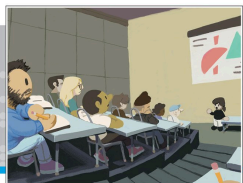


Chapter 11 Presentation Skills



Mary Shier

Student Success
An Invaluable Resource for
College and University Students



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This resource is a chapter from the book, *Student Success: An Invaluable Resource for College and University Students* by Mary Shier, published by BCcampus Open Education, illustrated by Gordon Shier.

Note that page numbers reflect the page numbers in the full textbook.

The full text can be found at **opentextbc.ca/studentsuccess**, where it can be read online, downloaded, printed, or ordered.

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This textbook can be referenced. In APA citation style, it would appear as follows:

Shier, M. (2020). *Student Success*. Victoria, B.C.: BCcampus. Retrieved from <https://opentextbc.ca/studentsuccess/>

Introduction

Learning Objectives

In this chapter on “Presentation Skills,” the following topics will be covered:

Interpersonal Skills – Students will:

- Practice techniques that affect physical presence (eye contact, face audience, body language).
- Practice speaking skills including projection, speed, tone, clarity, and enthusiasm.
- Use humour and practical examples to engage audience.
- Use a variety of visuals in presentations (e.g. handouts, props, posters, Power Point presentations).
- Facilitate questions and discussion.

Planning the Presentation – Students will:

- Describe key communication format factors to consider when developing a presentation.
- Describe the main functional elements of an effective introduction.
- Describe the functional organization in the body of an effective presentation.
- Describe the main functional elements of an effective conclusion.
- Develop a presentation outline using the concepts discussed in the chapter.

Presentation Aids – Students will:

- Explain how visual aids can improve the quality and impact of a presentation.
- Distinguish unique benefits of different types of visual aids.
- Develop visual aids that are consistent with standard presentation quality criteria.

Delivering the Presentation – Students will:

- Explain the preparation process used to deliver a presentation.
- Describe ways to cope with mistakes and surprises during a live presentation.
- Describe important audience factors to consider in delivering an effective presentation.
- Critique and provide constructive feedback on a professional presentation.

You may be taking a course that requires you to make a presentation. You may have already had exposure to public speaking and giving presentations, or perhaps you shudder at the thought. This

module introduces you to the art and science of putting together an impressive presentation. You will utilize key strategies needed to prepare and deliver presentations. Doing so requires a range of skills. Foremost is the ability to communicate well. Whether for business, school, or in everyday life, the ability to communicate effectively and with confidence is a core skill. But not everyone is a gifted communicator.

The art of communication involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and values. Speech is a key skill in communicating. Conversational speech may come easily to some, but communicating verbally in a professional context may not. Public speaking can be thought of as a rhetorical skill. To be effective, you need to understand not only what to say but also how to say it. You will learn about rhetoric as a function of communication, its key elements, and how it can be applied to professional presentations.

Casual conversation is usually spontaneous and informal. What is communicated may be unplanned and without consequence. Presentations, on the other hand, need to be planned and well-structured. They often occur in formal and sometimes stressful environments. Unlike in casual conversation, personal traits used in formal presentations may not come to you naturally. As a presenter, you need to know how to use elements of verbal and non-verbal communication effectively. For example, eye contact, body language, speaking style, active listening, and being concise are all important elements of a quality presentation. You will learn ways to hone these traits in order to effectively apply them as you develop your personal communication style.

In this module you will learn about proven techniques for planning a presentation for different purposes such as informing, persuading, or entertaining your audience. Each of these requires attention to detail and a clear strategy. Delivery includes what you say in words and what you say using props or presentation aids. You need to ensure these work in harmony to convey your message clearly. You will also learn about design considerations for creating visual aids to enhance your presentation.

Anxiety is a common barrier many presenters experience, and can result from being nervous or uncomfortable facing groups of people. It can also be caused by things like the presentation venue, familiarity with equipment that will be used, or other environmental factors. You will examine techniques to cope with and offset the impact of presentation anxiety.

As you work through the sections in this module, you will learn that giving good presentations does not just happen; rather, it is the result of a deliberate and well-planned process that combines both art and science.

Interpersonal skills are perhaps the most important for a successful presentation. They are key to getting your message across and to the way your audience reacts to you and interacts with you during your presentation. You will discover how verbal and non-verbal skills can be harmonized to deliver a presentation that an audience will not soon forget, both in its content and in presentation.

The next phase of the process is about planning. Here you will learn about factors to consider when preparing for an effective presentation and how to develop an execution strategy based on these factors. We will cover planning activities such as knowing your audience, researching supporting evidence for your topic, and organizing the flow of your presentation.

The final phase focuses on delivering a presentation. This is the culmination of your hard work in preparation and planning. It is where you showcase your communication skills and planning strategy. This is also the time when your audience is eager to get what they came for. In other words, this is the time when you sell yourself based on the quality of information you will convey and on how well it resonates with the audience.



Student presentations provide valuable experience.

Regardless of its substance or how well planned it may be, a poorly delivered presentation can be a significant disappointment to you and the audience. Very few presentations can be done well by winging it. You will learn several delivery techniques that improve the likelihood of a successful presentation including how to skillfully use body movements without causing distraction, how and when to vary voice characteristics to add emphasis, and the subtleties of eye contact to draw your audience into the presentation. You will also discover the pros and cons of using props and how to integrate them effectively to support your presentation.

Since your presentation is as much about you as is the topic, you will learn tips and techniques for rehearsing, interacting with your audience, conducting effective Q&As, and improving your persona.

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11.1 Interpersonal Presentation Skills

Many people have very limiting beliefs about presentations and their own abilities to give one. Examining your skills, fears, and preferences is your first step in opening yourself up to reaching your full potential as a presenter.

Your voice is a powerful communication tool, and how you use it can make or break your presentation. In this chapter you will learn about how you use verbal elements of presentation by examining techniques like pitch, volume, and pronunciation, among others.

Your non-verbal cues like gestures, facial expressions, and posture can punctuate and strengthen your message or do the opposite. You will learn about these non-verbal elements and have a chance to see how you use them in conjunction with your verbal cues by recording and examining a practice presentation.

After combining all of these elements, you will have a better understanding of who you are as a presenter and what you can bring to the table to develop your presentation strategy in the next chapter.

What Makes a Successful Speech or Presentation?

It's important to remember that a successful speech or presentation depends on a number of factors. For our purposes we can boil them down to three main factors: the environment, the presenter, and the audience. The presenter is key to a successful presentation. The speaker must have planned the presentation to be engaging and easy to follow, and then must deliver it well to be clearly understood. Often people forget about the other two aspects. The audience is important to consider as well. How much do they already know? What is their interest in the subject? Do you want them to ask questions and be involved in the presentation? Finally, the environment is the third aspect to consider when planning a presentation. Speeches and presentations usually take place in controlled environments, so the environment aspect is often overlooked. But everything from technology failure to a room being too hot or too cold can thwart a presentation's success. Using a room next to a noisy construction site can ruin even the most beautifully planned presentation. The environment affects both the speaker and the audience. You can't have a successful speech or presentation without considering all three aspects: the presenter or speaker, the audience, and the environment.



The Speaker

According to longtime Toastmasters member Bob Kienzle, there are a few key elements that tend to make a successful speaker:

- Voice—Can the person be easily understood?
- Body Language—Does their body support what they’re saying? Are they confident?
- Coherent Structure—Does what they’re presenting make sense? Is it logical?
- Enthusiasm—Do they care about what they’re presenting?
- Expertise—Do they know what they’re talking about? Are they credible?
- Practice—If they haven’t practised or sufficiently prepared, it will likely show up in one or more of the above.

A successful speaker can be inspired by other speeches or speakers but may fall flat if they try to copy someone else. **Authenticity** and passion can resonate so much with an audience that it can outweigh elements otherwise considered pitfalls. The techniques, tools, and best practices are a guideline, and it’s important to note there is no such thing as perfection in public speaking. Failure can happen in a myriad of ways, but it’s more helpful to see them as learning opportunities, or opportunities to make a stronger connection to your audience.

The biggest failure, according to Kienzle, is to pass up opportunities to practise your skills in presenting or public speaking.

The Audience

One of the most anxiety-inducing areas of presenting or speech-making is being in front of the audience. Some people may feel more at ease with relatively small audiences of up to about 10 people. Others

feel that 10 people is too intimate and actually feel more comfortable with impersonal numbers in the hundreds or thousands.

People often think of hostile audiences throwing tomatoes and yelling boos if the presenter makes the slightest mistake or slip of the tongue. But the truth is that most audiences desperately want you to succeed. They are overwhelmingly on your side. This means that in most situations they are very forgiving; they know being up there can be tough. If you make a mistake, you can apologize or laugh it off and keep going.

The audience is at least as involved in your presentation as you are. Awareness of yourself and awareness of them is key. If you are so preoccupied with your fear of the audience that you hide your head behind the podium while reading a boring list of facts your audience could read themselves, you will lose them. If you're not interested, they're not interested. If you are so frightened of your audience that you never look at them, you will not be able to get cues about their involvement in your presentation.

