in mind the saying 'practice makes perfect' - few people can just get up to give their presentation cold and nail it. If you don't practice your presentation, you're certain to fumble and lose the interest of your audience. Don't feel like you have to memorise the entire presentation; in many cases you will be able to use memory prompts such as cue cards or the PowerPoint slides themselves.

Notes

Prepare some written notes to help remember what to say in the presentation, but do so in such a way that you minimise the temptation to read and maximise the chance of speaking directly to the audience. Your notes should outline the main points only and you then expand on these points as you present.

Eye contact

Remember to look up and try and make contact with at least two people in your audience. If you feel uncomfortable making eye contact, 'scan' the room without looking specifically at any one person, or look slightly above the heads of the audience.

Voice and speech

You should deliver your presentation at a speed slower than your normal talking speech. This is necessary so that people can take in what you are saying. Take a moment or two to breathe between each point. Practice your talk several times, going slowly and timing yourself. If it is too long, edit it down. Remember also to enunciate words clearly and project your voice so that all the audience members can hear without straining.

Body language

Choose a position so the audience can see you easily and stand confidently when delivering your presentation. During your presentation, keep movement to a minimum and avoid swaying and fidgeting. Try to not turn your back on the audience to read the slides behind you.

Note: Information in the *Delivering with confidence* section has been adapted from: Turner, K., Ireland, L., Krenus, B. & Pointon, L. (2008). *Essential academic skills*. South Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.