

Oral Design Presentations

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Three parts to every presentation

- Speaker
- Subject
- Listener



“... an oration is constituted of three things, of the speaker, and of the subject about which he speaks, and of the person to whom.”

Aristotle, Rhetoric, Bk I. chap iii.

Buckley, trans.

Oral presentations require:

- Content
- Organization
- Language
- Visuals
- **Practice!** (really!)

Things to recall before you speak:

- You cannot give all the information in a presentation that you can in a written report
- Most audiences can really only remember a few “main points” from a talk
- A talk must be properly organized to bring out those main points

So, a talk must be:

- Organized to emphasize those main points
- Planned carefully so there’s enough time devoted to each topic
- Planned so that you *meet your time limit*
 - If there is time afterwards for **Q&A**, try to anticipate likely questions/topics and be prepared for those as well! Perhaps even have “extra” slides, readily-retrievable an on-point...

Some old, but good advice:

- Estimate the number of words
- Make an outline
- Develop the ideas into *paragraphs*
- Use interesting and clear language
- Practice your delivery

Adapted from Harry Shafter. (1963). *How to Prepare Talks and Oral Reports*. New York: Pocket Books.

Estimating Words

Most people speak between 100 and 150 words per minute...

Why is this important to know?

It fits along with something else:

“Most authorities agree, however, that paragraphs over 200 words or under 100, unless used deliberately for specific effect, indicate some weakness in structure.”

Harry Shafter. (1963). *How to Prepare Talks and Oral Reports*. New York: Pocket Books.

Hence: Most people speak about a paragraph a minute.
****Caveat: This doesn't mean you memorize notes!***

So, take a *12-minute* presentation...

This means twelve developed “paragraphs,” which will need to cover an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

Recall that the focus will generally be on 3-4 “main points,” including their various supporting detail...

One possible distribution:

- Introduction (1-2 paragraphs)
- Body:
 - Point A (2-3 paragraphs)
 - Point B (2-3 paragraphs)
 - Point C (2-3 paragraphs)
- Conclusion (1-2 Paragraphs)

Or perhaps this?

- Introduction (1 paragraph)
- Body:
 - Point A (2-3 paragraphs)
 - Point B (2-3 paragraphs)
 - Point C (2 paragraphs)
 - Point D (2 paragraphs)
- Conclusion (1 Paragraph)

Typical Structure of E100 Presentations:

- Greeting & Introduction of Team (verbally only)
 - Begin w/ title slide (title, team/logo, names, date, place).
- Brief Introduction of overall *Topic/Task* (1-2 slides)
- Forecast of Presentation (outline/agenda for the rest)
- Summary (may combine onto 1 slide w/ prob & soln)
 - of the *Problem* (1 slide max)
 - of your team’s *Solution/Design* (1 slide max)
- Full **Problem**, including **Background, Criteria, etc.**
- Your Team’s **Solution/Design** (main focus)
- Conclusion (1 slide, *plus* 1 to thank & invite Qs)

The “D.E.S.C.E.N.D.” Principle:

- Describe
- Extract
- State
- Clarify
- Exhibit
- Narrate
- Demonstrate

**From Shefter, H.
“How to Prepare Talks and Oral Reports”*

“Describe”

Give a good, concrete description of something.
Avoid abstractions here; help the audience see what you’re talking about.

Example:

“The Roomba is a gray, flat, circular vacuum cleaner about a foot and half across and five inches thick. It is self-propelled and vacuums a room by itself.”

“Extract”

It’s often helpful to use a vivid or telling quotation (or other motivating device).

Example:

Ambrose Bierce once said: “An inventor is a person who makes an ingenious arrangement of wheels, levers and springs, and believes it enhances civilization.”

“State”

Set forth your thesis, including meaningful quantitative information. (Be honest and clear in your use of statistics!)

Example:

“Two percent of engineering students account for 20% of CAEN printing. Each of these students prints an average of 16,000 pages a year.”

“Clarify”

Clarify any generalities or abstractions with concrete explanations.

Example:

“It is built of travertine stone and is an oval with a circumference of 527 meters and diameters of 188 and 156 meters. It is four stories high, the stories made of superimposed arcades, and it could seat 50,000 spectators. A great canvas awning protected the spectators, while the combatants fought in the sand below, the sand, which gave its name ‘arena’ to that area.”

“Exhibit”

Use visual aids wherever appropriate.



“Narrate”

Sometimes, an illustrative story or anecdote can help the audience relate to what you’re talking about.

For example, “paint the picture” of a *scenario* in which your design is best *used*...perhaps a few key examples? And, be sure to tie this to the particular content you’re describing...

“Demonstrate”

Show how something works, insofar as possible (often overlaps with “Narrate”).



(Mr. Wizard)

Visual Aids in Presentations

“The greatest number of ideas in the shortest time with the least ink in the smallest space.”

Edward R. Tufte on what makes an excellent graphic

Various Principles to Consider

- Many of the same general principles (covered separately) of Visuals
- Some extra-important considerations regarding oral presentations:
 - The visuals must not be too “busy”
 - They must not be distracting from the speaker!
 - ***They should be parallel in structure and design (bullets/sub-bullets, phrasing)***

Text Slides in Presentations

- In presentations, even text-only slides are a form of a visual!
- Be sure to use uniform font/size patterns
- Be sure to use a consistent overall structure
- Make sure your design is intuitive to follow
- “Seven-by-Seven” Rule:
 - NOT a rigid rule, but a general guideline...
 - Try not to use more than 7 lines (including sub-bullets) per slide, and around 7 words/line...

Font Sizes: Make Sure All Can See!

This is 40 point type (Arial)

This is 36 point type

This is 24 point type

This is 18 point type

This is 16 point type

Some Comments on PowerPoint...

It can be a straitjacket!

- But to many, it's a nice-looking straitjacket
- It lets you do a lot, but it can constrict you in some ways as well
- Don't assume that just because PowerPoint leads you into a certain arrangement that it's a good one...



PowerPoint Pointers

- Watch out for distracting backgrounds, poor contrasts, or irrelevant graphics
- People naturally look at brightly-colored screens
- People often prefer the visual to the speaker
 - Don't make the slide more interesting than you!
- People will try to read the text of a slide rather than listen to what you have to say

Points about the act of *speaking*:

- You aren't alone in fearing public speaking!
- A little "stage fright" can actually be helpful
- Even professional speakers often suffer from stage fright
- People are often afraid simply because they haven't had enough practice
 - But remember, "*practice*" *doesn't mean memorization*; you should be familiar enough with the content to be "conversational" about it

To be an effective speaker, you must:

- Prepare
 - Well-designed slides
 - An outline of key phrases
 - *Try doing it on note-cards, but don't use note cards in your actual presentation (occasional glancing at slides is okay, but never turn your back to the audience)*
- Practice
 - Saying your part aloud several times. Project well!
 - *Multiple times over several days, if possible...*
 - Say it to your friends or teammates
 - Work on eye contact, posturing, gestures, etc.

Strive to avoid certain vocal affectations:

- Improper pitching
 - Don't make a statement sound like a question, such as with raised intonation at the end
- Excessive "Ahh" and "Umm" fillers
- Stalling/Stumbling (appearing to forget, etc.)
- Overly colloquial diction
- *Apparent* nervousness

Appearance & Enthusiasm

- People judge you by your appearance
 - A good appearance enhances your credibility
 - The more "professional" you dress, the more you'll be taken seriously
- *Show Enthusiasm*: People gauge the merit of your content in part by how enthusiastic YOU seem about it

It may be unfair, but it's a fact!