

ORAL PRESENTATION: Step by step

A good oral presentation is well structured; this makes it easier for the listener to follow. Basically, there are three parts to a typical presentation: the beginning, middle and end or (introduction, body and conclusion). We are going to look at the content of each part individually and the language needed to express its structure and content.

THE BEGINNING OR THE INTRODUCTION

The beginning of a presentation is the most important part. It is when you establish a rapport with the audience and when you have its attention. More detailed techniques are to be found later.

- **Get the audience's attention and signal the beginning.**

- *Right. Well. OK. Erm. Let's begin.*
- *Good. Fine. Great. Can we start?*
- *Shall we start?*
- *Let's get the ball rolling.*
- *Let's get down to business.*

Try to get your audience involved in your talk either by asking direct or rhetorical questions. Ask for a show of hands for example in response to a question.

- **Greet the audience.**

It is important to greet the audience by saying something like:

- *Hello gentlemen.*
- *Good morning partners.*
- *Good afternoon esteemed guests!*

In English-speaking countries it is not uncommon that the speaker begins with a joke, an anecdote, a surprising statement to get the audience's attention, to make people want to listen, to feel relaxed and even to introduce the subject. An illustration from real life can be useful here as this may be a way to present information in such a way that the audience can identify with.

- **Give title and introduce subject**
- **What exactly are you going to speak about?**

Situate the subject in time and place, in relation to the audience, the importance. Give a rough idea or a working definition of the subject.

- *I plan to speak about...*
- *Today I'm going to talk about...*
- *The subject of my presentation is...*
- *The theme of my talk is... I've been asked to talk to you about...*
- *I have chosen to speak about this because...*
- *I was asked to speak about X because...*

Have you set any limits on the scope of your talk? What won't you speak about? It may be very useful to eliminate certain areas before you start so as to avoid confusion or deviation from your main task. It also protects you from criticism later if do not mention it in advance.

Have you limited the time? It is useful to give the listeners some idea of the time so as to maintain their attention better.

- *I will not speak about...*
- *I have limited my speech to*
- *I will speak for 2 minutes*
- *My talk will last about 2 minutes*

To get the audience's attention and perhaps to find out where they are you could introduce the subject by saying:

- *Have you ever heard of/seen X?*
- *You've probably seen countless times...*
- *You may have wondered...*

- **Give your objectives (purpose, aim, goals)**

The main purpose of an informative speech is to have the audience understand and remember a certain amount of information. You should thus have two purposes: a general purpose and a specific one. The former is to inform: to give an overview, to present, to summarize, to outline; to discuss the current situation or to explain how to do something or how something is done. The latter is what you want the audience to take away with them after listening to you, what you want them to do, what they should remember.

- *My purpose in doing this paper is to give you a solid background on the subject of oral presentation so that in the future, at the INT or elsewhere you can deliver a successful speech in front of a group.*
- *What I would like to do today is to explain...*
- *to illustrate...*
- *to give a general overview of...*
- *to outline...*
- *to have a look at...*
- *What I want my listeners to get out of my speech is...*

Once you have established your specific objectives you may go on to formulate your content.

- **Announce your outline.**

You want to keep the outline simple so 2 or 3 main points are usually enough. Concerning grammar the headings of the outline should be of the same grammatical form.

- *I have broken my speech down/up into X parts.*
- *I have divided my presentation (up) into Y parts.*
- *In the first part I give a few basic definitions. In the next section I will explain In part three, I am going to show...*
- *In the last place I would like / want to give a practical example...*

CONTENT: THE MIDDLE OR THE BODY

What **information** should you give in your speech? All your information should support purpose. In most cases you will have to limit the content, as time is usually precious!

- **Quantity**

How much information should you give? Enough to clearly develop your ideas. Don't forget to illustrate through examples.

- **Sequencing your ideas.**

Whatever sequencing you choose, the headings should be all of the same grammatical form to keep the audience's attention. The beginning and the end or the first and last parts are what listeners will remember the most. Think of ways you can keep the audience's attention throughout the rest of the speech.

- **Signposting or signaling where you are**

Just as when you are driving along a road that you don't know very well you depend on signs to guide you, you need to guide the listener by using expressions to tell him/her where you are going. That is to say, first announce what you are going to say (give an example, reformulate etc.) and then say what you want to say.

This is very like verbal punctuation. Indicating when you have finished one point and go on to the next. It is redundant in text but very advantageous in oral presentations. It may be useful also to pause, change your stance and the pitch of your voice as you move from one part of your presentation to another.

