

Learning Unit 6

Doing presentations

After completing this Learning Unit, you will be able to use strategies that capture and retain the interest of an audience, by successfully completing the following:

- Use key words/signs, pace and pause, stress, volume and intonation or sign size, pace, rhythm and non-manual features (NMFs) in appropriate ways to reinforce the message.
- Use body language in a manner that is appropriate to context and topic, and reinforces main ideas and points of view.
- Plan formal communications in writing/signing and plans are detailed, complete, and realistic with respect to time allocation and content.
- Use visual aids that are appropriate to topic and context, and enhance the presentation and the transfer of information and understanding.
- Use techniques to maintain continuity and interaction.

Doing presentations

Different people learn in different ways. Research indicates that students may have preferences for the ways in which they receive information. Different preferences are the following:

- **Oral** is the most common way to exchange information in our society. Speech this arrives to the learner's ear and is therefore coded as aural (related to the ear). For students with an aural preference an attachment to the questionnaire provides a set of strategies for "learning by ear".
- **Reading and writing** are for other respondents who prefer to obtain information from printed words.
- The third group are not well served by modern methods of teaching in a university. They are the **visual learners** who like information to arrive in the form of graphs, charts, and flow diagrams. Sometimes they will draw maps of their learning sequences or create patterns of information. They are sensitive to different or changing spatial arrangements and can work easily with symbols.
- The last group is the group who like to experience **their learning by using all their senses**, including touch, hearing, smell, taste and sight. This group is regularly described in the literature as kinesthetics. They want concrete, multi-sensory experiences in their learning. They learn theory through its application during field trips, experiments, role plays, games and experiential learning.

Purpose of making presentations

The purpose of having students make oral and visual presentations to the entire class, in contrast to them submitting assignments only to the instructor, or only to one peer, is to demonstrate and evaluate the benefits of such presentations.¹ Arguments in favour of trying this method as a learning tool for writing and for verbal communication are:

1. Verbal presentation by individual students gives an opportunity to increase, improve and provide alternate methods of learning in the classroom besides lecture, visual presentations, visiting speakers, and peer review of assignments by one or two peers. (*Most instructors use one peer. When I hold peer group reviews, I use groups of 3-4 for more exposure.* Haber, 2008)
2. Each student will have the benefit of the entire class's feedback and expertise, not only that of the instructor or a small group of peers. Total class-instructor feedback is not available when assignments are submitted only to one peer. (*The single peer may lack skills needed to give feedback, though I, personally, assign an advanced to a less-advanced student for peer review.* Haber, 2008)
3. The presenter's peers and instructor will have the opportunity to ask the presenter questions regarding his report, helping the presenter to clarify unclear statements and the class to offer constructive suggestions.
4. By presenting an assignment in class, the student presenter can receive immediate feedback from all peers and the instructor, so that the presenter can make changes before submitting a final draft for grading.
5. Students can use and apply their training in critical thinking and on how to give constructive feedback. Students will learn to think for themselves, rather than having the instructor doing all their thinking for them. The instructor will moderate, fill in omissions or correct errors.

¹ refer: http://www.etni.org.il/etnirag/issue9/gilda_haber.htm#purpose_presentations

6. Adult, experienced working students are often especially skilled in some areas and can provide added information to students giving oral reports.
7. Class members will participate more actively in discussion, see each other face-to-face instead of seeing other students from the back only, and will come to know other class members, bond and help each other.
8. Hearing others' reports will make the class more interesting than receiving feedback and a grade from the instructor alone.
9. The class will gain insight into (and perhaps provide) new areas of information. For instance, one student presented an assignment on bird collision with airplanes, another, on the papilloma virus in college women, and how to control it, another compared breast cancer in Caucasian and African men and women. These topics inform other students in content areas they may not know about, and or, can contribute to.
10. Students will more often complete the assignment when knowing they will be "on stage." Many students will enjoy public presentations and using the blackboard and projector. This activity will provide a change of pace, and certainly more physical activity needed in three-hour classes.
11. Students listening to themselves speak and presenting their work out loud can critique themselves while addressing a live audience, which promote impromptu revisions (unprepared, on the spot).
12. When students practise their oral presentations to a classroom they will gain excellent preparation and skills for future professional meeting/conference assignments in the workplace.
13. If students often do public verbal presentations to a non-threatening audience such as peers in a classroom, they will increase their skills and confidence in oral and written assignments.
14. Knowing that one will be giving a public presentation will probably mean that the student come prepared.

