

# Professional Communication (eTextbook)

## *Professional Communications OER*

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# 3. Presenting in a Professional Context

Developed by

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## MODULE OVERVIEW

### Module Chapters

The chapters in this module include

- [Your Presentation Style](#)
- [Developing a Presentation Strategy](#)
- [Presentation Aids](#)
- [Communicating with a Live Audience](#)

### Module Summary

You may have already had exposure to public speaking and giving presentations, or perhaps you shudder at the thought. This module introduces you to the art and science of putting together an impressive presentation. You will develop key strategies needed to prepare and deliver professional presentations. Doing so so requires a range of skills. Foremost is the ability to communicate well. Whether for business, school, or in everyday life, the ability to communicate effectively and with confidence is a core skill. But not everyone is a gifted communicator.

The art of communication involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and values. Speech is a key skill in communicating. Conversational speech may come easy to some, but communicating verbally in a professional context may not. Professional speaking can be thought of as a rhetorical skill. To be effective, you need to understand not only what to say but also how to say it. You will learn about key elements of rhetoric as a function of communication and how it can be applied to professional presentations.

Casual conversation is usually spontaneous and informal. What is communicated may be unplanned and without consequence. Professional presentations, on the other hand, need to be planned and well-structured. They often occur in formal and sometimes stressful environments. Unlike in casual conversation, personal traits used in formal presentations may not come to you naturally. As a presenter, you need to know how to use elements of verbal and non-verbal communication effectively. For example, eye contact, body language, speaking style, active listening, and being concise are all important elements of a quality presentation. You will learn ways to hone these traits in order to effectively apply them as you develop your personal communication style.

In this module you will learn about proven techniques for planning a presentation for different purposes such as informing, persuading, or entertaining your audience. Each of these requires attention to detail and a clear strategy. Delivery includes what you say in words and what you say using props or presentation aids. You need to ensure these work in harmony to convey your message clearly. You will also learn about design considerations for creating visual aids to enhance your presentation.

Anxiety is a common barrier many presenters experience and can result from being nervous or uncomfortable facing groups of people. It can also be caused by things like the presentation venue, familiarity with equipment that will be used, or other environmental factors. We will examine techniques to cope with and offset the impact of presentation anxiety.

As you work through the eText module chapters, you will learn that giving good presentations does not just happen; rather, it is the result of a deliberate and well-planned process that combines both art and science. This process begins with you learning some things about yourself, specifically identifying key skills that you can adapt to improve on your delivery style and the authenticity of your message. We will determine the extent to which your own beliefs and attitudes may play a positive or negative role in delivering a successful presentation. You

will discover how building self-confidence and using self-reflection can help you to develop your ideas more thoroughly and communicate them effectively to others.

Interpersonal skills are perhaps the most important for a successful presentation. They are key to getting your message across and to the way your audience reacts to you and interacts with you during your presentation. You will discover how verbal and non-verbal skills can be harmonized to deliver a presentation that an audience will not soon forget, both in its content and in presentation.

The next phase of the process is about planning. Here you will learn about factors to consider when preparing for an effective presentation and how to develop an execution strategy based on these factors. We will cover planning activities such as knowing your audience, researching supporting evidence for your topic, and organizing the flow of your presentation.

The final phase focuses on delivering a presentation. This is the culmination of your hard work in preparation and planning. It is where you showcase your communication skills and planning strategy. This is also the time when your audience is eager to get what they came for. In other words, this is the time when you sell yourself based on the quality of information you will convey and on how well it resonates with the audience.

Regardless of its substance or how well planned it may be, a poorly delivered presentation can be a significant disappointment to you and the audience. Not every presentation can be done well by winging it. You will learn several delivery techniques that improve the likelihood of a successful presentation including how to skillfully use body movements without causing distraction, how and when to vary voice characteristics to add emphasis, and the subtleties of eye contact to draw your audience into the presentation. You will also discover the pros and cons of using props and how to integrate them effectively to support your presentation.

Since your presentation is as much about you as is the topic, you will learn tips and techniques for rehearsing, interacting with your audience, conducting effective Q&A's, and improving your persona.

## **Relevance to Practice**

Along with good writing skills, the ability to communicate verbally is vital to many employers today. It is an integral part of the modern business world. People in the workplace spend the majority of their time communicating. Verbal communication in the workplace takes many forms such as staff meetings, discussions, speeches, presentations, informal conversations, and telephone and video conferences.

Communicating verbally is more personal and flexible than writing. It allows workers to exchange ideas, information, and feedback more quickly. Verbal communication tends to occur in person, making it easier to negotiate, express emotions, outline expectations, and build trust, all of which are important in today's workplace. Communication can also occur between people who are not together in person. In these situations, unique skills are necessary to achieve success.

Simple conversation skills are also valued in the workplace, but this does not mean using casual or informal language. Rather, what is prized by many employers is the ability to communicate important information professionally but in a meaningful and understandable way. This can be important when making spontaneous presentations as well as more elaborate formal group presentations, which are a part of many work roles today.

## **Learning Goals**

An overarching theme in this eText is on recognizing how personal traits and attitudes build confidence and that successful delivery of a presentation is the result of clear and deliberate planning. Learning goals based on this theme will guide the development of a planning strategy while learning outcomes serve as evidence of achievement. Key developmental attributes related to the learning goals are also listed here.

## Learning Goals

The aim of this module is for you to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to:

1. build a persona that exudes confidence as a presenter and;
2. understand the dynamics at play in developing an effective presentation delivery strategy and executing it successfully.

## Developmental Attributes

Upon successfully completing this module, you should:

*Understand* the following:

- That communication is not only about the words we say but also about how they are conveyed
- That communicating well involves knowing about yourself and is vital to building acceptance and trust in others
- That good communication is not an inherent skill but a process that is learned and practised
- That listening is a focused mental process, while hearing is a physical process with no particular intent
- That effective verbal communication can be key to a person's success

*Know* the following:

- Rules and procedures for organizing information
- Characteristics of different purposes for verbal presentations
- Strategies to manage performance anxiety
- Quality standards for the development of presentation visual aids
- Techniques to minimize performance barriers

*Be able to* do the following:

- Effectively communicate in verbal and non-verbal ways
- Adapt language and communication style to ensure understanding by a diverse range of individuals
- Speak in a clear manner so as to be easily understood
- Apply active listening strategies to give full attention to what others are saying, reflecting on what is said and offering constructive responses
- Create effective visual aids to support presentation topics
- Demonstrate management of audience interaction techniques

### **Learning Outcomes for this Module**

Upon successfully completing this module, you should be able to

1. demonstrate the effective use of key interpersonal communication skills in professional presentations,
2. execute a communication strategy to deliver an effective presentation following accepted standards of public speaking, and
3. demonstrate the effective integration of communication and presentation techniques in the delivery of professional presentations.

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## Your Presentation Style

### Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- recognize the value of self-awareness in the delivery of effective presentations,
- describe the function of active listening and feedback in verbal communication,
- describe verbal techniques used to support professional presentations, and
- describe non-verbal techniques used to support professional presentations.

