Tapescript: Giving Effective Oral Presentations at University

Introduction

==Welcoming the audience==
==Introducing the topic==
==Why the topic is relevant/ important for the audience==
==Structuring==

Good morning everybody … Thank you for coming to my presentation … I hope you'll find it interesting and informative … The topic of my presentation this morning is 'how to plan and deliver an effective oral presentation' … As you know, oral presentations play an important part in our studies here at the PolyU … In many of the courses we take, our tutors often ask us to carry out research and then write up a paper or report on a particular aspect of the topic … And very often we are expected to give a presentation on the topic we've researched, and in many cases these presentations are an important part of the assessment … Especially in the final year, when many departments require students to present the findings of their third-year project.

So, clearly, knowing how to give effective presentations is absolutely vital for all of us … But how often do you see a really good presentation? … It's true many of us have a good understanding of our subjects … Many of us have a good command of English … And many of us have the ability to put across our ideas to an audience … But by no means do all of us have the ability to put all these ingredients together and deliver a really top-class presentations … Why is this? … Well, the simple fact is that oral presentations are hard to do … Hard to plan … Hard to organise … Hard to deliver … Not only have we got to master the subject matter … Which can often be very complex … But we've also got to communicate our ideas in a second language … While at the same time worrying about our visual aids, timing, body language, and of course our tutor sitting at the back.

Now, although many of these problems will never entirely disappear, with careful preparation, planning and practice you'll be able to develop the strategies you need in order to deliver effective presentations, both here at the PolyU and in your future career … And this is the main theme of my presentation this morning … How to give an effective oral presentation … Now, I'd like to divide my presentation into three main areas … To start with, I'm going to look at how to plan your presentation … Then I'll move on to talk about the ways in which you can organise and write up your ideas … And finally I'll give you some suggestions about how to communicate your message … So, planning the presentation … Organising the presentation … and delivering the presentation.

Main Body

==Moving on to the main body== ==and previewing the main points==
==Signalling the topic is about to change==

Linking words and phrases
Referring to previous point

Now, I'd like to start by looking at how to plan your presentation … And here I'd like to mention three points … Your purpose … Your audience … And the setting for the presentation … Now before I begin, I should point out that when people advise students about planning presentations they usually include suggestions about how to select and narrow down a topic … Now, while this is of course important, for the purposes of my presentation today, I'm going to assume that this has already been decided … Either by you or your tutor … So, I'll assume that you've chosen the topic … Carried out the research … Written up a report or paper … And that you're now ready to begin the process of planning a presentation based on your written work.

Now, the first thing you have to consider in the planning process is the purpose of your presentation … There are two ways of looking at the purpose … The first is the general purpose of the presentation … In other words, do you want to inform … Entertain … Persuade … And so on … I guess the general purpose of my presentation today is to inform or enlighten … As well as thinking about the general purpose of your presentation, you'll need to think about its specific purpose … And by this I mean what you want to accomplish … What you want to achieve … Essentially this involves asking 'why' … Why am I giving this presentation? … Well, the specific purpose of this presentation is to give you some practical advice and suggestions about planning, organising and delivering effective oral presentations at university … That's what I'm trying to accomplish.

The second aspect of planning involves thinking about the needs and interests of your audience, and the context in which your presentation is taking place … You should aim at being an audience-centred speaker … In other words, a speaker who really understands and communicates with an audience … If you want to connect with your audience, you need to understand who they are … These are some of the things you need to consider … Their knowledge … Their level of interest … Their attitudes … Their needs … As well as characteristics like age, sex, and ethnic group.

Apart from thinking about your audience you also need to consider the context or setting in which the presentation is taking place … These are just a few of the questions you need to ask yourself … How many people will be coming? … Where is the presentation taking place? … What are the seating arrangements? … What facilities are available? … Clearly, giving a long assessed presentation to fifty professionals in a well-equipped lecture theatre will be quite different from giving a short talk to a group of classmates in a small seminar room … What you have to do when planning your presentation is think carefully about the kind of people you're going to talk to and the kind of setting in which it's going to take place, and then adapt, tailor, customise your presentation so that it's appropriate for the audience and the occasion.

OK, having looked at how to plan presentations, I'd now like to consider the ways in which you can organise and prepare notes for your presentation … And I'm going to do this by, first, looking at how to organise your ideas and information in the body of your presentation … Then I'll give you some suggestions about how to introduce and conclude your presentation … And finally I'll

look at the differences between written and spoken English, and the ways that you can use your awareness of these differences to prepare notes for your presentation.

Now, when you consider the organisation of your presentation, I think it's best to start with the body … If the body is clearly and logically organised your presentation will be easier for the audience to understand and remember … I think the best way to organise the body is to devise three or four main points, which of course are related to the purpose and central message of your presentation … And then select supporting points to develop your main points … Now when you're actually delivering your presentation it's important to supply transitions to help your audience follow your presentation as you move from one point to another … For example, I'm now coming to the end of my section on the body so I need to say something to link this section with the next … So I'll say … Well, I think that covers most of the points about organising the body, and now I'd like to move on to look at how you can introduce your presentation.