What you bring to the audience affects what they get from your presentation or speech. For that reason, it is tremendously important to develop enough self-awareness so that you can be *present* for your audience and have the confidence to make adjustments to keep them on your side and involved in your presentation.

The Environment

Sometimes you have no control over your environment. When you are asked to make a presentation for a class, you are likely confined to the course classroom. But there are usually some factors you will have control over. Regardless, it is a good idea to check out the space where you will be presenting to decide where things will happen.

Some things to check out if possible:

- **Room temperature.** If the audience is too hot or too cold they can be very distracted. See if you can make sure the temperature is comfortable before starting, and feel free to get feedback from your audience if they look uncomfortable. Your acknowledgement of their discomfort and efforts to do something about it (e.g. send someone to the office to try to fix the problem) goes a long way towards bringing the audience on side.
- **Distracting noises.** Are there fans, outside noises, or busy adjacent classrooms? If so, try to work around those things. If a noisy first aid class meets every morning from 9-11, and you can hear them through the wall shouting medical instructions in their mock emergency scenarios, this is not a good time to schedule your presentation.
- **The lay of the land.** Decide where you will stand ahead of time. Decide where your projection screen will be, where your projector will be, and where you want your audience to sit. If you decide on this ahead of time, you'll avoid mistakes like people not being able to see properly because of an obstruction, the projector not displaying a large enough screen, and the audience being too far away or too spread out. It's a good idea to move desks around so they are in a seating arrangement that is conducive to the presentation. Do you want them in a big U, or in small groups, or in traditional audience seating style?

Remember to consider all three aspects when planning your presentation: the presenter, the audience, and the environment. Let's first concentrate on the presenter and the interpersonal skills required.

The Presenter: Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Are you aware of your strengths and weaknesses as a presenter? You may have some ideas already. For example, if you are very soft-spoken, you may consider that to be a weakness if you're on a stage, especially without a microphone. Soft-spoken people also sometimes keep low-key in other ways; maybe they're more plain in the way they dress or have less expressive mannerisms. Many people think that to be effective on stage you must be a rip-roaring extrovert. This is not true. No matter who you are, if you are aware of the qualities that make you a unique individual and you spend time getting to know your audience, you can convert perceived weaknesses into potential strengths. Conversely, if you are so overconfident about your abilities that it shows itself in poor preparation and lack of concern for your audience or environment, your strengths can quite quickly become weaknesses.

Your first step in helping define what makes you yourself is to look at what you're good at and what you enjoy doing. At the same time, this helps you distinguish what you're not so good at and what you don't enjoy. Make a list as you go through the next sections on your verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to get a reasonable prediction about how to focus your strategy as a presenter.

What Are My Verbal Communication Techniques?

Pitch

Do you have a deep, low voice, or a high-pitched one? We all have a normal speaking **pitch** where we are most comfortable, but we can move our pitch up or down. Use pitch inflections to make your delivery more interesting and emphatic. If you don't change pitch at all, your delivery will be monotone, which gets boring for the audience very quickly. Some people pitch their voices up at the end of sentences, making every statement sound like a question—avoid this common but distracting habit.

Volume

Do you speak softly or loudly? Adjust the **volume** of your voice to your environment and audience. If you're in a large auditorium, speak up so that people in the back row can hear you. But if you're in a small room with only a few people, you don't want to alarm them by shouting! You may need to use volume to compensate for ambient noise like traffic or an air conditioner. You can use volume strategically to emphasize the most important points in your speech.

Emphasis

Stress certain words in your speech to add **emphasis** to them, that is, to indicate that they are particularly important. You may also use a visual aid to emphasize key points by using photographs or charts.

Pronunciation

Make sure that you know the appropriate **pronunciation** of the words you choose. If you mispronounce a word, it could hurt your credibility or confuse your audience. Websites such as Wiktionary contain audio files that you can play to hear standard pronunciation of many words. Your pronunciation is also influenced by your accent. If your accent is quite different from the accent you expect most members of your audience to have, practise your speech in front of someone with the same accent that your audience members will have, to ensure you are pronouncing words in a clear, understandable way.



Presentations are a great way to communicate about differences and similarities and open understanding.

Fillers

Avoid the use of “**fillers**” as placeholders for actual words (*like, er, um, uh*, etc.). You might get away with saying “um” two or three times in your speech before it becomes distracting, but the same cannot be said of “like”—a particularly troubling filler for many North American speakers. If you have a habit of using fillers, practise your speech thoroughly so that you remember what you want to say. This way, you are less likely to lose your place and let a filler word slip out.

Rate

Are you a fast or slow speaker? The pace that you speak at will influence how well the audience can understand you. Many people speak quickly when they are nervous. If this is a habit of yours, practice will help you here, too. Pause for breath naturally during your speech. Your speaking rate should be appropriate for your topic. A rapid, lively **rate** communicates enthusiasm, urgency, or humour. A slower, moderated rate conveys respect and seriousness. By varying your rate within a speech, you can emphasize your main points and keep your audience engaged.

What Non-Verbal Cues Do I Use?

Gestures

A **gesture** is “a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning” (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). You can use these to channel nervous energy into an enhancement of your speech, reinforcing important points, but they can be distracting if overused. If the audience is busy watching your hands fly around, they will not be able to concentrate on your words.

Take a look at this article, titled “What to Do with Your Hands When Speaking in Public

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2015/11/17/what-to-do-with-your-hands-when-speaking-in-public/>)” (*The Washington Post*, 2015) for dos and don’ts of gesturing when you are speaking.

Facial Expression

You might be unaware of how much your **facial expressions** say when you are speaking. Facial expression comes so naturally that we are not always in control of the story our face is telling. Rehearse your speech in front of a mirror to see what facial expressions come across. You might find that your face is saying something entirely different about your topic than your words are! Practise using facial expressions consciously. If you are speaking about an upbeat topic, smile! Conversely, if your topic is serious or solemn, avoid facial expressions that are overtly cheerful, because the audience will be confused by the mixed message.

In North American culture, the most important facial expression you can use is eye contact. Briefly catch the eye of audience members as you move through your speech. If you can’t look your audience members in the eye, they may view you as untrustworthy. Remember, though, that eye contact is a culturally sensitive gesture. In some cultures, there are certain accepted behaviours for males looking females in the eye, and vice-versa. You’ll want to avoid holding eye contact for too long with any one person, as too much can be unnerving.

Posture

It’s easy to let your **posture** slip when you’ve been talking for a while, but try to stay conscious of this and stand up straight. This gives the audience the perception that you are authoritative and take your position seriously. If you are slouching, hunched over, or leaning on something, this gives the impression that you are anxious, lacking in credibility, or not serious about your message. Speakers often assume a more casual posture as a presentation continues, but you only get one shot at making a first impression, so make sure you begin with a strong stance.

Silence

Silence is a powerful technique if used well, but it is often overlooked. Perhaps you had a teacher in high school who would stand sternly and silently at the front of the room, expectantly waiting for the chatter to die down. His silence and stance were unnerving, so students soon became quiet, didn’t they? And some of the best comedians use the well-timed pause for a powerful and hilarious—rather than serious—effect. Either way, pauses are useful for emphasis and dramatic effect when you are speaking.

Some speakers are reluctant to pause or use silence because they become uncomfortable with the dead air, but sometimes your audience needs a moment to process information and respond to you.

Movement

You can use your **body movements** to communicate positively with the audience. Leaning in or moving closer to the audience helps to bridge the space of separation. Moving from one side of the room to the

other in a purposeful way that supports your content is a useful way to keep your audience engaged; their eyes will track your movements. Pacing rapidly with no purpose and no support to your message may quickly distract from your message, however. Standing still without movement when you are listening or responding to a question can show interest. However, standing still without any movement for the duration of your presentation could leave the audience bored. Balance is key, as is using your body as an extension of your content that suits the context of the environment and the audience.

Exercise: Interpersonal Presentation Skills

Consider the factors presented in this section.

- Which factors do you consider are already personal strengths?
- Which factors do you feel are personal weaknesses?
- Which factors would you like to focus on in upcoming presentations?

Summary

This section helped you focus on getting to know your presentation style by understanding yourself better. You learned that elements of the environment, the audience, and the presenter have an impact on what makes for a good speech. You examined several issues related to self-awareness, including dealing with strengths and weaknesses. Finally, you learned about verbal and non-verbal elements of your presentation style. You should now be able to take what you have learned from this section into the next section as a foundation to build your presentation strategy.

Key Takeaways

- There are three aspects to consider for presentations: the presenter, the audience, and the environment.
- Voice, body language, coherent structure, enthusiasm, expertise, and practice are ingredients that can make a successful speech or presentation.
- The audience wants you to succeed.
- Making a recording of your verbal and non-verbal cues helps to identify your presentation style.
- Verbal elements such as pitch, volume, emphasis, pronunciation, fillers, and rate all impact the presentation.

- Non-verbal elements such as gestures, facial expressions, posture, silence, and movement all impact the presentation.
- Self-awareness of the presenter's strengths and weaknesses will help to adjust verbal and non-verbal elements for the presentation and can impact the presenter's planning strategy.