### Topics

- Self-awareness
- Taking advantage of your strengths and minimizing your weaknesses
- Using your environment
- Verbal communication techniques
- Non-verbal cues

### Introduction

This chapter is all about getting to know yourself as a presenter. Many people have very limiting beliefs about presentations and their own abilities to give one. Examining your skills, fears, and preferences is your first step in opening yourself up to reaching your full potential as a presenter.

We begin this “self”-focused chapter by considering what you think makes a successful speech or presentation. Here we look at who you might consider to be great and/or successful speakers while examining the role of the audience in making a good speech happen.

From there we delve more deeply into the dimensions of self such as self-awareness around your values, perceptions, and presentation strengths and weaknesses.

Your voice is a powerful communication tool, and how you use it can make or break your presentation. You will learn about how you use verbal elements of presentation by examining techniques like pitch, volume, and pronunciation among others.

Your non-verbal cues like gestures, facial expressions, and posture can punctuate and strengthen your message or do the opposite. You will learn about these non-verbal elements and have a chance to see how you use them in conjunction with your verbal cues by recording and examining a pre-selected speech or presentation.

After combining all of these elements, you will have a better understanding of who you are as a presenter and what you can bring to the table to develop your presentation strategy in the next chapter.

## **What Makes a Successful Speech or Presentation?**

When considering what makes a successful speech or presentation, it’s worth thinking about the speeches or presentations you’ve heard that resonated with you. (If you’re still scratching your head at this point, you can do a search in YouTube or check out some talks on ted.com.) What do you remember about it? How did it make you feel? Did you learn anything? Where were you when you heard it? How did other people around you (if there were any) react?

It’s important to remember that a successful speech or presentation depends on a number of factors. For our purposes we can boil them down to three main factors: the environment, the

presenter, and the audience. Speeches and presentations usually take place in controlled environments, so this is often overlooked. But everything from a natural disaster to technology failure to a room being too hot or too cold can thwart a presentation's success. The environment affects both the speaker and the audience. You can't have a successful speech or presentation without a presenter or speaker, and you also can't have it without an audience.

## What Makes a Successful Presentation?

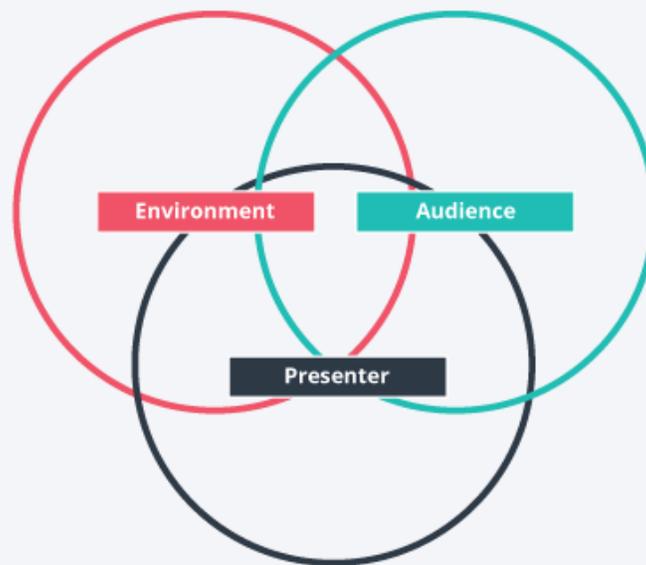


Figure 3.1.1 What Makes a Successful Presentation by Laura Underwood

A successful speech occurs when the speaker and the audience connect in a benign environment. In order to facilitate this, it helps to look at some things that typically make a successful speaker as well as the role of the audience in making a speech or presentation great.

### What Makes a Successful Speaker?

According to longtime Toastmasters member Bob Kienzle, there are a few key elements that tend to make a successful speaker:

- Voice—Can the person be easily understood?
- Body Language—Does their body support what they're saying? Are they confident?
- Coherent Structure—Does what they're presenting make sense? Is it logical?

- Enthusiasm—Do they care about what they’re presenting?
- Expertise—Do they know what they’re talking about? Are they credible?
- Practice—If they haven’t practised or sufficiently prepared, it will likely show up in one or more of the above.

A successful speaker can be inspired by other speeches or speakers but may fall flat if they try to copy someone else. **Authenticity** and passion can resonate so much with an audience that it can outweigh elements otherwise considered pitfalls. The techniques, tools, and best practices are a guideline, and it’s important to note there is no such thing as “perfection” in public speaking. “Failure” can happen in myriad ways, but it’s more helpful to see them as learning opportunities, or opportunities to make a stronger connection to your audience.

The biggest failure, according to Kienzle, is to pass up opportunities to practise your skills in presenting or public speaking.

### **Audience Role**

One of the most anxiety-inducing areas of presenting or speech-making is being in front of the audience. Some people may feel more at ease with relatively small audiences of up to about 10 people. Others feel like 10 people is too “intimate” and actually feel more comfortable with the “impersonal” numbers in the hundreds or thousands.

People often think of hostile audiences throwing tomatoes and yelling boos if the presenter makes the slightest mistake or slip of the tongue. But the truth is most audiences desperately want you to succeed. They are overwhelmingly on your side. This means in most situations they are very forgiving; they know being up there can be tough. If you make a mistake, you can apologize or laugh it off and keep going.

The audience is at least as involved in your presentation as you are. Awareness of yourself and awareness of them is key. If you are so preoccupied with your fear of the audience that you bury

your head in the podium while reading a boring list of facts your audience could read themselves, you will lose them. If you're not interested, they're not interested. If you are so frightened of your audience that you never look at them, you will not be able to get cues about their involvement in your presentation.

What you bring to the audience affects what they get from your presentation or speech. For that reason, it is tremendously important to develop enough self awareness so that you can be *present* for your audience and have the confidence to make adjustments to keep them on your side and involved in your presentation.

## **Self-Awareness**

The connection between self-awareness and being a good presenter may not be immediately obvious. But a good presenter usually has a very good idea not just of the audience and the environment but also about themselves, their motivation, values, perception, and other elements. Without delving into a full-on psychological profile, taking some time getting to know more about you and what makes you tick is still extremely useful in the pre-strategizing stage of planning for your presentation. Oftentimes these things lie below the surface of our awareness. Imagine, for example, seeing only the tip of the iceberg, not knowing the even greater mass of ice that lies beneath the water's surface.

We already know that your success as a presenter depends on the three factors of the presenter, the audience, and the environment. Doing a bit of self-analysis as a presenter, then, is just as important as doing an audience analysis or examining the environment. In order to become more self-aware, it's important to first ponder a few concepts that may or may not be new to you. These include self concept, self-reflection, internal monologue, and dimensions of self. Later we'll examine importance of knowing about your values and perceptions, active listening, as well as strengths and weaknesses.