6.1 Plan formal communications

The process of planning communications differs depending on whether it is an oral or a written presentation. As you know, the written word can be sent via e-mails, letters, essays as well as class room work, whereas oral communication refers to sending and receiving messages using spoken, verbal words, such as in interpersonal interactions or speeches.

It is important to note that what is said or not said can be used against the sender if the message is unclear. Before speaking or writing anything, a person should consider the words used, their meaning and possible perception of others.

When you communicate in these forms, you must first determine the audience to decide on the nature of the communication; such as; writing to your friend vs a formal business letter. The structure of oral and written communication should be clear, concise and easy to understand. Keep the ages of your audience in mind as well; when you speak to children you would not use complex words or thoughts in your communication. Some information is also best said face to face – especially if it is really important.

Sometimes you need a second opinion when you write. You may give your written communication to a friend or co-worker to proofread and provide feedback. This will identify the strong and weak points so that you can adjust so it is more understandable. For oral communication you should practise on your own as well as in front of someone else – this can help you to improve.

Cultural sensitivity is also important here, and identifying possible barriers before communicating can help avoid misunderstandings.

Formal oral communications are always planned in the written form first. This helps to ensure that they are effective. You need not write out the entire oral presentation word for word but you do need to have a very detailed plan of what you are going to say written down. This means you should plan what you are going to say in your introduction, in the main body of your oral communication, and how you are going to conclude.

The introduction is always important as this is how you capture the audience's attention from the start. A dull, boring introduction will cause the audience to lose interest and their attention may start wandering.

You may want to briefly explain the purpose of your presentation and why you consider it important. You might want to use an amusing anecdote to put the audience at ease. You may want to use a startling example to grab everyone's attention.

Examples:

Which of these two examples do you think would be the most effective introduction?

- **Example 1:** Rape is a bad thing. It is growing in South Africa. People are faced with a life sentence if they are found guilty of rape.
- **Example 2:** Ladies and gentlemen, in the time it will take me to introduce this topic, another five women or children will have been raped. Think about that. This is the shocking nature of the enormous problem we all face in South Africa.

The plan for the **main body** of the presentation should be very detailed. You need to plan in terms of paragraphs. Each one should contain a separate important idea, or set of facts. You must ensure that there is a logical link between each of the ideas you wish to present.

Which of these two examples do you think shows the most logical and meaningful sequence of ideas to be covered in the main body of a presentation on modern music?

Example 1:

- rap music
- house music
- an overview of modern music
- the future direction of modern music
- well known rap stars
- some examples of modern music
- well-known house music DJs
- why youth respond to modern music

Example 2:

- an overview of modern music
- why youth respond to modern music
- some examples of modern music
- rap music

- well known rap stars
- house music
- well-known house music DJs
- the future direction of modern music

The **conclusion** to an oral presentation contains your closing comments. It is the last impression you will leave with your audience. You may want to briefly summarise what you have covered in the main body of your presentation or you may wish to pose questions for the audience to think about. Always try to end on a high note and to create a good lasting impression. Plan your concluding remarks carefully.

When planning an oral presentation you need to be prepared to practise aloud in order to check how long it takes to present.

You need to be very clear about what the **time** constraints for any oral presentation are and ensure that you stick to these. If an audience is expecting a 15 minute address on something and get either a four minute presentation or a 30 minute one they will feel dissatisfied and your communication will not have been effective.



You also need to make sure that the **content** of your oral presentation is relevant to the context in which you are presenting and to the needs of your audience. Let us say you have been asked to present a talk on "The issues surrounding genetic modification of plants". There is a great difference in how you would choose content for this presentation if it was for fellow learners or if it was for a meeting of gardeners who work in Stellenbosch residential area.

6.2 Use techniques to maintain continuity and interaction

We have looked at a range of techniques you can use in order to make your oral presentation as effective as possible. Now we need to move on to look at what happens in an actual presentation. How, while you are presenting, do you maintain **continuity** and **interaction**? Continuity refers to the flow of your presentation and interaction refers to what happens between you and members of the audience.

You should maintain continuity at all times and encourage interaction between you and your audience.