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11.2 Planning the Presentation

To think about a strategy for your presentation, you must move from thinking only about your self to how you will engage with the world outside of you, which, of course, includes your audience and environment.

This section focuses on helping you prepare a presentation strategy by selecting an appropriate *format*, prepare an audience analysis, ensure your style reflects your authentic personality and strengths, and that the tone is appropriate for the occasion.

Then, after you've selected the appropriate channel, you will begin drafting your presentation, first by considering the general and specific purposes of your presentation and using an outline to map your ideas and strategy.

You'll also learn to consider whether to incorporate backchannels or other technology into your presentation, and, finally, you will begin to think about how to develop presentation aids that will support your topic and approach.

At the end of this chapter you should be armed with a solid strategy for approaching your presentation in a way that is authentically you, balanced with knowing what's in it for your audience while making the most of the environment.

Preparing a Presentation Strategy

Incorporating FAST

You can use the acronym **FAST** to develop your message according to the elements of *format*, *audience*, *style*, and *tone*. When you are working on a presentation, much like in your writing, you will rely on FAST to help you make choices.

FAST Form

- **Format** – What type of document will you use? What are the elements of that document type?
- **Audience** – Who will receive your message? What are their expectations? What's in it for them?
- **Style** – What personality does your writing have? Consider issues like word choice, sentence length and punctuation.

- **Tone** – How do you want your audience to feel about your message? Is your message formal or informal? Positive or negative? Polite? Direct or indirect?

There is a FAST Form (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EZYJj2th7cRHpRQ9Ro-AI37TYHY1LtD2aKknMEKeIY8/edit>) template to fill out.

First, you'll need to think about the **format** of your presentation. This is a choice between presentation types. In your professional life you'll encounter the verbal communication channels in the following table. The purpose column labels each channel with a purpose (I=Inform, P=Persuade, or E=Entertain) depending on that channel's most likely purpose.

Presentation Communication Channels

Channel	Direction	Level of Formality	Interaction	Purpose
Speech	One to many	Formal	Low One-sided	I, P, E
Presentation	One or few to many	Formal	Variable Often includes Q&A	I, P, E
Panel	Few to many	Formal	High Q&A-based	I, P
Meeting	Group	Informal	High	I, P
Teleconference	Group	Informal	High	I, P
Workshop	One to many	Informal	High Collaborative	I (Educate)
Webinar	One to many	Formal	Low	I
Podcast	One to many	Formal	Low Recorded	I, P, E

There are some other considerations to make when you are selecting a **format**. For example, the number of speakers may influence the format you choose. Panels and presentations may have more than one speaker. In meetings and teleconferences, multiple people will converse. In a workshop setting, one person will usually lead the event, but there is often a high level of collaboration between participants.

The location of participants will also influence your decision. For example, if participants cannot all be in the same room, you might choose a **teleconference** or **webinar**. If **asynchronous delivery** (participants access the presentation at different times) is important, you might record a **podcast**. When choosing a technology-reliant channel, such as a teleconference or webinar, be sure to test your equipment and make sure each participant has access to any materials they need before you begin.

When your presentation is for a course assignment, often these issues are specified for you in the assignment. But if they aren't, you can consider the best format for your topic, content, and audience. Once you have chosen a format, make sure your message is right for your audience. You'll need to think about issues such as the following:

- What expectations will the audience have?
- What is the context of your communication?
- What does the audience already know about the topic?
- How is the audience likely to react to you and your message?

AUDIENCE Analysis Form

- Analyze – Who will receive your message?
- Understand – What do they already know or understand about your intended message?
- Demographics – What is their age, gender, education level, occupation, position?
- Interest – What is their level of interest/investment in your message? (What’s in it for them?)
- Environment – What setting/reality is your audience immersed in and what is your relationship to it? What is their likely attitude to your message? Have you taken cultural differences into consideration?
- Need – What information does your audience need? How will they use the information?
- Customize – How do you adjust your message to better suit your audience?
- Expectations – What does your audience expect from you or your message?

Here is an Audience Analysis Form template (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QW19UhQphOsy_1OqbmCSUFNNgF3keFB9EP5fbQmEVfQ/edit#) to fill out.

Next, you’ll consider the **style** of your presentation. Some of the things you discovered about yourself as a speaker in the self-awareness exercises earlier will influence your presentation style. Perhaps you prefer to present formally, limiting your interaction with the audience, or perhaps you prefer a more conversational, informal style, where discussion is a key element. You may prefer to cover serious subjects, or perhaps you enjoy delivering humorous speeches. Style is all about your personality!

Finally, you’ll select a **tone** for your presentation. Your voice, body language, level of self-confidence, dress, and use of space all contribute to the mood that your message takes on. Consider how you want your audience to feel when they leave your presentation, and approach it with that mood in mind.

Presentation Purpose

Your presentation will have a general and specific purpose. Your general purpose may be to inform, persuade, or entertain. It’s likely that any speech you develop will have a combination of these goals.

Most presentations have a little bit of entertainment value, even if they are primarily attempting to inform or persuade. For example, the speaker might begin with a joke or dramatic opening, even though their speech is primarily informational.

Your specific purpose addresses *what* you are going to inform, persuade, or entertain your audience with—the main topic of your speech. Each example below includes two pieces of information: first, the general purpose; second, the specific purpose.

Examples

To inform the audience about my favourite car, the Ford Mustang.

To persuade the audience that global warming is a threat to the environment.

Timing

Aim to speak for 90 percent of your allotted time so that you have time to answer audience questions at the end (assuming you have allowed for this). If audience questions are not expected, aim for 95 percent. Do not go overtime—audience members may need to be somewhere else immediately following your presentation, and you will feel uncomfortable if they begin to pack up and leave while you are still speaking. Conversely, you don't want to finish too early, as they may feel as if they didn't get their "money's worth."

To assess the **timing** of your speech as you prepare, you can

- Set a timer while you do a few practice runs, and take an average.
- Run your speech text through an online speech timer.
- Estimate based on the number of words (the average person speaks at about 120 words per minute).

You can improve your chances of hitting your time target when you deliver your speech, by marking your notes with an estimated time at certain points. For example, if your speech starts at 2 p.m., you might mark 2:05 at the start of your notes for the body section, so that you can quickly glance at the clock and make sure you are on target. If you get there more quickly, consciously try to pause more often or speak more slowly, or speed up a little if you are pressed for time. If you have to adjust your timing as you are delivering the speech, do so gradually. It will be jarring to the audience if you start out speaking at a moderate pace, then suddenly realize you are going to run out of time and switch to rapid-fire delivery!

Incorporating Backchannels

Have you ever been to a conference where speakers asked for audience questions via social media? Perhaps one of your teachers at school has used Twitter for student comments and questions, or has asked you to vote on an issue through an online poll. Technology has given speakers new ways to engage with an audience in real time, and these can be particularly useful when it isn't practical for the audience to share their thoughts verbally—for example, when the audience is very large, or when they are not all in the same location.

These secondary or additional means of interacting with your audience are called **backchannels**, and you might decide to incorporate one into your presentation, depending on your aims. They can be helpful for engaging more introverted members of the audience who may not be comfortable speaking out verbally in a large group. Using publicly accessible social networks, such as a Facebook Page or Twitter feed, can also help to spread your message to a wider audience, as audience members share posts related to your speech with their networks. Because of this, backchannels are often incorporated into conferences; they are helpful in marketing the conference and its speakers both during and after the event.

There are some caveats involved in using these backchannels, though. If, for example, you ask your audience to submit their questions via Twitter, you'll need to choose a hashtag for them to append to the messages so that you can easily find them. You'll also need to have an assistant who will sort and choose the audience questions for you to answer. It is much too distracting for the speaker to do this on their own during the presentation. You could, however, respond to audience questions and comments after the presentation via social media, gaining the benefits of both written and verbal channels to spread your message.

Developing the Content

Creating an Outline

As with any type of messaging, it helps if you create an outline of your speech or presentation before you create it fully. This ensures that each element is in the right place and gives you a place to start to avoid the dreaded blank page. Here is an outline template that you can adapt for your purpose. Replace the placeholders in the *content* column with your ideas or points, then make some notes in the *verbal and visual delivery* column about how you will support or emphasize these points using the techniques we've discussed. This outline is appropriate for a presentation meant to inform or persuade. You'll note this is similar to an outline for a research paper.