Your **self-concept** is “what we perceive ourselves to be” (McLean, 2005) and involves aspects of image and esteem. How you feel about yourself influences how you communicate with others. What you are thinking now and the way you communicate influences how others treat you. For example, if you perceive yourself to be a horrible presenter, your behaviour will likely follow your thoughts. Your audience then encounters several cringeworthy moments mirroring your feelings of discomfort, and they wish you’d get off the stage as quickly as possible too! On the flipside, if you feel nervous about presenting but confident that you know your topic so well, you let your passion and expertise shine through, and your audience focuses on that and isn’t fazed by your sweaty palms or your occasional mispronunciations.

**Self-reflection** can be a useful tool in helping to improve or support your self-concept. Self-reflection is a trait that allows you to adapt and change to the context or environment, to accept or reject messages, to examine your concept of yourself, and to improve.

Your **internal monologue** is your mental self-talk. It can be a running monologue in your mind that is rational and reasonable, or disorganized and illogical. It can interfere with listening to others, impede your ability to focus, and become a barrier to effective communication. Self-reflection can be a useful tool here as well, allowing you to distinguish whether what you’re saying to yourself is constructive and honest or destructive and false.

Who are you? What are your **dimensions of self**? You are more than your actions and more than your communication, and the result may be greater than the sum of the parts, but how do you know yourself?

For many, answering these questions can prove challenging while trying to reconcile the self-concept you perceive with what you want others to perceive about you. Is it even possible to see yourself through interactions with others, and can you come to terms with the idea that we may not know everything there is to know about ourselves?

Joseph Luft and Harry Ingram gave considerable thought and attention to these dimensions of self, which are represented in the figure below known as the **Johari Window** (Luft & Ingram, 1955).

In the first quadrant of the figure, information is known to you and others, such as your height and colour. The second quadrant represents things others observe about us that we are unaware of, such as how many times we say “umm” in the space of five minutes. The third quadrant involves information that you know but do not reveal to others. It may involve actively hiding or withholding information, or may involve social tact, such as thanking your Aunt Martha for the large purple hat she’s given you that you know you will never wear. Finally, the fourth quadrant involves information that is unknown to you and to others, such as, for example, a childhood experience that has been long forgotten or repressed may still motivate you.

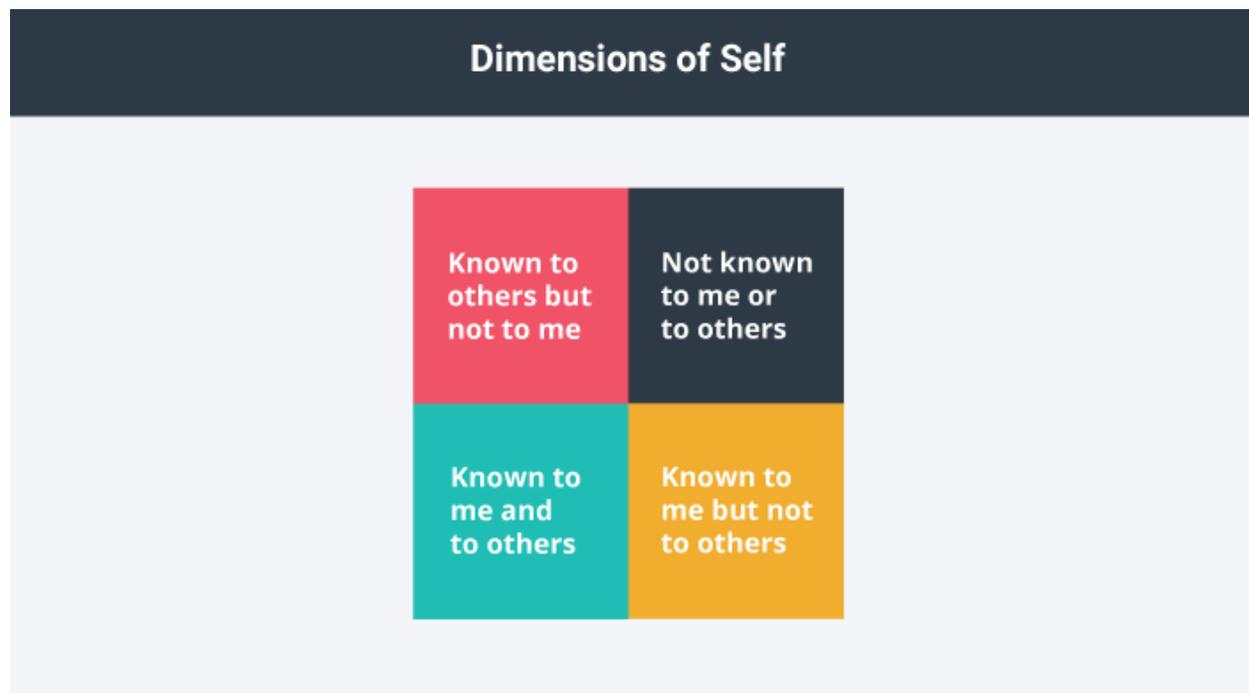


Figure 3.1.2 JOHARI Window by Laura Underwood  
Adapted from Luft & Ingram (1955)

These dimensions of self remind us that we are not fixed—that freedom to change combined with the ability to reflect, anticipate, plan, and predict allows us to improve, learn, and adapt to our surroundings.

In the context of business communication, the self plays a central role. How do you describe yourself? Do your career path, job responsibilities, goals, and aspirations align with your talents? How you represent “self” through your résumé, in your writing, in your articulation and presentation—these all play an important role as you negotiate the relationships and climate present in any organization.

### **Your Values and Perceptions**

Another key element in becoming more self-aware involves understanding your values and perceptions. Your **values** are defined as “the principles or standards of behaviour; one’s judgement of what is important in life” (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). Your values are often so embedded in who you are that you probably don’t think twice about them. You could also be totally unaware of what they are if you take for granted that everyone shares your values. As a speaker it’s important for you to uncover what your values are to avoid glaring blind spots (visible to others but not to you) and know more about who you are.

Our values and life experience can also lead to our perception about ourselves and others. Perception is defined as “the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted.” The problem is that our perception or interpretation of events can go unchallenged, and we can cling to perceptions whether they are accurate or inaccurate.

If you’ve never considered your values or perceptions before, it can be helpful to monitor what issues or concerns cause you to take the following behaviours:

### **Judging**

**Judging** is defined as forming an opinion or conclusion about something (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). If you find yourself jumping to conclusions or nitpicking minor details to condemn someone or something, it may be because the issue or person has challenged your values. Judgement in the best sense of the term leads to useful and ethical decision making; in its negative sense it can lead to bias. **Bias** is the “inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair” (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015).

### **Anticipating**

When you **anticipate**, you “regard [something] as probable” or “expect or predict [something]” (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). Anticipating can be a by-product of judging, when you have already decided what the other person is going to say. You might even start filling in their words for them. The point is, you have stopped listening to the other person. You may be polite in letting them finish, but your mind is already formulating witty comebacks to something they said that challenged your values or perceptions. At its best, anticipating can solidify that people are on the same wavelength, like an old married couple who know each other so well they really can fill in their words meaningfully. On the other end of the spectrum, anticipating leads to shutting down true communication, often followed by a fruitless power struggle over winning an argument that neither party is listening to or learning from.