How do you respond to queries? **Responding to queries** in a positive way is essential. Members of the audience might ask you to tell them more about something you have said; they may want to know where to go for more information; may query some of your opinions, and so on. Always try to respond positively to a query. Thank the person for asking the question. Attempt to answer the question as clearly and as concisely as you can. If you are not sure of the answer do not pretend that you are - rather tell the questioner where he or she could find the answer or tell them you will get back to them with the correct answer.

If you are not sure that you have understood the question that has been put to you then **reword** it and check whether you have clearly understood what you are being asked. This helps to ensure clear effective oral communication.

You may also try and reword information that is quite complex so that all members of the audience can follow. An example of this might be: "HIV attacks the immune system. In other words it stops the body from being able to fight off disease effectively."



The way you time your speech or presentation is also important. If you have two main points to put across, you should allocate more or less equal time to both points. Think back to the planned speech you gave. Were you aware of the timing issue? **Timing techniques** in your

actual presentation are also critical. Never give the impression that you are rushing over a point or are not prepared to give enough time to audience queries. This will lead to ineffective audience interaction.

6.3 Use appropriate ways to reinforce the message

How can you use your voice most effectively to ensure that you deliver presentations in a successful way?

Our voices have an incredible range - we can vary our manner of speaking a great deal in order to ensure that our audience understand our message and is kept interested. Let us now look at some key elements of our oral communication that relate to delivery.

Pace refers to the speed at which you speak; the degree of urgency or sharpness with which we deliver an oral communication.

We can vary the pace of delivery. We can have a rapid fire delivery (fast pace), an even, well-modulated mode of delivery (medium pace) or a very deliberate rate of delivery (slow pace). Sometimes we may feel it is appropriate to use a different pace for different parts of our delivery.

Pause refers to a small break in our delivery. A pause is the verbal equivalent of a comma or full stop. Pauses can be used to emphasise an important point, in this case we would be pausing for dramatic effect; a pause can show that we have reached the end of one point and are about to move on to the next; a pause could indicate a small break between each item in a list of things; a pause could give the audience time to absorb the previous point.

Stress is another element in oral communication. To stress a word or phrase is to emphasise it. It is the equivalent of using the **bold** function in word processing. We can stress the most important word in a phrase, or we can stress the most important phrase in a sentence. Sometimes we will also inform the audience that we "wish to stress" an important point.



Volume refers to the amount of sound we make. We may speak very quietly (low volume) or use a middle range volume (medium volume) or we may speak very loudly (high volume). We must always choose the appropriate volume for our audience. It is important that we can be heard at all times and it is generally inappropriate to shout at people. An intimate one-on-one context usually calls for a low volume. If however we are addressing a large audience we may need to increase the volume until we are speaking relatively loudly.

Intonation refers to the pitch of the voice: the rising (high) or falling (low) pitch of the voice when we say a word or syllable; or the rising and falling pattern of speech generally. Generally we need to vary our pitch or intonation in order not to sound boring and monotonous.

When we address an audience we always have a message to put across or convey. Whether we do this successfully or not will often depend, not only on the content of our message, but also on the delivery. The elements given above all refer to delivery.

It is pointless preparing an excellent speech which we then deliver in a monotonous and boring way at an inappropriate volume - the message will not get across successfully.

6.4 Use body language

We have looked at the way we use our voices to convey the appropriate message to our audience.

We now move on to the topic of body language - also sometimes referred to as nonverbal communication. Our gestures, facial expressions, mannerisms, and the way we hold ourselves convey a number of messages to our audience.



Facial expressions are a very clear indicator of a wide range of emotions. For example we can signal certain emotions by smiling to show happiness or pleasure, frowning to show anger or displeasure, raising our eyebrows to show disbelief or amazement, turning down the corners of our mouth to show disgust or disapproval, widening our eyes to show surprise.

[You can check how effectively you use these expressions by looking into a mirror and attempting to show as wide a range of emotions as possible.]

Don't forget to smile!!

We can of course control our facial expressions in order either to not show any emotion or to show an emotion we are not feeling.

How do we ensure that our facial expressions are appropriate to the context in which we are operating? We need to be sensitive to our context in order not to convey an inappropriate message through our facial expression. For example it would be extremely inappropriate to indicate great joy and happiness at a funeral. It would also be very inappropriate to convey through our facial expression that we found a worker's responses to our questions extremely amusing; it would be inappropriate for us to show pleasure if a colleague gets hurt. Always be aware of the context in which you are operating.

