

Starting a Presentation

In modern English, Presentations tend to be much less formal than they were even twenty years ago. Most audience these days prefer a relatively informal approach. However, there is a certain structure to the opening of a Presentation that you should observe.

1. Get people's attention
2. Welcome them
3. Introduce yourself
4. State the purpose of your presentation
5. State how you want to deal with questions

Get people's attention

- If I could have everybody's attention.
- If we can start.
- Perhaps we should begin?
- Let's get started.

Welcome them

- Welcome to Microsoft.
- Thank you for coming today.
- Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.
- On behalf of Intel, I'd like to welcome you.

Introduce yourself

- My name's Jane Shaw. I'm responsible for travel arrangements.
- For those of you who don't know me, my name's Tom Stotter.
- As you know, I'm in charge of public relations.
- I'm the new Marketing Manager.

State the purpose of your presentation

- This morning I'd like to present our new processor.
- Today I'd like to discuss our failures in the Japanese market and suggest a new approach.
- This afternoon, I'd like to report on my study into the German market.
- What I want to do this morning is to talk to you about our new mobile telephone system.
- What I want to do is to tell you about our successes and failures in introducing new working patterns.
- What I want to do is to show you how we've made our first successful steps in the potentially huge Chinese market.

State how you want to deal with questions.

- If you have any questions, I'll be happy to answer them as we go along.
- Feel free to ask any questions.

- Perhaps we can leave any questions you have until the end?
- There will be plenty of time for questions at the end.

Of course, these are only suggestions and other language is possible. Even within this limited group of phrases, just choose a few you feel comfortable with and learn and use those.

Signposting

When we are giving a presentation, there are certain key words we use to 'signpost' different stages in our presentation. These words are not difficult to learn but it is absolutely essential that you memorize them and can use them when you are under pressure giving a presentation.

When you want to make your next point, you 'move on'.

- Moving on to the next point.
- I'd like to move on to the next point if there are no further questions

When you want to change to a completely different topic, you 'turn to'.

- I'd like to turn to something completely different.
- Let's turn now to our plans for next year.

When you want to give more details about a topic you 'expand' or 'elaborate'.

- I'd like to expand more on this problem we have had in Chicago.
- Would you like me to expand a little more on that or have you understood enough?
- I don't want to elaborate any more on that as I'm short of time.

When you want to talk about something which is off the topic of your presentation, you 'digress'.

- I'd like to digress here for a moment and just say a word of thanks to Bob for organizing this meeting.
- Digressing for a moment, I'd like to say a few words about our problems in Chicago.

When you want to refer back to an earlier point, you 'go back'.

- Going back to something I said earlier, the situation in Chicago is serious.
- I'd like to go back to something Jenny said in her presentation.

To just give the outline of a point, you 'summarize'.

- If I could just summarize a few points from John's report.
- I don't have a lot of time left so I'm going to summarize the next few points.

To repeat the main points of what you have said, you 'recap'.

- I'd like to quickly recap the main points of my presentation.
- Recapping quickly on what was said before lunch,.....

For your final remarks, you ‘conclude’.

- I'd like to conclude by leaving you with this thought
- If I may conclude by quoting Karl Marx

Survival Language

In modern English, Presentations tend to be much less formal than they were even twenty years ago. Most audience these days prefer a relatively informal approach. However, there is a certain structure to the opening of a Presentation that you should observe.

I got the language for today's lesson from an excellent book by Mark Powell called "Presenting in English ".

If you get your facts wrong.

- I am terribly sorry. What I meant to say was this.
- Sorry. What I meant is this.

If you have been going too fast and your audience is having trouble keeping up with you.

- Let me just recap on that.
- I want to recap briefly on what I have been saying.

If you have forgotten to make a point.

- Sorry, I should just mention one other thing.
- If I can just go back to the previous point, there is something else that I forgot to mention.

If you have been too complicated and want to simplify what you said.

- So, basically, what I am saying is this.
- So, basically, the point I am trying to get across is this.