### **Emotional Reaction or Response**

To have an **emotional reaction** or response means “Arousing or (being) characterized by intense feeling.” These intense feelings can be a strong indicator that your values or perceptions are being challenged. Emotional reactions can be physiological; your heartbeat quickens, palms get sweaty, you feel your face heating from the neck up. In more severe reactions it can trigger mild or violent responses, anything from walking away to arguing to physical violence. You can also have an emotional reaction that no one else notices; you may even be vocal about how much you don’t care about a

particular thing or person. But if you feel emotional discomfort, follow those feelings to examine what values or perceptions may lie below the surface; in this way, you will know yourself better and understand what triggers you.

To sum up, if you find yourself judging, jumping the gun by anticipating, or having a strong emotional response, some element of your deeply held values are likely at play or have been betrayed in some way. This is very important information that can help you understand yourself in terms of what you bring to the stage or podium as a presenter. This knowledge can be used to examine whether or not your perceptions are accurate or false, and lead to approaches to help you improve in areas such as (a) active listening and (b) knowing your strengths and weaknesses—both of which are examined next.

## Active Listening

### Listening vs. Hearing

**Hearing** is an accidental and automatic brain response to sound and requires no effort. We are surrounded by sounds most of the time. For example, we are accustomed to the sounds of airplanes, lawn mowers, furnace blowers, the rattling of pots and pans, and so on. We hear those incidental sounds and, unless we have a reason to do otherwise, we train ourselves to ignore them. We learn to filter out sounds that mean little to us, just as we choose to hear our ringing cell phones and other sounds that are more important to us.

Hearing	Listening
Accidental	Focused
Involuntary	Voluntary
Effortless	Intentional

Table 3.1.1 Active Listening

**Listening**, on the other hand, is purposeful and focused rather than accidental. As a result, it requires motivation and effort. Listening, at its best, is active, focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker. We do not always listen at our best, however.

Effective listening is about self-awareness. You must pay attention to whether or not you are only hearing, *passively* listening, or *actively* engaging. Effective listening requires concentration and a focused effort that is known as active listening. Active listening can be broken down into three main elements: attention, attitude, and adjustment.

### Attention

Hoppe (2006) advises that active listening is really a state of mind requiring us to choose to focus on the moment, being present and attentive while disregarding any of our anxieties of the day.

He suggests listeners prepare themselves for active attention by creating a **listening reminder**. This might be to write “Listen” at the top of a page in front of you in a meeting.

We know now that attention is the fundamental difference between hearing and listening. Paying attention to what a speaker is saying requires intentional effort on your part.

Nichols (1957), credited with first researching the field of listening, observed, “Listening is hard work. It is characterized by faster heart action, quicker circulation of the blood, a small rise in bodily temperature.”

Consider that we can process information four times faster than a person speaks. Yet, tests of listening comprehension show the average person listening at only 25 percent efficiency. A typical person can speak 125 words-per-minute, yet we can process up to three times faster, reaching as much as 500 words-per-minute. The poor listener grows impatient, while the effective listener uses the extra processing time to process the speaker’s words, distinguish key points, and mentally summarize them (Nichols, 1957).

While reading a book or having a discussion with an individual, you can go back and reread or ask a question to clarify a point. This is not always true when listening. Listening is of the moment, and we often only get to hear the speaker's words once.

The key, then, is for the listener to quickly ascertain the speaker's central premise or controlling idea. Once this is done, it becomes easier for the listener to discern what is most important. Of course, distinguishing the speaker's primary goal, his main points, and the structure of the speech are all easier when the listener is able to listen with an open mind.

### Attitude

Even if you are paying attention, you could be doing so with the wrong **attitude**. Telling yourself this is all a waste of time is not going to help you to listen effectively. You'll be better off determining an internal motivation to be attentive to the person speaking.

Approaching the task of listening with a positive attitude and an open mind will make the act of listening much easier. As mentioned earlier, bad listeners make snap judgments that justify their decision to be inattentive. Yet, since you're already there, why not listen to see what you can learn?

Kaponya (1991) warns against such psychological **deaf spots**, which impair our ability to perceive and understand things counter to our convictions. It can be as little as a word or phrase that might elicit "an emotional eruption," causing communication efficiency to drop rapidly.

For instance, someone who resolutely supports military action as the best response to a terrorist action may be unable to listen objectively to a speaker endorsing negotiation as a better tool. Even if the speaker is effectively employing logic, drawing on credible sources, and appealing to emotion with a heartrending tale of the civilian casualties caused by bombings, this listener would be unable to keep an open mind. Failing to acknowledge your deaf spots will leave you at a deficit when listening.

You will always need to make up your own mind about where you stand—whether you agree or disagree with the speaker—but it is critical to do so *after* listening. Adler proposes having four

questions in mind while listening: “What is the whole speech about?” “What are the main or pivotal ideas, conclusions, and arguments?” “Are the speaker’s conclusions sound or mistaken?” and “What of it?”

Once you have an overall idea of the speech, determine the key points, and gauge your agreement, you can decide why it matters, how it affects you, or what you might do as a result of what you have heard. Yet, he notes it is “impossible” to answer all these questions at the same time as you are listening. Instead, you have to be ready and willing to pay attention to the speaker’s point of view and changes in direction, patiently waiting to see where she is leading you.

### Adjustment

The final element to consider is **adjustment**. Often when we hear someone speak, we don’t know in advance what the speaker will say. So, we need to be flexible, willing to follow a speaker along what seems like a verbal detour down a rabbit hole, until we are rewarded by the speaker reaching his final destination while his audience marvels at the creative means by which he reached his important point.

If the audience members are more intent on reacting to or anticipating what is said, they will be poor listeners indeed. Having an open attitude, paying attention, and being in the moment of the speech leads to the flexibility required to adjust to the situation.

### **Your Strengths and Weaknesses**

Are you aware of what your strengths and weaknesses are as a presenter? You may have some ideas already. For example, if you are very soft spoken, you may consider that to be a weakness if you’re on stage, especially without a microphone. Soft-spoken people also sometimes keep low-key in other ways; maybe they’re more plain in the way they dress or have less expressive mannerisms. Many people think that to be effective on stage you must be a rip-roaring extrovert. This is not true. No matter who you are, if you are aware of the qualities that make you a unique individual and you spend time getting to know your audience, you can convert any perceived weaknesses into a potential strength. Conversely, if you are so overconfident about your abilities

that it shows itself in poor preparation and lack of concern for your audience or environment, your strengths can quite quickly become weaknesses.

Your first step in helping define what makes you you is to look at what you're good at and what you enjoy doing. At the same time, this helps you distinguish what you're not so good at and what you don't enjoy. Make a list as you go through the next sections on your verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to get a reasonable prediction about how to focus your strategy as a presenter.

## What Are My Verbal Communication Techniques?

### Pitch

Do you have a deep, low voice, or a high-pitched one? We all have a normal speaking **pitch** where we are most comfortable, but we can move our pitch up or down. Use pitch inflections to make your delivery more interesting and emphatic. If you don't change pitch at all, your delivery will be monotone, which gets boring for the audience very quickly. Some people pitch their voices up at the end of sentences, making every statement sound like a question—avoid this common but distracting habit.

