



HOW TO STRUCTURE A PRESENTATION

Do you ever struggle with what points you want to get across during an oral presentation? Or how to create one? The purpose of an oral presentation is to inform your classmates about whatever topic you researched. You want to engage your audience by not only being informative, but by convincing the audience that they too should care about what you are talking about.

Present your material in the most clear and logical order possible. To do this, it is helpful to make an outline of your key points. Much like in a paper, start with an introduction, transition into the supporting points of your argument and/or information, and provide a purposeful conclusion. However, unlike with a paper, the audience cannot go back and reread what you said. Introduce, explain, and reference back to specific points.

Tell your audience what you are going to tell them. Tell them. Tell them again what you told them (USC).

- **Introduction:**

Start with something interesting enough to grab the audience's attention— maybe an interesting fact you found while researching, a related story, or a controversial question. After, state the purpose for the presentation and some background information on the topic. Next, briefly outline your presentation so that the audience gains a firm understanding of what you are going to be talking about. In short, tell them what you are going to be telling them.

- **Supporting Points:**

Your supporting points will include either presenting a body of information to the audience that is already proven (informative) or supporting your argument with evidence (analytical) (UPenn).

- Choose the most important information you want to relay to your audience. It is imperative to narrow down what you are trying to say because this is the information that will be most memorable.
 - If you are having trouble with this, try brainstorming the big ideas of your topic and circle 3-5 (maybe more depending on length of presentation) of your most important points. Build your presentation around these points.
- Again, unlike with a paper your audience cannot reread what you are saying, so focus and repeat the most important information. Back these points up using examples and citing sources from your research.

- **Transitions:** Transitions are important because they link your supporting points. Verbal transitions are ways of transitioning to another point while connecting to the point you are currently talking about. Smooth these transitions out with connecting *or* countering language:

Example: On the contrary, a recent study in schools shows that...

Example: In addition to Socrates' belief that we should all live an examined life, Mencius believes...

Example: This idea is most clearly expressed in *The Book of Job* when Krishna says, "...” ().

Nonverbal transitions could be changing the slide or pausing between points. Do not underestimate the power of a brief pause—it leaves time for the audience to think and for you to gather your thoughts. A pause can even add emphasis to what you are saying.

- **Conclusion:** Why does this presentation matter? So what? Do not just briefly explain what you already said; reinvent it so that the audience stays engaged and thinks about what you are saying further.

Example: I found out that... which is important because...

At the end of your presentation, you want your audience to now know what your research/argument entailed, and why it is important. Tell them again what you already told them. If you effectively told them this information, they should remember the key points you made. Always ask if there are questions because there will most often be points you mentioned that the audience wants to know a little bit more about.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.virginia.edu/cue/presentationtips.html>

"How To Make an Oral Presentation of Your Research." *Oral Presentation Tips*, Center for Undergraduate Excellence, U.Va. Center for Undergraduate Excellence, Web. 01 Oct. 2014.

<http://go.owu.edu/~dapeople/ggpresnt.html>

Peoples, Deborah Carter. "Guidelines for Oral Presentations." *Guidelines for Oral Presentations*. Ohio Wesleyan University Libraries, 15 Nov. 2001. Web. 01 Oct. 2014.

<http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=83009&sid=891476>

"Giving an Oral Presentation." *USC Libraries*. USC University of Southern California, 20 Oct. 2014. Web. 20 Oct. 2014.

<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/cwic/docs/so1.doc>

"Structure of Oral Presentation." *Communication Across the Curriculum*. University of Pennsylvania The College of Arts and Sciences, Web. 18 Oct. 2014.

Works Cited

"Giving an Oral Presentation." *USC Libraries*. USC University of Southern California, 20 Oct. 2014. Web. 20 Oct. 2014.

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"Structuring a Presentation." *Learning Development*. University of Leicester, Web. 07 Oct. 2014.