Presentation Outline

Section	Content	Verbal and Visual Delivery
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Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention-grabber • Main idea • Common ground 	
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I. Main idea: Point 1 • Sub-point 1 • A.1 specific information 1 • A.2 specific information 2 • II. Main idea: Point 2 • Sub-point 1 • B.1 specific information 1 • B.2 specific information 2 • III. Main idea: Point 3 • Sub-point 1 • C.1 specific information 1 • C.2 specific information 2 	
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of main points 1–3 • Residual message/ call-to-action 	

Introduction

The beginning of your speech needs an **attention-grabber** to get your audience interested right away. Choose your attention-grabbing device based on what works best for your topic. Your entire introduction should be only around 10 to 15 percent of your total speech, so be sure to keep this section short. Here are some devices that you could try for attention-grabbers:

Examples of Attention Grabbers

Attention Grabber	Purpose	Examples
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Subject statement	A subject statement is to the point, but not the most interesting choice.	We are surrounded by statistical information in today's world, so understanding statistics is becoming paramount to citizenship in the twenty-first century.
Audience reference	An audience reference highlights something common to the audience that will make them interested in the topic.	As human resource professionals, you and I know the importance of talent management. In today's competitive world, we need to invest in getting and keeping the best talent for our organizations to succeed.
Quotation	Share wise words of another person. You can find quotations online that cover just about any topic.	Oliver Goldsmith, a sixteenth-century writer, poet, and physician, once noted that "the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them."
Current event	Refer to a current event in the news that demonstrates the relevance of your topic to the audience.	On January 10, 2007, Scott Anthony Gomez Jr. and a fellow inmate escaped from a Pueblo, Colorado, jail. During their escape the duo attempted to rappel from the roof of the jail using a makeshift ladder of bed sheets. During Gomez's attempt to scale the building, he slipped, fell 40 feet, and injured his back. After being quickly apprehended, Gomez filed a lawsuit against the jail for making it too easy for him to escape.
Historical event	Compare or contrast your topic with an occasion in history.	During the 1960s and '70s, the United States intervened in the civil strife between North and South Vietnam. The result was a long-running war of attrition in which many American lives were lost and the country of Vietnam suffered tremendous damage and destruction. We saw a similar war waged in Iraq. American lives were lost, and stability has not yet returned to the region.
Anecdote, parable, or fable	An anecdote is a brief account or story of an interesting or humorous event, while a parable or fable is a symbolic tale designed to teach a life lesson.	<p>In July 2009, a high school girl named Alexa Longueira was walking along a main boulevard near her home on Staten Island, New York, typing in a message on her cell phone. Not paying attention to the world around her, she took a step and fell right into an open manhole (Witney, 2009).</p> <p>The ancient Greek writer Aesop told a fable about a boy who put his hand into a pitcher of filberts. The boy grabbed as many of the delicious nuts as he possibly could. But when he tried to pull them out, his hand wouldn't fit through the neck of the pitcher because he was grasping so many filberts. Instead of dropping some of them so that his hand would fit, he burst into tears and cried about his predicament. The moral of the story? "Don't try to do too much at once" (Aesop, 1881).</p>

Surprising statement	A strange fact or statistic related to your topic that startles your audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Boeing 747 airliner holds 57,285 gallons of fuel. • The average person has over 1,460 dreams a year. • There are no clocks in any casinos in Las Vegas. • In 2000, Pope John Paul II became the most famous honorary member of the Harlem Globetrotters.
Question	You could ask either a question that asks for a response from your audience, or a rhetorical question, which does not need a response but is designed to get them thinking about the topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise your hand if you have ever thought about backpacking in Europe. • If you prick us, do we not bleed? (Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice)
Humour	A joke or humorous quotation can work well, but to use humour you need to be sure that your audience will find the comment funny. You run the risk of insulting members of the audience, or leaving them puzzled if they don't get the joke, so test it out on someone else first!	"The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless." —Nicolas Chamfort, sixteenth-century French author
Personal reference	Refer to a story about yourself that is relevant to the topic.	In the fall of 2008, I decided that it was time that I took my life into my own hands. After suffering for years with the disease of obesity, I decided to take a leap of faith and get a gastric bypass in an attempt to finally beat the disease.
Occasion reference	This device is only relevant if your speech is occasion-specific, for example, a toast at a wedding, a ceremonial speech, or a graduation commencement.	Today we are here to celebrate the wedding of two wonderful people.

The above provides several options for attention-grabbers, but remember you likely only need one. After the attention-getter comes the rest of your introduction. It needs to do the following:

- Capture the audience's interest
- State the purpose of your speech
- Establish credibility
- Give the audience a reason to listen
- Signpost the main ideas

Body

For post-secondary students, your class presentation is likely to fulfill an assignment such as presenting the findings of a research paper or summarizing a class unit. It is important to realize that your presentation does not need to include *all* of your information. In fact, it is unwise (and very boring) to read your whole research paper in your presentation. Choose the important and interesting things to highlight in your presentation.

Your audience will think to themselves, *Why should I listen to this speech? What's in it for me?* One of the best things you can do as a speaker is to answer these questions early in your body, if you haven't already done so in your introduction. This will serve to gain their support early and will fill in the blanks of *who, what, when, where, why, and how* in their minds.

You can use the outline to organize your topics. Gather the general ideas you want to convey. There is often more than one way to organize a speech. Some of your points could be left out, and others developed more fully, depending on the purpose and audience. You will refine this information until you have the number of main points you need. Ensure that they are distinct, and balance the content of your speech so that you spend roughly the same amount of time addressing each. Make sure to use parallel structure to make sure each of your main points is phrased in the same way. The last thing to do when working on your body is to make sure your points are in a logical order, so that your ideas flow naturally from one to the next.

Practical Examples

Depending on the topic, it is often useful to use practical examples to demonstrate your point. If your presentation is about the impacts of global warming, for example, it would be wise to mention some familiar natural disasters that are linked to global warming. If your presentation is about how to do a good presentation, you could mention several specific examples of things that could go wrong if the presenter isn't organized. These practical examples help the audience relate the content to real life and understand it better.

Using Humour

If appropriate, using humour in the presentation is often a welcome diversion from a serious topic. It lightens the mood, often helps relieve anxiety, and creates engagement with the audience. It needs to be used sparingly and tastefully. Humour is often an area that can offend, so run your ideas past others before incorporating it into your presentation.

Presentation Conclusion

You will want to conclude your presentation on a high note. You'll need to keep your energy up until the very end of your speech. In your conclusion, you will want to reiterate the main points of your presentation. This will help to tie together the concepts for your audience. It will also help them realize you are wrapping it up. It is often a good idea to leave them with a final thought or call to action, depending on the general purpose of your message. Lastly, remember to be clear that it is the end of your presentation. Don't end it by throwing one last piece of information or it will seem like you've left it hanging. End with a general statement about the topic or a thought to ponder. Ending with "thank you"

also lets them know it's the end. Once you have completed your question, you can invite questions and comments from the audience if appropriate.

Key Takeaways

- FAST (Format, Audience, Style, Tone) is a useful approach for ensuring your presentation strategy is comprehensive.
- Doing an audience analysis using the AUDIENCE tool helps us to better understand what's in it for them.
- Using an outline is a good way to stay organized while you write your speech.
- Your presentation intro should include an appropriate attention grabber in the introduction. There are several types to choose from.
- The body of your presentation should be organized and structured appropriately, presenting the main ideas and their related specifics in an orderly manner.
- The conclusion should include a summary of the main points along with a residual message or call to action.
- Always aim to conclude on a high note.

Summary

In this section you considered the importance of FAST and AUDIENCE tools in helping to lay out a strategy that incorporates your own understanding with the needs of the audience. You learned about how to use an outline to stay organized and keep track of your ideas, as well as general and specific purposes. You learned the importance of sustaining your audience's attention throughout the presentation with key approaches you can take as you write your introduction, body, and conclusion. You should now be prepared to take your strategy to the next level by ensuring you next consider whether and how to incorporate high-quality presentation aids.

Exercise: Check Your Understanding – Presentation Planning

1. You have been asked to present the pros and cons of living in student residence which will be followed by a group discussion with your classmates. The general purpose and approach you should use is
 - a. To entertain
 - b. To inform
 - c. To persuade

- d. To terrify
2. Why should you consider timing when preparing for a presentation?
- a. To avoid running out of time and having to cut short important content
 - b. To make sure that the rate at which you speak gives the desired effect
 - c. To make sure you have correctly timed technological elements such as slides
 - d. All of the above
 - e. Only (a) & (c)
3. The three main general purposes of speaking are to:
- a. Entertain, persuade, and debate
 - b. Persuade, inform, and perpetuate
 - c. Celebrate, perpetuate, and inform
 - d. Inform, persuade, and entertain
 - e. Deliberative, epideictic, and forensic
4. If you are delivering a presentation without any additional assistance and would like to make use of backchannels, an effective strategy would be:
- a. Have an extra laptop available so you can keep track of comments as they come in
 - b. At natural breaks in the presentation, minimize your other visual aids and display the comment feed
 - c. Wait until after the presentation to view the comments and reply to questions via the backchannel
 - d. Select a person in the room to monitor the backchannel and cue you into questions
5. A successful introduction should
- a. Establish your credibility
 - b. Explain the relevance of your topic to your audience
 - c. Lay out a simple map of your speech
 - d. All of the above
6. Which of the following best describes the role of a conclusion in a speech?
- a. To help the audience remember the primary message from the speech
 - b. To summarize the main points of the speech
 - c. To lead into a Q&A session
 - d. All of the above
 - e. Only (a) & (b)
7. You have been invited to speak to the Student Association on ways to avoid spreading germs in the college. Which of the following would be the most effective way to get their attention at the beginning of your speech or presentation?