### Volume

Do you speak softly or loudly? Adjust the **volume** of your voice to your environment and audience. If you're in a large auditorium, speak up so that people in the back row can hear you. But if you're in a small room with only a few people, you don't want to alarm them by shouting! You may need to use volume to compensate for ambient noise like traffic or an air conditioner. You can use volume strategically to emphasize the most important points in your speech.

### Emphasis

Stress certain words in your speech to add **emphasis** to them, that is, to indicate that they are particularly important. You may also use a visual aid to emphasize key points by using photographs or charts.

## Pronunciation

Make sure that you know the appropriate **pronunciation** of the words you choose. If you mispronounce a word, it could hurt your credibility or confuse your audience. Websites such as Wiktionary contain audio files that you can play to hear standard pronunciation of many words. Your pronunciation is also influenced by your accent. If your accent is quite different from the accent you expect most members of your audience to have, practise your speech in front of someone with the same accent that your audience members will have, to ensure you are pronouncing words in a clear, understandable way.

## Fillers

Avoid the use of “**fillers**” as placeholders for actual words (*like, er, um, uh*, etc.). You might get away with saying “um” two or three times in your speech before it becomes distracting, but the same cannot be said of “like”—a particularly troubling filler for many North American speakers. If you have a habit of using fillers, practise your speech thoroughly so that you remember what you want to say. This way, you are less likely to lose your place and let a filler word slip out.

## Rate

Are you a fast or slow speaker? The pace that you speak at will influence how well the audience can understand you. Many people speak quickly when they are nervous. If this is a habit of yours, practice will help you here, too. Pause for breath naturally during your speech. Your speaking rate should be appropriate for your topic. A rapid, lively **rate** communicates enthusiasm, urgency, or humour. A slower, moderated rate conveys respect and seriousness. By varying your rate within a speech, you can emphasize your main points and keep your audience engaged.

## What Non-Verbal Cues Do I Use?

### Gestures

A **gesture** is “a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning” (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). You can use these to channel nervous energy into an enhancement of your speech, reinforcing important points, but they can be distracting if overused. If the audience is busy watching your hands fly around, they will not be able to concentrate on your words.

Take a look at this article, titled [“What to Do with Your Hands When Speaking in Public”](#) (*The Washington Post*, 2015) for do’s and don’ts of gesturing when you are speaking.

### Facial Expression

You might be unaware of how much your **facial expressions** say when you are speaking. Facial expression comes so naturally that we are not always in control of the story our face is telling. Rehearse your speech in front of a mirror to see what facial expressions come across. You might find that your face is saying something entirely different about your topic than your words are! Practise using facial expressions consciously. If you are speaking about an upbeat topic, smile! Conversely, if your topic is serious or solemn, avoid facial expressions that are overtly cheerful, because the audience will be confused by the mixed message.

In North American culture, the most important facial expression you can use is eye contact. Briefly catch the eye of audience members as you move through your speech. If you can’t look your audience members in the eye, they may view you as untrustworthy. Remember, though, that eye contact is a culturally sensitive gesture. In some cultures, there are certain accepted behaviours for males looking females in the eye, and vice-versa. You’ll want to avoid holding eye contact for too long with any one person, as too much can be unnerving.

## Posture

It's easy to let your **posture** slip when you've been talking for a while, but try to stay conscious of this and stand up straight. This gives the audience the perception that you are authoritative and take your position seriously. If you are slouching, hunched over, or leaning on something, this gives the impression that you are anxious, lacking in credibility, or not serious about your message. Speakers often assume more casual posture as a presentation continues, but you only get one shot at making a first impression, so make sure you begin with a strong stance.

## Silence

**Silence** is a powerful technique if used well, but it is often overlooked. Perhaps you had a teacher in high school who would stand sternly and silently at the front of the room, expectantly waiting for the chatter to die down. His silence and stance were unnerving, so students soon became quiet, didn't they? And some of the best comedians use the well-timed pause for a powerful and hilarious—rather than serious—effect. Either way, pauses are useful for emphasis and dramatic effect when you are speaking.

Some speakers are reluctant to pause or use silence because they become uncomfortable with the dead air, but sometimes your audience needs a moment to process information and respond to you.

## Movement

You can use your **body movements** to communicate positively with the audience. Leaning in or moving closer to the audience helps to bridge the space of separation. Moving from one side of the room to the other in a purposeful way that supports your content is a useful way to keep your audience engaged; their eyes will track your movements. Pacing rapidly with no purpose and no support to your message may quickly distract from your message, however. Standing still without movement when you are listening or responding to a question can show interest. However, standing still without any movement for the duration of your presentation could leave

the audience bored. Balance is key, as is using your body as an extension of your content that suits the context of the environment and the audience.

## Conclusion

This chapter helped you focus on getting to know your presentation style by understanding yourself better. You learned that elements of the environment, the audience, and the presenter had an impact on what makes for a good speech. You examined several issues related to self-awareness, including uncovering your values, understanding your perceptions, and dealing with strengths and weaknesses. Finally, you learned about verbal and non-verbal elements of your own presentation style, including how to work with your body as an extension of your presentation content. You should now be able to take what you have learned from this chapter into the next chapter as a foundation to build your presentation strategy.

## Learning Highlights

- Voice, body language, coherent structure, enthusiasm, expertise, and practice are ingredients that can make a successful speech or presentation.
- The audience wants you to succeed.
- Judging, anticipating, and having a strong emotional reaction may indicate deeply held values being challenged.
- Hearing and listening are different: hearing is accidental and involuntary, while listening is focused and intentional.
- Making a recording of your verbal and non-verbal cues helps to identify your presentation style.

## Check Your Understanding

Match the effective speaker competency on the left with the description(s) on the right. Each correctly matched pair is worth one (1) mark.

Answers:

Premises:

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. ____ Relevant topic        | A. Word choice avoids inappropriate usage.            |
| 2. ____ Engaging introduction | B. establishes the speaker's credibility and interest |
| 3. ____ Clear organization    | C. pitch, volume, emphasis, and pronunciation         |
| 4. ____ Well-supported ideas  | D. articulates the problem and solution clearly       |
| 5. ____ Closure/conclusion    | E. appropriate for the audience and the occasion      |
| 6. ____ Clear language        | F. reinforces the thesis                              |
| 7. ____ Verbal techniques     | G. Points are directly related to the thesis.         |
| 8. ____ Non-verbal techniques | H. make allusions to shared experiences               |
| 9. ____ Adapt to the audience | I. posture, gestures, and facial expression           |
| 10. ____ Use of visual aids   | J. provide powerful insight into the topic            |
| 11. ____ Convincing argument  | K. Sources are clearly cited and credible.            |

What are the three A's of active listening?

- a) Attention, Attitude, Audience
- b) Analyze, Attitude, Adjustment
- c) Analyze, Audience, Adjustment
- d) Attention, Attitude, Adjustment
- e) Attention, Audience, Adjustment

Excluding environmental elements, what are the three main barriers to effective listening?

