

Presentation Structure

The structure of a presentation is much the same as that for an essay. You start by introducing the topic overall, then each aspect of the topic is presented in the body of your speech and, finally, you finish by summing up and restating the topic in your conclusion.

This structure is important for your audience to be able to follow what you are presenting. You have to introduce the general topic in order to set the context for the points you want to put forward in the body of your speech. You also need to restate the general topic at the end so that your audience hears the most important points last and are more likely to remember them.

Introducing the presentation

Grab their attention

A good presentation often begins with something that will grab the attention of the audience. This may be something funny like a joke or cartoon, it may be a story or it may be an interesting quote. Often, saying something controversial like “we should ban all cars in Brisbane and make everyone use bicycles” can make people sit up and listen.



State your purpose

The first thing you should talk about once you have their attention is to outline the main point (or thesis) of your presentation. People are more likely to remember things they see or hear at the beginning or the end of a presentation. Therefore, the main point you want them to remember should be made first. Likewise, this main point should also be the last thing you mention in your conclusion.

The structure of a presentation is much the same as that for an essay – introduction, body and conclusion

Tell them where they are going

People are able to follow a presentation if they already have a ‘road map’ in their heads of the points that will be covered in the body of the speech. This overview enables them to fit the details of your presentation into an overall context and they are more likely to understand your arguments as you present them. Therefore, it is good to give your audience an outline of your speech. For example: ‘I will concentrate on the following points: First of all...Then...This will lead to... And finally...’

The body of the presentation

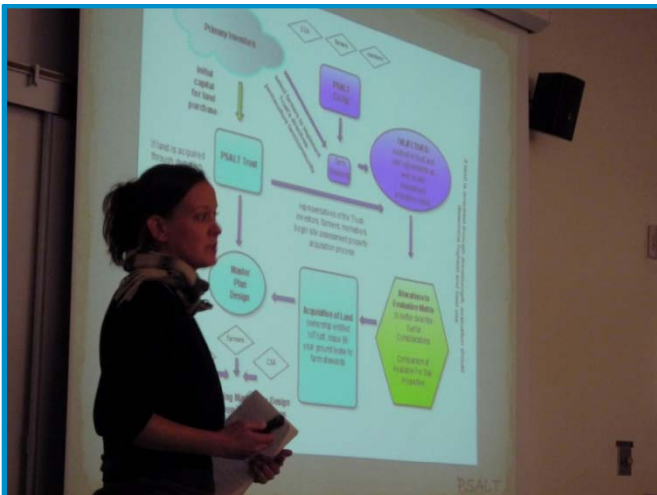
Structure each point

The body of a presentation should clarify your message and develop your arguments. Each point should be structured like a little mini presentation where you state the point first and then explain and expand on it. You need to back your points with evidence and often real life examples are useful to clarify. You should finish with a concluding sentence that restates the point again.

Order your points

Order your points logically so that they make sense and build a sequence or 'story' for your audience. Organise your material according to some 'organising principle'. This may be organising facts in chronological order, by theme, or in the order of importance.

When presenting an argument, some people recommend that your strongest points should go at the beginning and end and leave your weaker points to the middle of the presentation. This way, people are more likely to hear and remember your stronger points and will be more convinced by the argument you put forward.



Link your points

Try to link each of the points you are making so that your presentation moves smoothly from one point to the next. This can be done by using 'transitional words' like 'furthermore ... likewise ... however ... on the other hand'. Also, sequencing your points by using words like 'firstly ... secondly ... finally' signals to your audience that you are starting another point and where they are up to in the presentation.

The Conclusion

Sum up your points

It is important in your conclusion to leave your audience with a clear summary of everything you have covered. Restate each point and explain its connection to the other points made and to the main point of your presentation. This should leave your audience with a clear overview of what you have been saying. Finally, you need to leave them with a strong restatement of your main thesis so that it is the last thing they hear and therefore is the point they are most likely to remember.

Finish strongly

There is a risk that you can lose your audience towards the end of a presentation if you do not know how to finish strongly. Many people concentrate of preparing a snappy beginning to their presentation but then don't know how to finish. They either just stop leaving their audience confused or keep repeating themselves leaving their audience impatient.

Prepare a strong statement to finish with before you get up to speak. It may be a quote or a joke or even just restating your main point in a different way. This way you will not run the risk of dithering at the end and you will leave your audience satisfied with a strong conclusion.

PHOTO REFERENCES

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