If you realize that what you are saying makes no sense.

- Sorry, perhaps I did not make that quite clear.
- Let me rephrase that to make it quite clear.

If you cannot remember the term in English.

- Sorry, what is the word I am looking for?
- Sorry, my mind has gone blank. How do you say 'escargot' in English?

If you are short of time.

- So just to give you the main points.

- As we are short of time, this is just a quick summary of the main points.
 - A Friendly Face
- When you stand up in front of that audience, you're going to be really nervous.
- Poor speakers pay little or no attention to their audience as people. Big mistake.
- If you can see your audience as a group of individuals, you'll be much more likely to connect with those individuals.
- Start looking around your audience. See that big guy with his arms folded and an 'impress me' look on his face? Best not to look at him too much. How about that lady with the big smile, looking encouragingly towards you? OK, that's your mother, she doesn't count. But that other lady with a similar smile is someone you don't know. But from now on she's your 'friend'. Every time that you need any encouragement, look in her direction. Make good eye contact. Establish a form of communication between you.
- And now you've found one 'friend', you'll begin to see others in the audience. Pick out 'friends' all round the room. If you see an 'impress me' person and get discouraged, switch your view back to one of your 'friends'.
- Once you are aware that there are people in your audience who want you to succeed, you'll be much more likely to succeed
- .
- **Microphones**
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- Microphones can be a real problem. Very few of us use them frequently and so, when we have to talk into them in an already nervous state, we can easily make elementary mistakes.
- As a general rule, try to speak more clearly when you are using a microphone. (It will probably help if you speak a bit more slowly.)
- If you have a free-standing mike, step back from it a bit. This will enable you to speak louder and to vary your tone and inflection. If you are too close, your voice will sound monotonous and your audience will fall asleep.
- Don't turn your head away from the microphone while you are speaking. But do turn it away if you cough or sneeze!
- Any little movement you make, such as shuffling your papers, will be amplified by the mike. Cut out the nervous gestures!
- If you are wearing a clip-on mike, make sure it is not rubbing up against some clothing or jewellery. The noise this makes could ruin your presentation.
- If you have a radio-mike, make sure it is switched on when you are presenting and switched off at all other times. This particularly applies when you go to the restroom!

Dealing with nerves

- Almost everybody is nervous when they stand up to speak. There's no shame in being nervous. However, if you are too nervous, your anxiety will spread to your audience, making them nervous in turn.
- So how can you stop yourself from feeling too nervous? Here are a few tips.
- 1. Don't get hung up about being nervous. It's a normal human reaction. Don't make yourself more nervous because you're nervous.
- 2. Walk off your excessive nervousness. If possible, walk outside and get some fresh air at the same time. But a walk down the corridor is better than no walk.
- 3. Don't let your legs go to sleep. Keep the blood supply moving. Keep both feet on the floor and lean forward. Wiggle your toes. If you can stand up without disturbing anybody, do so.
- 4. Work your wrists, arms and shoulders to get the tension out of them. Gentle movements, not a major workout, will remove that tension.
- 5. Work your jaw. Gentle side-to-side or circular motion will help to loosen it.
- 6. Repeat positive affirmations quietly to yourself. "I am a good presenter." It may seem corny but it works.
- 7. Above all, breathe deeply. Make sure your stomach is going out when you breathe in.
- Don't be self-conscious about these warm-up activities. Most good speakers do them. Most people won't even notice that you are doing them. They're here to hear you speak, they're not interested in what you do when you are not in the limelight.

Stand Up When You Speak

I don't think you're going to like today's point. I don't like it very much myself but it's got to be done. For most purposes, when you give a presentation you should stand. Not clutching the back of your chair for support, not leaning against the podium but two feet on the floor facing your audience.

There are times when sitting is right. When it's an informal discussion, for example, where everybody is to contribute. But most of the time you need to stand.