- a) Attitude, Anticipating, Reacting Emotionally
- b) Anticipating, Judging, Reacting Emotionally
- c) Assumptions, Judging, Reacting Emotionally
- d) Anticipating, Assumptions, Judging

The difference between hearing and listening is

- a) very small; the two processes amount to about the same thing.
- b) Hearing is mindful and intentional, but listening is effortless.
- c) Hearing is effortless, but listening is mindful and intentional.
- d) Hearing requires strong motivation and attention, but listening is an automatic human response to speech.
- e) Hearing depends on listening, but listening does not depend on hearing.

Which of the following is a personal benefit of developing your presentation skills?

- a) helps your chances of employment and/or advancing within your career
- b) helps you to critically evaluate other's presentations
- c) helps you to fulfill roles in social contexts (e.g., toasts and eulogies)

Which of the following is a professional benefit of developing your presentation skills?

- a) helps your chances of employment and/or advancing within your career
- b) helps you to critically evaluate others' presentations
- c) helps you to fulfill roles in social contexts (e.g., toasts and eulogies)
- d) helps you build self-confidence

## Further Reading and Links

- Excerpts about the [10 greatest speeches of all time by women](#) from Marie Claire magazine, UK.
- Talks on [Technology, Education and Design from TED](#).
- Listening Effectively: Barriers to Effective Listening  
<https://courses.candelalearning.com/publicspeaking1xmaster/chapter/chapter-4-barriers-to-effective-listening/>

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# Developing a Presentation Strategy

## Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- describe key communication format factors to consider when developing a presentation,
- describe the main functional elements of an effective introduction,
- match the main elements of the rhetorical model to where they are best applied in the development of a presentation,
- describe the functional organization in the body of an effective presentation,
- describe the main functional elements of an effective conclusion, and
- develop a presentation outline using the concepts discussed in the chapter.

## Topics

- Preparing a presentation strategy
- Choosing a format
- Writing a presentation
- Using technology to support a presentation
- Developing presentation aids

## Introduction

In beginning to think about a strategy for your presentation, you must move from thinking only about your “self” to how you will engage with the world outside of you, which, of course, includes your audience and environment.

This chapter focuses on helping you prepare a presentation strategy by first revisiting the acronym FAST, which will help you select an appropriate Format, prepare an Audience analysis, ensure your Style reflects your authentic personality and strengths, and that the Tone is appropriate for the occasion.

Then, after you've selected the appropriate channel, you will begin drafting your presentation first by considering the general and specific purposes of your presentation and using an outline to map your ideas and strategy.

You'll also learn to consider whether to incorporate backchannels or other technology into your presentation, and, finally, you will begin to think about how to develop presentation aids that will support your topic and approach.

At the end of this chapter you should be armed with a solid strategy for approaching your presentation in a way that is authentically you, balanced with knowing what's in it for your audience while making the most of the environment.

## Preparing a Presentation Strategy

### Incorporating FAST

In the Writing module, you learned the acronym **FAST**, which you can use to develop your message according to the elements of Format, Audience, Style, and Tone. When you are working on a presentation, much like in your writing, you will rely on [FAST](#) to help you make choices.

First, you'll need to think about the Format of your presentation. This is a choice between presentation types. In your professional life you'll encounter the verbal communication channels in the following table. The purpose column labels each channel with a purpose (I=Inform, P=Persuade, or E=Entertain) depending on that channel's most likely purpose.

Channel	Direction	Level of Formality	Interaction	Purpose
Speech	One-to-many	Formal	Low. One-sided	I, P, E
Presentation	One/ Few-to-many	Formal	Variable. Often includes Q&A	I, P, E
Panel	Few-to-many	Formal	High. Q&A-based.	I, P
Meeting	Group	Informal	High.	I, P
Teleconference	Group	Informal	High.	I, P
Workshop	One-to-many	Informal	High. Collaborative.	I (Educate)
Webinar	One-to-many	Formal	Low.	I
Podcast	One-to-many	Formal	Low. Recorded	I, P, E

Table 3.2.1 Presentation Communication Channels

There are some other considerations to make when you are selecting a **format**. For example, the number of speakers may influence the format you choose. Panels and Presentations may have more than one speaker. In meetings and teleconferences, multiple people will converse. In a Workshop setting, one person will usually lead the event, but there is often a high-level of collaboration between participants.

The location of participants will also influence your decision. For example, if participants cannot all be in the same room, you might choose a **teleconference** or **webinar**. If **asynchronous delivery** is important, you might record a **podcast**. When choosing a technology-reliant channel, such as a teleconference or webinar, be sure to test your equipment and make sure each participant has access to any materials they need before you begin.

Once you have chosen a Format, make sure your message is right for your Audience, just as you did in the Foundations module, when you conducted your Audience Analysis. You'll need to think about issues such as the following:

- What expectations will the audience have?
- What is the context of your communication?
- What does the audience already know about the topic?
- How is the audience likely to react to you and your message?

The [AUDIENCE tool](#) you used in the Foundations module will be helpful tool here.

Next, you'll consider the **style** of your presentation. Some of the things you discovered about yourself as a speaker in the self-awareness exercises earlier will influence your presentation style. Perhaps you prefer to present formally, limiting your interaction with the audience, or perhaps you prefer a more conversational, informal style, where discussion is a key element. You may prefer to cover serious subjects, or perhaps you enjoy delivering humorous speeches. Style is all about your personality!

Finally, you'll select a **tone** for your presentation. Your voice, body language, level of self-confidence, dress, and use of space all contribute to the mood that your message takes on. Consider how you want your audience to feel when they leave your presentation, and approach it with that mood in mind.

### **Presentation Purpose**

Your presentation will have a general and specific purpose. Your general purpose may be to inform, persuade, or entertain—the same goals you had in previous modules. It's likely that any speech you develop will have a combination these goals. Most presentations have a little bit of entertainment value, even if they are primarily attempting to inform or persuade. For example,

the speaker might begin with a joke or dramatic opening, even though their speech is primarily informational.

Your specific purpose addresses *what* you are going to inform, persuade, or entertain your audience with—the main topic of your speech. Each example below includes two pieces of information: first, the general purpose; second, the specific purpose.

Examples:

To inform the audience about my favourite car, the Ford Mustang

To persuade the audience that global warming is a threat to the environment

### Timing

Aim to speak for 90 percent of your allotted time so that you have time to answer audience questions at the end (assuming you have allowed for this). If audience questions are not expected, aim for 95 percent. Do not go overtime—audience members may need to be somewhere else immediately following your presentation, and you will feel uncomfortable if they begin to pack up and leave while you are still speaking. Conversely, you don't want to finish too early, as they may feel as if they didn't get their "money's worth."

