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Online Presentations

What are presentations?

When you give a presentation, you are providing information verbally and visually in an informative way. There are many different types of presentations. The types of presentations you may give during your time at university include: an oral report, a debate, a patient interview, etc.

Planning to present online

Given the recent shift to online learning and teaching, you might be required to give a presentation online. This guide aims to help you prepare for giving an online presentation.

Before we begin, it's important to recognise that many people feel anxious about giving presentations. In fact, public speaking is recognised as one of the most common phobias.

When presenting online, you can feel nervous about a number of things. For example, you might not only be worried about the content of your presentation, but also be concerned about how to use the technology you are using for your presentation.

If you're feeling nervous, remember that being prepared is one of the best ways to deal with this anxiety.

Next, consider what form your presentation is going to take. If you are giving a presentation over video conferencing software, for example via Zoom, then make sure that you know how to use it.

Tip: For more detailed information about reducing presentation anxiety, see the Study Smart resource: [Reducing anxiety](#).

Tip: For Zoom help, read the [Zoom meeting and webinar features](#) guide.

How can I present effectively?

Step 1: Decide what your purpose is. What are you intending to accomplish through delivering your presentation? What is the main message that you want to convey?

Step 2: Write a draft of your main points, keeping in mind that you shouldn't try to include too much information. A useful technique can be to write each point on a post-it-note and stick them on the wall for review. This can also help you to structure your presentation effectively.

Step 3: Practise your presentation aloud, using the software you will be using during the live presentation. Also practise with the use of visual aids if you are going to use any.

Step 4: If possible, record your presentation and play it back. This will help you identify where you may need to make changes to improve it.

Step 5: Proofread any visual aids.

Even though you might not be in the same room as your audience during your presentation, try to keep them engaged as much as you can. Consider pausing at points in your presentation to ask questions such as, 'Can everyone see this slide?', to clarify that everyone is keeping up with you and to keep a line of communication open with your audience.

Tip: For more detailed information about using spoken language, see the Study Smart resource: [Written versus spoken language](#).

Using visual aids in an online presentation

If you are using slides or other visual aids in a Zoom presentation, practise screen sharing so that you feel comfortable using this function.

If you are using slides, remember that these should add to what you are presenting orally. As a general rule, slides should provide a summary of your key points. Keep them as clean and clear as possible. If you have too much text on a slide, it can distract your audience from what you are saying.

Tip: For more detailed information about using visual aids, see the Study Smart resource: [Using visual aids](#).

Try not to be too dependent on your slides. They should act as prompts, so avoid reading them line by line as this can become boring for your audience.

Presentation structure

Once you feel comfortable with the technology you will be using, you can begin to structure your presentation.

Introduction

In the introduction of the presentation you give an overview of what you will say. It's important to give a preview of what you will be saying so that the audience knows what to expect. Ensure that your introduction provides:

- a clear purpose for your presentation. Convey what this purpose is to your audience, otherwise they might be confused and lose the thread of your argument.
- an answer to the following: what is the purpose of my presentation?

Body

Present your main ideas in a logical sequence, following the outline you gave in the introduction. Ensure that you:

- speak slowly, and leave pauses between each main idea so that the audience has time to take it in.
- use transitional language as you move between ideas, e.g. 'Now that I've explained the third policy recommendation, I'm going to discuss how practical and effective it is.'

Conclusion

Summarise what you have said and end with a strong closing statement or recommendation, just as you would in a written essay.

Practice makes perfect

Remember to practise your presentation in the same way that you would practise a face-to-face presentation. When you rehearse your online presentation, give it a go by using the technology you will be using during the live presentation. This will help you to feel as prepared as possible.

However, keep in mind that we can't control all things in an online environment all the time, and if things go wrong that's ok! Apologise for any technical glitches and move on with your presentation when you can.

Extra things to consider

1. **Check your internet connection.** Sit near your modem or connect through a LAN cable to improve your connection.
2. **Audio:** check that your speakers and microphone are working correctly before your presentation. It may be better to wear a headset with a microphone to improve the quality of your sound. If possible select a quiet room with no background noise.
3. **Image:** consider checking how you and your background look before going live. For instance, your lighting might need some adjustment. You may also like to consider using a virtual background to hide your personal space from others viewing the presentation. You can check all of these by opening a new Zoom meeting. You might also like to practise your presentation in a Zoom meeting with a friend who will be able to provide you with feedback.