- You can move around the room. This has the simple effect that people will look at you, not shut their eyes and drift off
- You can make eye contact with everybody
- You can reach all your props and teaching material easily
- You're involving your whole body in the presentation. Many people think this makes it more memorable.
- You're sending out the signal to the participants that 'this will be short'. Only a few self-obsessed people stand up in front of audiences for longer than they need to. And you're not one of those, are you?

The worst part of standing up is the actual standing up. Most people don't feel at ease as they get out of their chair and walk forward to their speaking position. Here are a couple of tips.

- As you're waiting, keep your feet flat on the floor. Don't have them crossed. Trust me, getting up and walking will be so much easier.
- Decide in advance where you are going to stand. Focus on that spot
- Walk forward briskly and confidently.

And that's how you become a stand up sort of person.

Stating your purpose

It is important to state your purpose clearly at the beginning of your talk. Here are some ways to do this:

talk about = to speak about a subject

- Today I'd like to talk about our plans for the new site.
- I'm going to be talking to you about the results of our survey.

report on = to tell you about what has been done.

- I'm going to be reporting on our results last quarter.
- Today I will be reporting on the progress we have made since our last meeting.

take a look at = to examine

- First, let's take a look at what we have achieved so far.
- Before we go on to the figures, I'd like to take a look at the changes we have made.

tell you about = to speak to someone to give them information or instructions

- First, I will tell you about the present situation, then go onto what we are going to do.
- When I have finished, Jack will then tell you about what is happening in Europe.

show = to explain something by doing it or by giving instructions.

- The object of this morning's talk is to show you how to put the theory into practice.
- Today I'm going to show you how to get the most out of the new software.

outline = to give the main facts or information about something.

- I'd like to outline the new policy and give you some practical examples.
- I will only give you a brief outline and explain how it affects you.

fill you in on = to give some extra or missing information

- I'd like to quickly fill you in on what has happened.
- When I have finished outlining the policy, Jerry will fill you in on what we want you to do.

give an overview of = to give a short description with general information but no details.

- Firstly, I would like to give you a brief overview of the situation.
- I'll give you an overview of our objectives and then hand over to Peter for more details.

highlight = draw attention to or emphasize the important fact or facts.

- The results highlight our strengths and our weaknesses.
- I'd now like to go on to highlight some of the advantages that these changes will bring.

discuss = to talk about ideas or opinions on a subject in more detail.

- I'm now going to go on to discuss our options in more detail.
- After a brief overview of the results, I'd like to discuss the implications in more detail.
 - Describing change - verbs
- When we are giving a presentation, we often talk about changes. Usually we illustrate these changes with visual aids to show these changes. We need, however, to explain these changes. To do this, we need special verbs.
 - Describing change - adjectives
- When talk about changes, we often need to point out how big or rapid these changes have been. To do this, we need to use adjectives.
 - Describing change - giving figures
- When talk about changes, we often show graphs. We don't need to give precise figures but we do need to comment on them, interpret them and point out relevant facts. Let's look at some language to do this.
 - Commenting on visuals
- When we are giving lots of information, we often use visuals to give an overview. However, we often need to highlight only one or two key points or figures and then comment on them. Here's some language to help you.
 - Emphasizing
- Make your presentation more persuasive by making your points stronger. Here is some language to help you:
 - Emphasizing 2
- Here is some more language to help you make your presentation more persuasive and make your points stronger :
 - Softening
- We have seen how to emphasize points but sometimes you want to soften the impact of what you are saying and give them less importance. Here are some ways to do that:
- Compare:
- We made a **huge** loss.
We made a loss.
We made a **slight** loss.
- The situation has improved **enormously**.
The situation has improved.
The situation has improved **slightly**.
- It is always **incredibly** difficult to ...
It is difficult to ...
It is sometimes **a little** difficult to ...
 - Softening 2

- We can soften the impact of negative ideas by responding using a positive word with a negative form of the verb. For example, compare:
- The results are **disappointing**.
The results certainly aren't very **encouraging**, I'm afraid.