To assess the **timing** of your speech as you prepare, you can

- set a timer while you do a few practice runs, and take an average
- run your speech text through an online speech timer
- estimate based on the number of words (the average person speaks at about 120 words per minute)

You can improve your chances of hitting your time target when you deliver your speech, by marking your notes with an estimated time at certain points. For example, if your speech starts at 2 p.m., you might mark 2:05 at the start of your notes for the body section, so that you can

quickly glance at the clock and make sure you are on target. If you get there more quickly, consciously try to pause more often or speak more slowly, or speed up a little if you are pressed for time. If you have to adjust your timing as you are delivering the speech, do so gradually. It will be jarring to the audience if you start out speaking at a moderate pace, then suddenly realize you are going to run out of time and switch to rapid-fire delivery!

### **Incorporating Backchannels**

Have you ever been to a conference where speakers asked for audience questions via social media? Perhaps one of your teachers at school has used Twitter for student comments and questions, or has asked you to vote on an issue through an online poll. Technology has given speakers new ways to engage with an audience in real time, and these can be particularly useful when it isn't practical for the audience to share their thoughts verbally—for example, when the audience is very large, or when they are not all in the same location.

These secondary or additional means of interacting with your audience are called **backchannels**, and you might decide to incorporate one into your presentation, depending on your aims. They can be helpful for engaging more introverted members of the audience who may not be comfortable speaking out verbally in a large group. Using publicly accessible social networks, such as a Facebook Page or Twitter feed, can also help to spread your message to a wider audience, as audience members share posts related to your speech with their networks. Because of this, backchannels are often incorporated into conferences; they are helpful in marketing the conference and its speakers both during and after the event.

There are some caveats involved in using these backchannels, though. If, for example, you ask your audience to submit their questions via Twitter, you'll need to choose a hashtag for them to append to the messages so that you can easily find them. You'll also need to have an assistant who will sort and choose the audience questions for you to answer. It is much too distracting for the speaker to do this on their own during the presentation. You could, however, respond to

audience questions and comments after the presentation via social media, gaining the benefits of both written and verbal channels to spread your message.

## Developing the Content

### Creating an Outline

As with any type of messaging, it helps if you create an outline of your speech or presentation before you create it fully. This ensures that each element is in the right place and gives you a place to start to avoid the dreaded blank page. Here is an outline template that you can adapt for your purpose. Replace the placeholders in the Content column with your ideas or points, then make some notes in the Verbal and Visual Delivery column about how you will support or emphasize these points using the techniques we've discussed.

Section	Content	Verbal and Visual Delivery
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention-grabber</li> <li>• Main idea</li> <li>• Common ground</li> </ul>	
<b>Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I. Main idea: Point 1</li> <li>• Subpoint 1</li> <li>• A.1 specific information 1</li> <li>• A.2 specific information 2</li> <li>• II. Main idea: Point 2</li> <li>• Subpoint 1</li> <li>• B.1 specific information 1</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• B.2 specific information 2</li> <li>• III. Main idea: Point 3</li> <li>• Subpoint 1</li> <li>• C.1 specific information 1</li> <li>• C.2 specific information 2</li> </ul>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of main points 1–3</li> <li>• Residual message/call-to-action</li> </ul>	

Table 3.2.2 Presentation Outline

### Introduction

The beginning of your speech needs an **attention-grabber** to get your audience interested right away. Choose your attention-grabbing device based on what works best for your topic. Your entire introduction should only be around 10 to 15 percent of your total speech, so be sure to keep this section short. Here are some devices that you could try:

**Subject Statement** - to the point, but not the most interesting choice.

Example:

We are surrounded by statistical information in today’s world, so understanding statistics is becoming paramount to citizenship in the twenty-first century.

**Audience Reference** - highlights something common to the audience that will make them interested in the topic.

Example:

As human resource professionals, you and I know the importance of talent management. In today’s competitive world, we need to invest in getting and keeping the best talent for our organizations to succeed.

**Quotation** - wise words of another person. You can find quotations online that cover just about any topic.

Example:

Oliver Goldsmith, a sixteenth-century writer, poet, and physician, once noted that “the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them.”

**Current Event** - refer to a current event in the news that demonstrates the relevance of your topic to the audience.

Example:

On January 10, 2007, Scott Anthony Gomez Jr. and a fellow inmate escaped from a Pueblo, Colorado, jail. During their escape the duo attempted to rappel from the roof of the jail using a makeshift ladder of bed sheets. During Gomez’s attempt to scale the building, he slipped, fell 40 feet, and injured his back. After being quickly apprehended, Gomez filed a lawsuit against the jail for making it too easy for him to escape.

**Historical Event** - Compare or contrast your topic with an occasion in history.

Example:

During the 1960s and ’70s, the United States intervened in the civil strife between North and South Vietnam. The result was a long-running war of attrition in which many American lives were lost and the country of Vietnam suffered tremendous damage and destruction. We saw a similar war waged in Iraq. American lives were lost, and stability has not yet returned to the region.

**Anecdote, Parable, or Fable** - An anecdote is a brief account or story of an interesting or humorous event, while a parable or fable is a symbolic tale designed to teach a life lesson.

Examples:

In July 2009, a high school girl named Alexa Longueira was walking along a main boulevard near her home on Staten Island, New York, typing in a message on her cell phone. Not paying attention to the world around her, she took a step and fell right into an open manhole (Witney, 2009).

The ancient Greek writer Aesop told a fable about a boy who put his hand into a pitcher of filberts. The boy grabbed as many of the delicious nuts as he possibly could. But when he tried to pull them out, his hand wouldn't fit through the neck of the pitcher because he was grasping so many filberts. Instead of dropping some of them so that his hand would fit, he burst into tears and cried about his predicament. The moral of the story? "Don't try to do too much at once" (Aesop, 1881).

**Surprising Statement** - A strange fact or statistic related to your topic that startles your audience.

Examples:

- A Boeing 747 airliner holds 57,285 gallons of fuel.
- The average person has over 1,460 dreams a year.
- There are no clocks in any casinos in Las Vegas.
- In 2000, Pope John Paul II became the most famous honorary member of the Harlem Globetrotters.

**Question** - You could ask either a question that asks for a response from your audience, or a rhetorical question, which does not need a response but is designed to get them thinking about the topic.

Examples:

- Raise your hand if you have ever thought about backpacking in Europe.
- If you prick us, do we not bleed? (Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*)

**Humour** - A joke or humorous quotation can work well, but to use humour you need to be sure that your audience will find the comment funny. You run the risk of insulting members of the audience, or leaving them puzzled if they don't get the joke, so test it out on someone else first!

Examples:

*“The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless.”*—  
Nicolas Chamfort, sixteenth-century French author

**Personal Reference** - Refer to a story about yourself that is relevant to the topic.

Example:

In the fall of 2008, I decided that it was time that I took my life into my own hands. After suffering for years with the disease of obesity, I decided to take a leap of faith and get a gastric bypass in an attempt to finally beat the disease.

**Occasion Reference** - This device is only relevant if your speech is occasion-specific, for example, a toast at a wedding, a ceremonial speech, or a graduation commencement.

Example:

Today we are here to celebrate the wedding of two wonderful people.