- **Listing information**

This can be

- ***There are three things we have to consider: one, two, and three. A, B, C.***
- ***Now let us look at the first aspect which is ...***
- ***First of all,...***
- ***In the first place...***

- **Linking ideas, sections/making transitions**

Indicate the end of one section and the beginning of the next.

- ***That's all I would like to say about ... (subject of part A) and now let us turn to***
- ***Now that we've seen ... let us examine more closely..***

- **Outlining options.**

If there are alternative ways of looking at a topic or proposal outline them to show you are familiar with different ways of dealing with the situation.

- ***There seem to be two possibilities of dealing with this.....***
- ***We've looked at this from the point of view of the manufacturer but what about if we were to...***
- ***A number of options present themselves at this point....***

If what you are dealing with demands a comparison of strengths and weaknesses indicate clearly the different aspects and underline the points you feel are important or secondary.

- ***What exactly are the benefits?***
- ***On the plus side we can add....;***
- ***This is not the only weakness of the plan ...***
- ***We cannot ignore the problems that such an action would create.....***

THE END OR THE CONCLUSION

Your talk should include four parts:

1. Give a brief reminder of what you tried to show in your speech and how you tried to do so: you should briefly summarize your speech in a few lines to make sure the audience has retained the main points. Alternatives are to just simply: state the point of the speech; give the essential message to retain; list the main points and what you want the audience to remember; review informally or indirectly by using a quote, a comparison or example.
2. Present a short conclusion: that is to say you should give a message that logically comes out of the ideas developed in your speech. This could be a commentary, the lessons learned, some recommendations, or the next steps
3. Thank the audience for attending
4. Invite your partners to ask questions or open a discussion.

Sign posting the end of your talk.

This may take the form of a recapitulation of the main points.

- *I'd like to summarise/sum up*
- *At this stage I would like to run through/over the main points...*
- *So, as we have seen today....*

or there may be recommendations or proposals that you wish to make;

- *As a result we suggest that.. In the light of what we have seen today I suggest that.....*
- *My first proposal is.....*

Above all when you conclude do not do it abruptly or as if surprised to get to the end of your talk.

- *In conclusion I would like to say that.....*
- *My final comments concern....*
- *I would like to finish by reminding everyone that.....*

You may at this point wish to distribute a vocabulary list or more detailed information that you wish to make available.

- *I've prepared a slim folder of the proposals...;*
- *In the sheets that are now being distributed you will find a breakdown of the.....*
- *And finally you may well have to deal with questions.*
- *I'd be happy to answer any questions....*
- *If there are any questions please feel free to ask.*

Thank you very much for your attention and if there are any suggestions or comments

Here are further examples of expressions that you can use in different circumstances

<p>To give an example: <i>Now let's take an example.</i> <i>An example of this can be found...</i> <i>To illustrate this...</i> <i>Let's see this through an example.</i> <i>For example, for instance, e.g.</i></p>	<p>To rephrase: <i>Let me rephrase that,</i> <i>In other words</i> <i>Another way of saying the same thing</i> <i>That is to say i.e.</i></p>
<p>To summarize: <i>To summarize</i> <i>To sum up,</i> <i>Let me summarize by saying</i> <i>So that concludes my overview</i> <i>In conclusion</i> <i>Briefly said</i> <i>In short,</i> <i>What I've tried to show in this part...</i> <i>To recap what we've seen so far...</i></p>	<p>To emphasize <i>What is very important is...</i> <i>What is important to remember...</i> <i>I'd like to emphasize the fact that...</i> <i>to stress... to highlight... to underline...</i> <i>What I tried to bring out...</i> <i>What we need to focus on...</i></p>
<p>To refer to what you have said previously <i>As I have already said earlier...</i> <i>As we saw in part one...</i> <i>To repeat what I've said so far...</i></p>	<p>To refer to common knowledge: <i>As you all may well know...</i> <i>It is generally accepted that...</i> <i>As you are probably aware of..</i></p>
<p>To refer to what you will say: <i>We will see this a little later on.</i> <i>This will be the subject of part 3.</i> <i>We will go into more detail on that later.</i> <i>For now it is suffice to say..</i></p>	<p>To refer to what an expert says: <i>I quote the words of ...</i> <i>There is a famous quotation that goes...</i> <i>In the words of According to....</i> <i>Here I'd like to quote As Mr. X says in his book...</i></p>