Now, whether we like it or not, the fact is that first impressions count … And this very much applies to presentations … What you say … How you say it … How you look … These all contribute to the impression that you make at the beginning of your presentation … Making a good first impression is clearly an important factor in giving successful presentations … So, how do we do this? … Well, I think there are two basic ingredients … First, gain the attention and interest of the audience … And you can do this by doing things like asking a question … Using a quotation … Describing a problem … Referring to a recent event … Relating the topic to your audience's needs … In fact that's what I did at the beginning of my presentation … The other thing you need to do is to orient your listeners to the presentation … To do this you need to identify the topic and the purpose of your presentation … Give relevant background material … And provide an overview of the main points you're going to talk about … If you do this, your audience will be prepared both intellectually and psychologically for your presentation.

I said a moment ago that first impressions count … Well, it's also true that last impressions count … So you should aim at leaving your audience with a lasting impression of both you and your message by making your conclusion brief, clear and memorable … Easier said than done perhaps … But here are three suggestions … First, try to signal to your audience, either verbally or non-verbally, that you're coming to the end of the presentation … Second, summarise the main ideas of the presentation … And third, try to reinforce the central message of your presentation.

OK, you've organised the body of your presentation … And you've worked you're your introduction and conclusion … You know what you're going to say and the order in which you're going to say it … But how are you going to say it? … What about the words that you're going to use? … Well, I think it's fair to say that a lot of speakers don't really pay attention to the language they use, or rather the type of language they use … They tend to just read out their report or paper, or recite it from memory … The problem is that written English is quite different from spoken English … When we speak we tend to use simple straightforward words, short sentences or sentence fragments … We tend to use personal pronouns and contractions and ask a lot of questions … We also tend to repeat things … Information isn't packed in so densely … If you read straight from a script, you'll include lots of features of written academic language … Complex sentences, passive voice, long words and so on … To see what I mean, all you have to do is listen to someone reading from a textbook or a journal … After about thirty seconds you'll be confused,

bored or asleep … Written language is hard to understand … Hard to process … And you need to be aware of this when you prepare the notes for your presentation, and this is what I'd like to move on to … to talk about next.

Now, I've just mentioned that it's not a good idea to read out your report or paper … Even if you're very good at writing natural 'spoken' English, it'd still be really difficult to memorise all that material … On the other hand, you can't just speak off the top of your head … You've got to have something to refer to … I think the best solution to this problem is to prepare a detailed outline or plan of the whole presentation … This would include all the main sections and sub-sections, and would serve as a kind of blueprint for your presentation … After you have devised the outline, you can prepare speaking notes for each of the sections of the presentation … Probably the best way to do this is to prepare note cards with key words, which you can use as prompts … But remember, stick to key words … Don't write out full sentences otherwise you'll be back to the problem of written English.

So far I've concentrated on how to plan and organise your presentations … In other words, what you should do *before* you actually give your presentation … What I'd like to talk about now … And this is the last main point … Is how you can deliver your presentation effectively … And by this I mean the things you need to consider *during* the presentation … I'd like to concentrate on three aspects of delivery … First, visual aids … Second, non-verbal communication … And third, question-and-answer session at the end of the presentation.

It goes without saying that using visual aids like charts, photos and computer graphics can help you to get your message across … They can make your presentation interesting, clear and memorable … But you need to ensure that you use your visual aids effectively … Here are a few basic tips … Make sure your visual aids actually support what you're saying … Make sure they are simple and clear … Make sure that everyone can see them … And make sure you explain them clearly and fully.

The second thing to consider when delivering your presentation is non-verbal communication … Now, by non-verbal communication I mean communicating without words … In your presentation you will communicate your message through spoken and written language … And body language … You need to ensure that your personal appearance, your facial expressions, your eye contact, your posture, your movements, your gestures … All give the audience the impression that you're enthusiastic, confident and professional … That you really want to communicate with them … That you really want to build up a rapport with them.

The last point I'd like to talk about is the question-and-answer session at the end of your presentation … The question-and-answer session gives the audience the chance to find out more about the topic and in some cases ask for clarification about what you've been saying … How well you deal with the questions and the attitude you show towards your questioners will influence the way people feel about you and your presentation as a whole … I think there are two main points to consider here … The first is to anticipate the kinds of questions that might be asked and then prepare possible answers … This is particularly important if you're presenting a final-year project, when subject lecturers often like to test students out with difficult questions … What you can do in this situation is to think about possible weaknesses or limitations in your project … And then

try to think of ways that you can counter these criticisms … But make sure you do this in a fair and open way … And this is the second point I want to make … Don't be too defensive if people challenge you … Show that you welcome questions … Make eye contact with your questioners … Show that you value their questions … And try to answer them to the best of your ability … If you disagree with someone, do so in a respectful and reasonable way … Don't insult the questioner by implying that his or her question is meaningless or irrelevant or stupid.

Conclusion

Indicating the end of the presentation
Summarising the main points
Restating the key message of your presentation

Well, I think that covers most of the things I want to say about how to give effective oral presentations … In my presentation I've focused on three main areas … Planning your presentation … Organising your presentation … And delivering your presentation … To conclude my presentation today, I'd like to sum up the points I've made in a way that I hope you'll find easy to remember … And these are six key points you need to consider during the presentation process … These are the Principles of Presentation … Purpose … What is the objective of your presentation? … People … Who will you be talking to? … Preparation … What kinds of information and ideas will you include? … Planning … How will you organise your material? … Personality … How can you create a positive self-image for yourself … And finally, performance … How can you communicate your ideas effectively? … These are the principles of presentation … These are the principles that each and every one of you will need to consider if you want to give effective presentations here at the PolyU. Thank you.