- a. Pretend to sneeze into your hands several times as you walk up to a student. Then wipe the back of that hand across your nose before extending it to the student for a handshake.
 - b. Ask them “How many of you like catching colds?”
 - c. Tell a story about the time you got to skip school for a week because you caught a bad cold.
 - d. Provide data that show 2 percent of all colds progress to life-threatening conditions like pneumonia or pleurisy.
8. Which of the following principles of outline creation is INCORRECT?
- a. Your outline should include all the details of your presentation.
 - b. Your outline should show your plan for an introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - c. Your outline should show that you adequately supported your main points.
 - d. Your outline should show that you have presented similar ideas in parallel ways.
9. Which of the following is NOT a function shared by BOTH the introduction and the conclusion of a speech?
- a. Identify the main points
 - b. Get the audience’s attention
 - c. Make the topic important to the audience
 - d. Present the speech’s thesis

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11.3 Presentation Aids

Presentations can be enhanced by the effective use of visual aids. These include handouts, drawings on the whiteboard, PowerPoint slides, memes, short video clips, and many other types of props. Once you have chosen a topic, consider how you are going to show your audience what you are talking about. Visuals can provide a reference, illustration, or image to help the audience to understand and remember your point.

Visual aids accomplish several goals:

- Make your speech more interesting
- Enhance your credibility as a speaker
- Guide transitions, helping the audience stay on track
- Communicate complex information in a short time
- Reinforce your message
- Encourage retention

Emphasis, Support, and Clarity

The purpose for each visual aid should be clear and speak for itself. If you can't quickly link the purpose of a visual aid to the verbal message, consider whether it should be used. Visual aids can be distracting or confusing if they are not clearly connected to what you are saying.

Perhaps you want to highlight a trend between two related issues, such as socioeconomic status and educational attainment. You might show a line graph that compares the two, showing that as socioeconomic status rises, educational attainment also rises. People learn in different ways. Some of us learn best using visual stimuli; others learn by taking notes or by using tactile objects. So, by using visuals to support your presentation and, if possible, tactile aids or demos, you can help a more significant proportion of the audience learn about your topic.

Clarity is key in the use of visual aids. Limit the number of words on your slides. Some people even state their rule of thumb is no more than 10 words per slide, with a font large enough to be read at the back of the room or auditorium. Generally you should include no more than five to seven lines of text per slide. People often make the mistake of trying to cram too much information on a slide, which causes the audience to zone out. Test that your slides are readable in the environment you will be using.

Methods and Materials

Slide Decks

The most common visual aid used in presentations, **slide decks**, may be developed using software such as PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, or Google Slides. These tools allow you to show text, images, and charts and even to play audio or video files. They are an excellent enhancement to your presentation, but they do sometimes encounter a glitch. Computers sometimes fail to work as planned, so make sure you have a whiteboard or handout as a backup in case of any technical issues. Minimize the risk by testing out equipment ahead of time.

Also, remember that these are an *aid* to your central, verbal message. Resist the urge to read directly from them with your back to the audience, or to pack slides full of text in lieu of speaking all of the information you want to get across.

Flip Charts, Whiteboards, and Large Prints

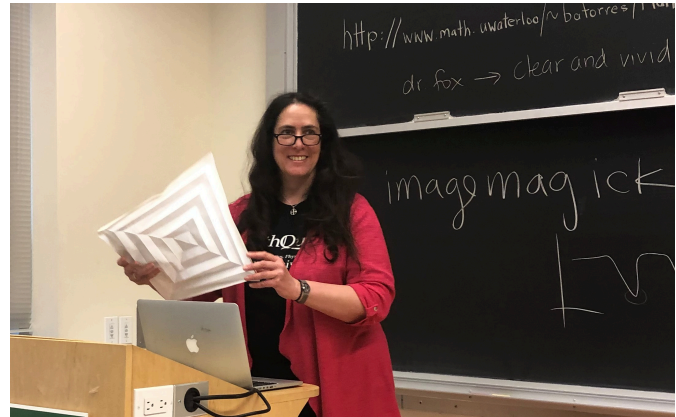
Flip charts and **whiteboards** are a good choice when you don't have access to a computer and projector. Alternatively, you can print some visual aids like charts and graphs in large sizes and show them during your presentation. If you plan to get a lot of audience input and want to write or draw things out, then a whiteboard is an ideal choice. But make sure your writing is large enough to be seen at the back of the room and that it is easy to read.

Handouts

If it will be helpful for your audience to refer to the information you're sharing at a later date, they'll appreciate it if you leave them with a handout. Decide whether it is better to give **handouts** to the audience at the beginning or end of your speech. If your handout is comprehensive and they have detailed notes in front of them, they can be distracted by reading and tune you out, so it's better to wait until the end to distribute them. Let the audience know at the beginning of the speech that you'll provide it at the end. This will relieve them from having to capture all your content by taking notes, and keep their attention focused on you while you speak. If your handouts are the presentation slides with just the main points, it may be better to hand them out at the beginning so that your audience can use them to add in additional points.

Demonstrations and Tactile Aids

If your presentation is about how to do something, for example, how to cook a particular dish or how to use a tool, you will want to show the audience a **demonstration**. Sometimes it is helpful to pass around a **tactile aid**, for example, a model. These can be very helpful if you want your audience to learn by doing. Make sure to pass items around during pauses in your presentation so that you don't lose the audience's attention. If audience members need to move around to use a tactile aid, make sure the location has enough space to make this possible.



Visual aids capture interest and demonstrate concepts.

Using Visual Aids

Designing Slide Decks

Using PowerPoint or a similar program, you'll be able to import, or cut and paste, words from text files, images, or video clips to represent your ideas. You can even incorporate web links.

At first, you might be overwhelmed by the possibilities, and you might be tempted to use all the bells, whistles, and sounds, not to mention the flying and animated graphics. If used wisely, a simple **transition** can be effective, but if used indiscriminately, it can annoy the audience to the point where they cringe in anticipation of, e.g. the **sound effect** at the start of each slide.

Stick to one main idea per slide. The presentation is for the audience's benefit, not yours. Pictures and images can be understood more quickly and easily than text, so you can use this to your advantage as you present.

If you develop a slide deck for your presentation, test these out in the location beforehand, not just on your own computer screen, as different computers and software versions can make your slides look different than you expected. Allow time for revision based on what you learn.

Your visual aids should meet the following criteria:

- **Big.** Make it legible for everyone, even the back row.
- **Clear.** The audience should "get it" the first time they see it.
- **Simple.** Simplify concepts rather than complicating them.
- **Consistent.** Use the same visual style throughout.

Font

Another consideration that you'll need to make when designing your slide decks is **font**. As previously

mentioned, think about the people at the back of the room when choosing the size of your text, to make sure it can be read by everyone.

A common mistake that presenters make is to use **decorative fonts**, or to incorporate many different fonts in their slides. This not only creates a mixed message for the audience but also makes your message difficult to read. Choose legible, common fonts that do not have thin elements that may be difficult to see.

Colour

When considering your choice of colours to use, **legibility** must be your priority. Contrast can help the audience read your key terms more easily. Make sure the background colour and the images you plan to use complement each other. Repeat colours, from your graphics to your text, to help unify each slide. To reduce visual noise, try not to use more than two or three colours.

Blue-green **colour blindness**, and red-green colour blindness are fairly common, so avoid using these colour combinations if it is important for the audience to differentiate between them. If you are using a pie chart, for example, avoid putting a blue segment next to a green one. Use labelling, so that even if someone is colour blind, they will be able to tell the relative sizes of the pie segments and what they signify.

Helpful Hints

Visual aids can be a powerful tool when used effectively but can run the risk of dominating your presentation. Consider your audience and how the portrayal of images, text, graphic, animated sequences, or sound files will contribute or detract from your presentation. Here are some hints to keep in mind as you prepare yours.

- Keep it simple.
- Use one idea per slide.
- Avoid clutter.
- Use large, bold fonts that can be read from at least 20 feet away.
- Use colours that work well together.
- Avoid using clip art. It can look hokey.
- Proofread each slide with care.
- Test in the presentation room beforehand.
- If you are using a computer and/or projector for your visual aids, test it beforehand. Have a hard copy of your presentation in case the computer has technical difficulties.
- Mark the floor with tape beforehand to mark the best spot to have the projector once you've tested it.

Summary

Using visual aids takes time and practice. The more you practise before your speech, the more comfortable you will be with your visual aids and the role they serve. Know your material well enough that you refer to your visual aids, not rely on them.

Key Takeaways

- Visual aids include handouts, whiteboard drawings, slide decks, video clips, and more.
- Visual aids should provide emphasis, clarity, and support to your presentation strategy.
- Popular slide decks include PowerPoint, Prezi, and Google Slides.
- Avoid using more than two or three colours to keep visual “noise” low.
- Slide decks should be (1) big (type font); (2) clear; (3) simple and consistent.

