

## Devising and Giving Oral Presentations

In many units in Engineering, you have to report work in oral presentations. You may have to present a proposal for a design, a progress report of an on-going investigation or the final outcomes of a project. When you are working in a group, the presentation will then be a group presentation where a number of the group members, if not all, present different aspects of the work.

There are significant differences between a report of your work in an oral presentation and in a written report. An oral presentation involves face-to-face, more informal spoken communication where you only have time to inform the audience of the key aspects of your work. Do not take an oral presentation word for word from a written report!

The **purpose** of an oral presentation is to

- **report key information about a technical project**
- **use spoken delivery techniques and visual aids to enhance communication**

Keep this purpose in mind as you select information to include in your presentation.

The **audience** is often a client, for example, if you are presenting a bridge design your audience might be the shire engineer and the local council. You want to convey your enthusiasm, your technical expertise and your professional judgement to them

Keep this audience in mind as you decide what to include in your presentation.

The key features of a good presentation are:

1. **a clear logical structure**
2. **effective visual aids, and**
3. **good delivery techniques.**

### 1. **Clear, logical structure**

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You need to plan any oral presentation very carefully so that the information is easy for the audience to understand and to remember.

**In the introduction, make sure that**

- you give a clear statement of the purpose of the presentation
- you provides an overview of the key aspects of your investigation
- you outline the main sections of the presentation
- you introduce each member of the team and outline the material that they will be covering.

### **In the body of your presentation, make sure that**

- you present a clear logical report of your investigation using the main sections already outlined
- each new speaker begins by briefly stating what their topic is.

### **In the conclusion, make sure that:**

- you sum up your presentation effectively
- you give a quick summary of your major findings
- you leave the audience with a clear take-away message.

### **Linking the parts of a presentation**

In a good presentation, the speaker presents the structure of the presentation at the beginning in the Introduction. The speaker then reminds the audience of the structure throughout the presentation by making clear links at the beginning of each section and then by announcing the Conclusion.

#### **Example 1**

##### **Introduction**

*I'd like to talk today about .....*

*My aim today is to .....*

##### **Outline**

*I've divided my presentation into .....*

##### **Section 1**

*Let's start with .....*

*So that covers.....*

##### **Section 2**

*Now I'm going to outline .....*

*So the key features are .....*

##### **Section 3/4 etc**

*That brings me to .....*

##### **Summary**

*To sum up .....*

##### **Conclusion**

*In conclusion .....*

## Example 2

**Section 1: First, I'm going to outline my method.**

*Let's start with the key features of my method. ....*

**Section 2: So using this method, I obtained some very interesting results.**

*Let's first look at the results from my survey. ....*

*Thus the key results were ..., ..... and ..... .*

**Section 3: The data I gathered points to some very interesting findings.**

*The first implication from my data is that .....*

*The second implication is .....*

*The third is .....*

Use clear links to announce new sections of your presentation and to create a clear logical connections between the ideas within each section.

## 2. Visual aids

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The **purposes** of visual aids are

- to support and enhance the spoken message by communicating visual information in pictures, graphs and images
- to add impact and interest to your presentation.

Use visual information wherever it helps you to communicate your message to the audience.

The words on slides can also be effective prompts to what you say as well as emphasising key points for your audience.

### Remember:

- for word slides, use only key words or short phrases.
- for drawings and diagrams, clearly label them and give them titles.
- for graphs, clearly label the axes and take the audience slowly through the graph to explain what is significant in the data shown.

### 3. Delivery techniques

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Try to present with a natural conversational style. You want your presentation to be interesting, convincing and professional, and you want to share your enthusiasm for your subject with the audience.

#### Key aspects of delivery for each speaker:

- **Voice:** Keep your voice enthusiastic, loud enough and not too fast.
- **Eye contact:** Keep eye contact with the audience.
- **Stance:** Have a relaxed, natural stance.
- **Using notes:** Do not read notes or your report word for word. Just use key words and phrases as prompts.
- **Using slides:** Make sure you explain the information on each slide.

#### Question and answer time:

There will be a few minutes at the end of each presentation for questions about your designs. Anticipate these questions and prepare answers to them.

### 4. Assessment Criteria

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The following aspects are always considered in the assessment of an oral presentation:

#### 1. Content

- technically accurate
- logically organised with clear structure announced by first speaker and in links between speakers

#### 2. Slides

- easy to read with clearly labelled diagrams

#### 3. Voice

- easy to hear, confident and enthusiastic

#### 4. Questions

- answered thoughtfully and accurately

## **5. Good References for oral presentations**

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Mablekos, C.M. (1991) *Presentations That Work* IEEE, New York.  
Hargrave-Andrews Library 808.51 M112P

Mandel, S. (1988) *Technical Presentation Skills* Crisp Publications, Menlo Park.  
Hargrave-Andrews Library 808.51 M271T.c

### **For further assistance with oral presentations:**

Online tutorial on Oral Presentations at  
<http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/speaking/presentations/index.xml>