We also need to be aware of the topic which is being presented either by ourselves or someone else and ensure that our facial expressions are appropriate to this topic.

If we are presenting a talk on the effect of HIV/AIDS in rural areas it would be extremely inappropriate to convey amusement. If we were required to negotiate a settlement between two colleagues it would be inappropriate to show anger and aggression.

When we are communicating orally we can use our facial expressions to help us convey our message effectively. We can also use gestures and body posture (the way we hold our body) in ways that help us to ensure our body language is appropriate to the context in which we are operating and to the topic we are presenting. Appropriate facial expressions, gestures and body posture can also help us reinforce the main ideas and attitudes we wish to convey to our audience.

The definition of a gesture is a body movement made in order to express meaning or emotion, or to communicate an instruction. Gestures send visual signs to onlookers and also transmit information.

Some examples of gestures are: throwing our hands in the air; touching our hair or clothes; wagging a finger in the air; wringing our hands; giving a "V" for victory sign; making an obscene hand gesture; punching the air in triumph, shrugging our shoulders, signalling to the waitress to bring the bill, and so on.

Our gestures can sometimes be subconscious, that is, we are not aware of making them. You should become as aware as possible of all the unconscious gestures you make which could get in the way of effective communication. For example, you may fiddle with a pen, you may keep touching your hair or clothes, you may constantly smooth your eyebrows or your moustache or play with your jewellery. All these gestures, and others like them, can be very distracting to your audience and prevent your communication from being as effective as it

could be. Ask friends or family or fellow students to assist you in becoming as aware as possible of unconscious gestures you make.

Effective public speakers on the other hand, will consciously and deliberately use gestures in order to emphasise their main points and to emphasise their attitude to issues.

Body posture or stance is the way we carry ourselves. Body posture often indicates what our attitude is to the interaction we are involved in and towards our audience. Body posture conveys information such as whether we are bored, attentive, relaxed or tense.

6.5 Use visual aids

A visual aid can be defined as a visible instructional or educational aid; something such as a model, chart, film or video, that is looked at as a complement (addition) to a lesson or presentation.

When you communicate orally with an audience by doing a presentation or a talk, it is often helpful to use visual aids, as these will enhance your presentation and make it more effective. You should always ensure that the aids you choose are appropriate to your topic and the context of your audience. You also need to ask yourself whether your choice of visual aids is really assisting the audience to understand what you are presenting.

Here are some examples of visual aids:

- flipcharts
- slide projectors
- videos and films
- overhead projector transparencies
- hand-outs
- whiteboards
- graphs
- posters
- photos
- PowerPoint presentations

When you use visual aids, you must keep certain key points in mind. Always remember:

- Ensure that the visual aids are clear and understandable.
- Prepare all your visual aids well in advance and know exactly where in the presentation you are going to use them.
- Make sure that all the equipment you will be using is in good working order and that you can use it competently.
- Ensure that the visual aids are suitable for the venue by checking that they are clearly visible from everywhere in the venue.
- Ask yourself whether these visual aids will make your oral communication more effective.



Class Activity 6: Doing presentations

Please follow the instructions from the facilitator to complete the formative activity in your Learner Workbook.



Reflection

Individually, complete the formative activity in your Learner Workbook.



Facilitator Observation Checklist

The facilitator will provide you with feedback about your participation during the class activities in your Learner Workbook.

Summative Assessment

You are required to complete a number of summative assessment activities in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide. The Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide will guide you as to what you are required to do:

- Complete all the required administration documents and submit all the required documentation, such as a certified copy of your ID, a copy of your CV and relevant certificates of achievement:
 - Learner Personal Information Form
 - Pre-Assessment Preparation Sheet
 - Assessment Plan Document
 - Declaration Of Authenticity Form
 - Appeals Procedure Declaration Form
- Place your complete Learner Workbook (with the completed Class Activities) in the specified place in the Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.
- Complete the Knowledge Questions under the guidance of your facilitator:



Knowledge Questions

Individually, complete this summative activity in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.

- Complete the other summative assessment activities in your workplace:



Practical Activities

Individually, complete this summative activity in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.



Summative Project

Individually, complete this summative activity in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.



Logbook

Individually, complete this summative activity in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide.

Once you have completed all the summative activities in your Learner Portfolio of Evidence Guide, complete the Assessment Activities Checklist to ensure that you have submitted all the required evidence for your portfolio, before submitting your portfolio for assessment.