Exercise: Check Your Understanding – Presentation Aids

1. Which of the following presentations would be more effective with the use of a physical or animate object?
 1. A slide presentation on a new employment policy
 2. A slide presentation on the different features of a mountain bike
 3. A personal finance workshop on real estate investing tips
 4. A lecture on the psychological effects of pharmaceutical drugs
2. All of the following should be practiced for designing an effective slide presentation, except:
 1. Limiting text to one or two fonts
 2. Bolding, italicizing, and capitalizing important information
 3. Presenting no more than five to seven lines of text per slide
 4. Using a font colour that blends in well with the background
3. If a presenter is using slides in a well-lit room, which of the following colour schemes should be used on the slides to maximize legibility?
 1. A dark background with light text and visuals
 2. A dark background with dark text and visuals
 3. A light background with dark text and visuals

4. A light background with light text and visuals

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11.4 Delivering the Presentation

This section focuses on what to do when presentation day finally arrives. You should be well-prepared and well-poised to communicate interpersonally with a live audience.

You will first learn about how to prepare to present by taking a deeper look at what you should be doing during rehearsals, and considering how you'll dress comfortably and professionally and how your setup will keep you prepared for what is ahead.

You will learn effective approaches to managing anxiety, such as how to cope with your body's reaction as well as how to cope with mistakes or surprises that may pop up in the speech, with the technology or through some other external distraction.

Having an understanding of how to read your audience for positive or negative cues is important during and after the presentation. You will learn about interpreting these cues by scanning the audience's body language during the presentation and during the Q&A.

Finally, you will have a chance to critically reflect on the delivery of a presentation by learning about how to do a self-analysis, as well as give and receive constructive verbal and non-verbal feedback.

Preparing to Present

Rehearsing

To deliver your presentation to the best of your ability, and to reduce your nerves once you take the stage, you need to practise by **rehearsing**. As you do, try to identify the weaknesses in your delivery to improve on them. For example, do you often mis-speak the same words (e.g. *pacific* for *specific*; *ax* for *ask*) or do your hands or feet fidget? Use your practice time to focus on correcting these issues. These sessions should help you get comfortable and help you remember what you want to say without having to constantly refer to notes.

Try practising in front of a mirror, or even recording yourself speaking to a camera and playing it back. It's also helpful to get feedback from a supportive audience at this stage. Perhaps a few family members or friends could watch you give your presentation and provide some feedback.

If at all possible, access the room where you will be presenting. This way you can get a feel for its setup and decide how you will stand or move during your presentation.

Dress for Success

While there are no definitive guidelines for how you should dress for your presentation, your appearance is an important part of your audience's first impression. If you want them to take you seriously, you'll

need to look the part. While you don't have to wear a suit each time you present, there are some scenarios where this would be expected; for example, if you are presenting to a corporate audience who wear suits to work, you should do the same. You should dress one step above your audience. If your audience is going to be dressed casually in shorts and jeans, then wear nice casual clothing such as a pair of pressed slacks and a collared shirt or blouse. If your audience is going to be wearing business casual attire, then you should wear a dress or a suit. If you are presenting to your instructor and classmates, dress better than you normally would in class, to demonstrate you are taking this seriously and you are adding a level of formality.

Another general rule is to avoid distractions in your appearance. Clothing with loud colours and bold patterns, overly tight or revealing garments, or big jangling jewellery can distract your audience's attention from your message.

Setting Up Your Environment

Depending on the circumstances of your speech or presentation, you may have some choices to make about the environment. Perhaps you have a choice of meeting rooms that you can use, or perhaps you have only one option.

If you have some flexibility, it is helpful to think about what sort of environment would best help you get your message across. For example, if you are running a workshop, you might want to assemble participants in a circle to encourage collaboration and discussion. If you are holding a webinar, you'll need a quiet location with a strong internet connection and a computer system. It is imperative that you think about what facilities you need well before the day of your presentation arrives. You may have to book equipment or classrooms. Arriving to find that the equipment you expected isn't available is not a nice surprise for even the most experienced speaker!

If you have access to the location beforehand, you may need to move tables or chairs around to get things just the way you want them. You might choose to have a **podium** brought in, if you are aiming for a formal feel, for example, or you may need to position your flip chart. Double check that you have all the equipment you need, from whiteboard markers to speakers. It is far better if you can get comfortable with the room before your audience arrives, as this will make you feel more prepared and less nervous.

If you are using technology to support your presentation (i.e. PowerPoint slides or a projector), test everything before you begin. Do a **microphone check** and test its volume, view your slides on the computer you will be using, check any web links, play videos to test their sound, or make a call to test the phone connection prior to your teleconference. Your audience will get restless quickly if they arrive and are expected to wait while you fix a technical problem. This will also make you seem disorganized and hurt your credibility as an authoritative speaker.

Contingency Planning

Well before the day of your presentation, ask yourself, *What could go wrong?* This might sound like a way for a novice presenter to stress oneself out, but it can actually be very helpful. If you anticipate the worst-case scenario and are prepared for it, problems on the day of your presentation are less likely to bother you.

Many of the possible problems can be avoided with **preparation**. Make sure you have notes with you in case you need them. Dress professionally so that you feel good about how you are presenting yourself. Getting there early to set up and test the equipment will prevent many technical issues, but having a handout with you will make you feel even more comfortable in case you have problems with your slides. Bring a bottle of water in case your throat becomes dry or you need a moment to pause.

Most other problems can be prevented with practice. Rehearse so that you are not reliant on your notes. This way, if a note card goes missing, it's no big deal. During your rehearsals you'll get used to pacing yourself, pausing for breath, and monitoring the timing of your speech so that this comes more naturally once you get onstage.

During the Presentation

Managing Anxiety

Studies show that presenters' nervousness usually peaks at the anticipation stage that occurs one minute before the presentation. They further found that as the speech progresses, **nervousness** tends to go down. Here are some things you can do to help you manage your anxiety before the presentation:

- Practice/rehearse in similar conditions/setting as your speech
- Be organized
- Think positively
- Analyze your audience
- Adapt your language to speaking style

During the presentation itself, there are four main areas where you can focus attention in order to manage your anxiety:

1. Your body's reaction
2. Attention to the audience
3. Keeping a sense of humour
4. Common stress management techniques

Your Body's Reaction

Physical movement helps to channel some of the excess energy that your body produces in response to



Presenting with passion

anxiety. If at all possible, move around the front of the room rather than remaining imprisoned behind the **lectern** or gripping it for dear life (avoid pacing nervously from side to side, however). Move closer to the audience and then stop for a moment. If you are afraid that moving away from the lectern will reveal your shaking hands, use note cards rather than a sheet of paper for your outline. Note cards do not quiver like paper, and they provide you with something to do with your hands. Other options include **vocal warm-ups** right before your speech, having water (preferably in a non-spillable bottle with a spout) nearby for a dry mouth, and doing a few stretches before going on stage.

Deep breathing will help to counteract the effects of excess adrenaline. You can place cues or symbols in your notes, such as “slow down” or ☺, that remind you to pause and breathe during points in your speech. It is also a good idea to pause a moment before you get started, to set an appropriate pace from the onset. Look at your audience and smile. It is a reflex for some of your audience members to smile back. Those smiles will reassure you that your audience members are friendly.

Attention to the Audience

During your speech, make a point of establishing direct **eye contact** with your audience members. By looking at individuals, you establish a series of one-to-one contacts similar to interpersonal communication. An audience becomes much less threatening when you think of them not as an anonymous mass but as a collection of individuals.

A gentleman once shared his worst speaking experience: Right before the start of his speech, he reached the front of the room and forgot everything he was supposed to say. When asked what he saw when he was in the front of the room, he gave a quizzical look and responded, “I didn’t see anything. All I remember is a mental image of me up there in the front of the room blowing it.” Speaking anxiety becomes more intense if you focus on yourself rather than concentrate on your audience and your material.

Keeping a Sense of Humour

No matter how well we plan, unexpected things happen. That fact is what makes the public speaking situation so interesting. When the unexpected happens to you, do not let it rattle you. At the end of a class period late in the afternoon of a long day, a student raised her hand and asked the professor if he knew that he was wearing two different-coloured shoes, one black and one blue. He looked down and saw that she was right; his shoes did not match. He laughed at himself, complimented the student on her observational abilities, and moved on with the important thing, the material he had to deliver. People who can laugh at themselves often endear themselves to their audience.

Stress Management Techniques

Even when we use positive thinking and are well prepared, some of us still feel a great deal of anxiety about public speaking. When that is the case, it can be more helpful to use stress management than to try to make the anxiety go away.

Here are two main tools that can help:

- **Visualization:** Imagine the details of what a successful speech would look and sound like from beginning to end; a way of hypnotizing yourself into positive thinking by using your mind's eye to make success real.
- **Systematic desensitization:** Gradual exposure to the thing that causes fear—in this case, giving a speech—can ultimately lead to decreased anxiety. Basically, the more practice you get speaking in front of people, the less fear and anxiety you'll have about public speaking. Organizations like Toastmasters, that help people confront their fears by providing a supportive environment to learn and practise, are a good option if you have a true phobia around presenting or public speaking.

Using a Microphone

Conditions such as the size of the room and how far away your audience will be sitting should determine whether or not you need a microphone. Many people make the mistake of thinking they don't need a mic because they can talk loud enough for everyone to hear. They are usually wrong. Unless the crowd is very small, it benefits you to use a microphone. It is very frustrating for people to be watching a presentation that they can't hear.

If you are using a microphone during your speech, there are a few cautions to be aware of. First, make sure you do a sound check and that you know how the microphone works—how to turn it on and off, how to mute it, and how to raise or lower it. If possible, have it positioned to the height you need before you go onstage. Make sure the microphone does not block your face.

Make sure to find the optimum distance from the microphone to your mouth. This will vary with different sound equipment. For some, the mic needs to be right up against the mouth to get good sound quality. For others, this will cause screeching feedback or will pick up your breathing noises. If you will be using a clip-on microphone (called a lavalier mic), you'll need to wear something with a lapel or collar that it can be clipped to. Make sure your hair and jewelry are out of the way to avoid rustling noises, and place the lavalier microphone 8 to 10 inches below your chin.

If the microphone is on a stand, make sure it is set to the appropriate height. If it is set too high, it is distracting to the audience and if it's too short, it will cause you to hunch over it, creating bad posture and an uncomfortable position. Often you can take the mic off the stand and use it as a handheld model, which allows you to move around a little more. Doing a sound check and getting comfortable with the equipment before you go onstage will prevent the majority of errors when using a microphone.

Coping with Mistakes and Surprises

Even the most prepared speaker will encounter unexpected challenges from time to time. Here are a few strategies for combating the unexpected in your own presentations.

Speech Content Issues

What if a note card goes missing or you skip important information from the beginning of your speech? While situations like these might seem like the worst nightmare of a novice public speaker, they can be overcome easily. Pause for a moment to think about what to do. Is it important to include the missing

information, or can it be omitted without hindering the audience's ability to understand your speech? If it needs to be included, does the information fit better now or in a later segment? If you can move on without the missing element, that is often the best choice, but pausing for a few seconds to decide will be less distracting to the audience than sputtering through a few "ums" and "uhs." Situations like these demonstrate why it's a good idea to have a glass of water with you when you speak. Pausing for a moment to take a sip of water is a perfectly natural movement, so the audience may not even notice that anything is amiss.

Technical Difficulties

Technology has become a very useful aid in public speaking, allowing us to use audio or video clips, presentation software, or direct links to websites. But it does break down occasionally! Web servers go offline, files will not download, or media contents are incompatible with the computer in the presentation room. Always have a **backup plan** in case of **technical difficulties**. As you develop your speech and visual aids, think through what you will do if you cannot show a particular graph or if your presentation slides are garbled. Your beautifully prepared chart may be superior to the verbal description you can provide; however, your ability to provide a succinct verbal description when technology fails will give your audience the information they need and keep your speech moving forward.

External Distractions

Unfortunately, one thing that you can't control during your speech is **audience etiquette**, but you *can* decide how to react to it. Inevitably, an audience member will walk in late, a cell phone will ring, or a car alarm will go off outside. If you are interrupted by external events like these, it is often useful and sometimes necessary to pause and wait so that you can regain the audience's attention.

Whatever the event, maintain your **composure**. Do not get upset or angry about these **glitches**. If you keep your cool and quickly implement a "plan B" for moving forward, your audience will be impressed.

Reading Your Audience

Recognizing your audience's mood by observing their body language can help you adjust your message and see who agrees with you, who doesn't, and who is still deciding. With this information, you can direct your attention—including eye contact and questions—to the areas of the room where they can have the most impact.

As the speaker, you are conscious that you are being observed. But your audience members probably don't think of themselves as being observed, so their body language will be easy to read.

Questions and Discussion

As a presenter, it's a good idea to allow a little time at the end of your presentation to invite questions from the audience and to facilitate a little discussion about the topic. If possible and applicable you can include a bit of interactivity with the audience during the presentation. This goes a long way to getting the audience engaged and interested in the topic.

There are three important elements to think about when incorporating Q&A's as part of your presentation:

Audience Expectations

At the beginning of your speech, give the audience a little bit of information about who you are and what your expertise on the subject is. Once they know what you do (and what you know), it will be easier for the audience to align their questions with your area of expertise—and for you to bow out of answering questions that are outside of your area.

Timing of Q&A's

Questions are easier to manage when you are expecting them. Unless you are part of a panel, meeting, or teleconference, it is probably easier to let the audience know that you will take questions at the end of your presentation. This way you can avoid interruptions to your speech that can distract you and cause you to lose time. If audience members interrupt during your talk, you can then ask them politely to hold on to their question until the Q&A session at the end.

Knowing How to Respond

Never pretend that you know the answer to a question if you don't. The audience will pick up on it! Instead, calmly apologize and say that the question is outside of the scope of your knowledge but that you'd be happy to find out after the presentation (or, suggest some resources where the person could find out for themselves).

If you are uncertain about how to answer a question, say something like "That's really interesting. Could you elaborate on that?" This will make the audience member feel good because they have asked an interesting question, and it will give you a moment to comprehend what they are asking.

Sometimes presenters rush to answer a question because they are nervous or want to impress. Pause for a moment, before you begin your answer, to think about what you want to say. This will help you to avoid **misinterpreting** the question, or taking **offense** to a question that is not intended that way.

A final tip is to be cautious about how you answer, so that you don't offend your audience. You are presenting on a topic because you are knowledgeable about it, but your audience is not. It is important not to make the audience feel inferior because there are things that they don't know. Avoid comments such as "Oh, yes, it's really easy to do that..." Instead, say something like "Yes, that can be tricky. I would recommend..." Also, avoid a bossy tone. For example, phrase your response with "What I find helpful is..." rather than "What you should do is..."

Critiquing a Presentation

Self-Analysis

It is often said that we are our own worst critic. Many people are hard on themselves and may exaggerate

how poorly a speech or presentation went. Other times, there's not much exaggeration. In both cases it helps to examine your performance as presenter after the presentation.

You may want to ask yourself:

- Did you make the most of your unique voice? Did the audience seem to understand you?
- Did you make the most of using body language? Did your body confidently support what you were saying?
- Did you use a coherent structure? Did the audience seem to make sense of your presentation? Was it logical?
- Did you show enthusiasm? Did you show the audience you cared about your presentation?
- Did you demonstrate expertise? Did you show your credibility by citing reliable sources and making a distinction between facts and your opinion?
- Did you show that you practised and prepared? Did your confidence show because you implemented a plan that included sufficient rehearsal, contingency plans, and other success strategies?

Honestly asking yourself these questions with the intention of uncovering your strengths and weaknesses should help you to become a better presenter. While it is important to review other kinds of feedback, whether from the audience, your peers, or an instructor, it is also useful to have a realistic understanding of your own performance. This understanding is part of gaining experience and improving as a presenter.

Feedback from Others

As well as doing some self-analysis, it is a good idea to get feedback from others. If your presentation was for your class, you will likely get feedback from your instructor who is marking you. You may also get some feedback from classmates. It would also be wise to ask someone that you trust, who was in the audience, to give you feedback. You can learn a lot from what others tell you. They may have noticed a distracting habit such as twirling your hair, or putting your hands in your pockets, or a lot of ummys. They may also have noticed some real strengths of your presentation that you may not have considered. Whether the comments are positive or constructive criticism, they can be helpful for focusing on, in your next presentation.

Receiving Feedback

Being open to receiving feedback is the only way to have a better picture of your performance as a presenter or speaker. Combining self-analysis with the feedback of your audience or peers is your opportunity to better understand your strengths as a presenter and what resonated well with your audience.

When receiving and making sense of feedback, it is very important to be self-aware and honest with yourself. This honesty will help you distinguish between an environmental situation, a situation that lies with the audience member, or a situation with the presenter.

Summary

In this section you learned about useful tools, such as rehearsing, dressing appropriately, and having a contingency plan, that helps you prepare to present to a live audience. You examined approaches that would be useful during the presentation itself, such as keeping a good sense of humour and focusing your attention on your audience to manage anxiety, and what steps to take for a critical review afterwards to close the feedback loop.

Key Takeaways

- Preparing to present includes rehearsing, deciding what to wear, how to set up the environment, and making an appropriate contingency plan.
- Keeping attention on your audience, a good sense of humour, and knowing stress management techniques are good ways of managing anxiety.
- Mistakes or surprises can happen with the speech, the technology, or through external distractions.
- To effectively critique a presentation, it's good to balance self-analysis with constructive feedback from others.

Exercise: Check Your Understanding – Presentation Delivery

1. Why should you dress appropriately for the occasion at which you are speaking?
 - a. To give the audience confidence in your abilities
 - b. To show that you are easy-going and approachable
 - c. To play up your physical attractiveness
 - d. All of the above
2. While managing a Q&A session following his presentation, Eric finds himself unable to answer a question posed by one of the audience members. Which of the following tactics should Eric take to maintain control of the session?
 - a. Improvise and make up an answer
 - b. Commit to provide a more thorough answer at a later time
 - c. Spend significant time on the question before responding
 - d. Become hostile and defensive
3. Starting a presentation with a joke is a good technique for any presentation and presenter.

- a. True
 - b. False
4. Making mistakes in a presentation mean that the presenter “blew it.”
- a. True
 - b. False
5. The natural state of the audience is empathy, not antipathy. They generally want the presenter to succeed.
- a. True
 - b. False
6. If you write out your presentation word for word and memorize it, you’re golden.
- a. True
 - b. False
7. The audience will always be able to tell when the presenter is nervous.
- a. True
 - b. False

Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more tips for great presentations see:

- Presentation Skills (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/DeafStudiesTeaching/dissert/Presentation%20Skills.htm>) (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/DeafStudiesTeaching/dissert/Presentation%20Skills.htm>)
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11.5 Chapter Review and Activities

This module on how to prepare for and deliver well-executed presentations examined the aspects of interpersonal presentation skills, such as your own verbal and non-verbal presentation behaviours. This knowledge allowed you to move on to planning the presentation strategy. You did this by using tools such as FAST and AUDIENCE, respectively. With these frameworks in place, you began to brainstorm and keep track of your ideas using an outline to write your presentation. This included writing an attention-grabbing intro, a body to develop your main point or theme, and a conclusion that ended on a high note.

Presentation Aids were introduced by focusing on visuals or other tools that can aid your presentation by lending emphasis, clarity, and support. You learned about several tools and techniques, such as how to use slide decks (e.g., PowerPoint) and colours effectively to support your presentation. Lastly, you read the section on delivering the presentation, which included learning how to prepare to present, how to manage anxiety, and how to cope with mistakes.

What you've learned in this module will serve as good preparation for future presentations, whether they be at college, university, work, church, or in many other circumstances.

Exercise: Presentation

In this assignment, you will need to prepare and deliver a presentation following methods you have learned in this module.

Your first step will be to choose one of the scenarios listed below for your presentation, or you can choose one with your instructor's approval, or perhaps your instructor will assign one to you. These scenarios form the basis or purpose of your presentation, so please read them carefully.

Once you have analyzed your scenario, determine the main function or purpose for the presentation and then begin the process of developing it. You may want to review the module sections on developing a presentation strategy for guidance. Start thinking about the main point in the scenario and identify key factors that you need to address. Plan the information you will need to include into each section of the presentation as you do this.

Research and compile the necessary details, evidence, statistics, etc. that will support your message. Your presentation cannot simply be what "you" believe is a good response. The information you present needs to be accurate and credible based on your inclusion of valid and reliable details. This also speaks to your credibility as a presenter.

Develop a clear plan and delivery strategy. Rehearse and rehearse again so that you are comfortable and commanding in your delivery. Your goal here is not on memorizing but rather developing an intuitiveness with your presentation so that it comes off as being natural and authentic.

Your instructor may provide a grading rubric to help guide you in this assignment.

Process

- Carefully analyze the scenario that you will present on and identify the main topics that you will need to cover.
- Develop a “big picture” framework for your presentation using the strategies outlined in this module. This will help to guide your planning and development.
- Plan and outline a logical flow and progression, remembering to include all standard elements of a good presentation. You may want to use the outline template for this. As you work on this plan, identify any relevant sub-topics.
- Research relevant facts and information to support the main topics and any sub-topics. Remember to use credible evidence.
- Identify presentation aids that you could use to add value to your presentation. Review the key purpose and design elements for creating visual aids.
- Once you have organized your presentation, rehearse it and get feedback. You should rehearse several times, focusing on timing as well as the logical flow of ideas. Do they make sense to others and not just you? Is your speech clear? Are you speaking at a rate that is too fast? Are body movements and expressions compromising your presentation? These and other key questions will help in preparing for a quality presentation. If it is difficult to have people watch your presentation for feedback, create a self-video and critique it yourself.

Presentation

Your instructor will indicate when and where you will deliver your presentation. This is a timed presentation. To be successful, you need to present well and cover all of the expected points indicated in the scenario.

Keep the plan, outline, handouts, and visuals you created as part of your preparation work. Your instructor may want you to submit them as part of the assignment.

Presentation Scenarios

Scenario #1

The Student Association has asked you to make a short presentation at Student Orientation for new students. They want you to present about options for online learning and increase awareness. They have asked you to deal with some key questions to be included in your presentation.

- What are the most accessible options for online learning?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking online courses?
- Would you recommend students try taking an online course?

They would like you to allow time for a question period at the end to get students actively engaged. You will be given a total of 15 minutes to make your presentation including a Q&A session. You will have access to a classroom which has a large selection of presentation devices, including a computer and digital projector, whiteboards, teleconference equipment, and high-speed internet access.

Scenario #2

There is a long history of student complaints about the price of books at university and college bookstores.

Many students have mentioned web-based booksellers as possible alternatives. As a representative of your student government, you have been asked to make a presentation on the issue of book prices, including using alternative sources of supply.

Your presentation needs to answer the following: What are some alternative supply sources? What about book rental programs or using open educational resources? Which is the best alternative for students at your school? You decide to compare these alternatives by considering price, availability, book buyback programs, and students' thoughts about purchasing books. You are not asked to provide a recommendation, but a good conclusion should be included in your presentation.

Your audience will consist of invited students representing each of the academic program areas, the institution's bookstore manager, and members of student government and student services. The total number of attendees is expected to be up to 50.

You will be given a total of 15 minutes to make your presentation including a Q&A session. Your presentation will take place in a large room. Equipment, such as computers and digital projectors, can be made available; however there is no internet or cable TV access in this room.

Scoring Feedback Guide

This scoring guide can be used to provide constructive feedback to speakers on their presentations. It can also be used as a checklist as you prepare for and practice your own presentation. The criteria included align with major elements already discussed in this module. It can be used to provide feedback based on your impression of how well speakers have addressed the criteria (Presence, Language, Organization, Subject Mastery, Visual Aids), as outlined in the scoring criteria table. There is also a section in the table to indicate your overall impression of the presentation.

Much of the feedback provided will be subjective; however, if different peers participate, the aggregate of the feedback should become a reliable indicator of the performance quality related to each criterion. Presenters can then use this valuable feedback to hone their skills and improve their performance as they prepare for the course presentations that will be assessed formally.

If you are using this chart to evaluate others, you are encouraged to be honest and professional with your feedback. Also, you should not identify yourself if several people are evaluating. There is no need to include your name or other identifying markers. It is the feedback that is important here, not who provides it. If you are practising your presentations to others, have them use this to get useful feedback. If you are practising your presentation in front of a video camera, use this chart to evaluate yourself in your practice runs to improve your performance.

Scoring Feedback Guide

Scoring Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	Comments/Feedback
Presence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language and eye contact • Connection with the audience • Poise, confidence • Attentiveness 						
Language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct usage for the audience level • Appropriate vocabulary and grammar • Understandable (rhythm, intonation, accent) • Spoken loud enough to hear easily 						
Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear objectives outlined • Physical organization of materials • Logical structure of the presentation • Signposting different stages, transitioning • Preparedness 						
Subject Mastery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pertinence, relevance • Depth of commentary suggests knowledgeable • Spoken, not read from notes • Able to answer questions knowledgeably 						

Scoring Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	Comments/Feedback
Visual Aids <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrations, slides, props, handouts • Audio, video, etc. (clear, seamless integration) • Visually aesthetic (font, colour choice, contrast) • Use of imagery (e.g. no clip art) 						
Overall Impression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very interesting/very boring • Pleasant/unpleasant to listen to • Very good/poor communication 						

All the best to you as you practice and improve your presentation delivery. Hopefully, your marks on the above chart will go up each time you practice.

Finally, never give up the opportunity to make a presentation. It's natural that your first instinct is to say no, but the more you make presentations, the more comfortable with it you'll become making them. It is actually a pretty nice skill to develop.

Key Takeaways

Delivering a good presentation involves many factors.

- Interpersonal skills required include: physical presence, speaking skills, engaging the audience, using a variety of visuals, and facilitating questions and answers.
- Forward planning is key. First presenters need to decide on the type of communication format. Planning the presentation also includes: an effective outline, a strong introduction, a functional organized body, and a strong conclusion.
- Presentation aids should be developed to portray professionalism and increase impact on the audience. Visual aids should be chosen to fit well with the topic and vibe, and should enhance the quality of the presentation.
- During the delivery of the presentation, considering the audience's needs will help make the presentation more relevant. Dealing with mistakes and misfortunes is part of the process and should be handled with flexibility and humour.
- Invariably something in a presentation doesn't go as well as you would have liked. However, you likely did many things well and still pulled it off. The mistakes are factors to learn from, and help your next presentation go even better. You only get good at delivering presentations by delivering

presentations – and critiquing, evaluating, and improving each time.

Text Attributions

This chapter was adapted from the following chapter:

- “Professional Presentation Skills” in *Professional Communication OER* (<http://solr.bccampus.ca:8001/bcc/file/d569209a-3b01-4635-a56a-3cec1abf3ac5/1/eTextbook%20Part%203%20%28Presentations%29.pdf>) by Olds College OER Development Team. Adapted by Mary Shier. CC BY.