After the attention-getter comes the rest of your introduction. It needs to do the following:

- Capture the audience's interest
- State the purpose of your speech
- Establish credibility
- Give the audience a reason to listen
- Signpost the main ideas

## Body

### Rhetoric and Argument

Your audience will think to themselves, *Why should I listen to this speech? What's in it for me?* One of the best things you can do as a speaker is to answer these questions early in your body, if you haven't already done so in your introduction. This will serve to gain their support early and will fill in the blanks of *who, what, when, where, why, and how* in their minds.

You may remember the three **rhetorical proofs**, namely, ethos, pathos, and logos, from the Writing Module. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C) considered these the three most important elements in a speaker's arsenal.

### Ethos

*Ethos* refers to the speaker's character and expertise. When you use ethos correctly, you are showing the audience that you are credible and that they can believe what you say. To cover this element in your speech, tell the audience why they should listen to you. You can do this by demonstrating your authority on your topic. For example, you could begin a persuasive speech on the dangers of drinking and driving with a short story about how you helped implement a "designated driver" program. This way the audience will understand your relationship to the message and form a positive perception of you. If you are trying to persuade the audience to donate blood, your credibility on the subject may come from your studies in the medical field or from having volunteered at a blood drive.

### Pathos

The term *pathos* refers to the use of emotion as a persuasive element. You have probably seen commercials on television for charities trying to raise funds for sick children or mistreated animals, complete with sad images and music; this is pathos at work. We don't always make decisions based on clear thinking. We are easily moved by words, by a video clip, or by a piece of music, so this can be an effective way of convincing the audience to take a particular action.

But it *can* be overdone, and the audience will tire of it if you push too hard. If pathos is central to your strategy, be subtle about it so that you don't turn off your audience.

### Logos

The term *logos* refers to logic. Aristotle believed that any argument should be based on logic, not pathos (emotion), but you might not agree! To win your audience over using logic, your speech must be carefully organized and present facts and evidence. Depending on the general purpose of your speech, particularly if its goal is to persuade, you may need to present an argument. To do this, logos is key. Think about what prosecutors do during a trial—particularly during closing arguments. This is the place for facts and reason. Prosecutors will argue that the scenario they have presented is the only logical interpretation of the evidence. To use logos effectively, incorporate expert testimony, statistics, and other reliable data.

### Organization

An organized body helps your audience to follow your speech and recall your points later. When developing the body of your speech, recall the specific purpose you decided on, then choose main points to support it. Just two or three main points are usually sufficient, depending on the length of your speech. Anticipate *one main point per two to three minutes* of speaking.

To narrow down your main points, start by brainstorming. Don't worry about judging the value or importance of the points at this stage; just write down as many possible points as you can that support your topic. What information does your audience need to know to understand your topic? What information does your speech need to convey to accomplish its specific purpose? Here is an example of a list that you might begin with.

Item	Notes
------	-------

<p><b>Specific Purpose</b></p>	<p>To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts</p>
<p><b>Brainstorming List of Points</b></p>	<p>Define open-source software.</p> <hr/> <p>Define educational software.</p> <hr/> <p>List and describe the software commonly used by school districts.</p> <hr/> <p>Explain the advantages of using open-source software.</p> <hr/> <p>Explain the disadvantages of using open-source software.</p> <hr/> <p>Review the history of open-source software.</p> <hr/> <p>Describe the value of open-source software.</p> <hr/> <p>Describe some educational open-source software packages.</p> <hr/> <p>Review the software needs of my specific audience.</p>

	Describe some problems that have occurred with open-source software.
--	--

Table 3.2.3 Organizing the Points in a Presentation

Once you have a list of points, you'll need to narrow them down. Begin by looking for closely related minor points that can be grouped into one. This process is called **chunking**. Before reading our chunking of the preceding list, can you determine three large chunks out of the list above?

Item	Notes
<b>Specific Purpose</b>	To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts
<b>Main Point 1</b>	<b>School districts use software in their operations.</b>
	Define educational software.
	List and describe the software commonly used by school districts.
<b>Main Point 2</b>	<b>What is open-source software?</b>

	Define open-source software.
	Review the history of open-source software.
	Explain the advantages of using open-source software.
	Explain the disadvantages of using open-source software.
	Describe some problems that have occurred with open-source software.
<b>Main Point 3</b>	<b>Name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for the audience's use.</b>
	Review the software needs of my specific audience.
	Describe some educational open-source software packages.

Table 3.2.4 Organizing the Main Points in a Presentation

The preceding list is a little disjointed, and not all of the topics work together clearly. These are just general ideas at this point. There is often more than one way to organize a speech. Some of these points could be left out, and others developed more fully, depending on the purpose and audience. You will refine this information until you have the number of main points you need. Ensure that they are distinct, and balance the content of your speech so that you spend roughly the same amount of time addressing each. You'll also need to remember what you learned about

parallel structure in the Writing Module, to make sure each of your main points is phrased in the same way. The last thing to do when working on your body is to make sure your points are in a logical order, so that your ideas flow naturally from one to the next.

### **Concluding on a High Note**

You'll need to keep your energy up until the very end of your speech. In your conclusion, your job is to let the audience know you are finished, help them remember what you've told them, and leave them with a final thought or call-to-action, depending on the general purpose of your message.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter you revisited the importance of FAST and AUDIENCE tools in helping to lay out a strategy that incorporates your own understanding with the needs of the audience. You learned about how to use an outline to stay organized and keep track of your ideas, as well as general and specific purposes. You learned the importance of sustaining your audience's attention throughout the presentation with key approaches you can take as you write your introduction, body, and conclusion. You should now be prepared to take your strategy to the next level by ensuring you next consider whether and how to incorporate high-quality presentation aids.

### **Learning Highlights**

- FAST (Format, Audience, Style, Tone) is a useful approach for ensuring your presentation strategy is comprehensive.
- Doing an audience analysis using the AUDIENCE tool helps us to better understand “what’s in it for them.”
- Using an outline is a good way to stay organized while you write your speech.
- Your presentation intro should include an appropriate “attention grabber.”
- The body of your presentation should include attention to the classical rhetorical proofs

of logos, pathos, and ethos.

- Always aim to conclude on a high note.

## Check Your Understanding

You have been asked to present the pros and cons of the open-office layout for your workplace, meant to precede a group discussion with your colleagues. The general purpose and approach you should use is

- a) to entertain
- b) to inform
- c) to persuade
- d) to terrify

Why should you consider timing when preparing for a presentation?

- a) To avoid running out of time and having to cut short important content
- b) To make sure that the rate at which you speak gives the desired effect
- c) To make sure you have correctly timed technological elements such as slides
- d) All of the above
- e) Only (a) & (c)

Modern scholars generally describe the three general purposes of speaking as

- a) entertain, persuade, and debate
- b) persuade, inform, and perpetuate
- c) celebrate, perpetuate, and inform
- d) inform, persuade, and entertain
- e) deliberative, epideictic, and forensic

If you are delivering a presentation without any additional assistance and would like to make use of backchannels, an effective strategy would be:

- a) have an extra laptop available so you can keep track of comments as they come in
- b) at natural breaks in the presentation, minimize your other visual aids and display the comment feed
- c) wait until after the presentation to view the comments and reply to questions via the backchannel
- d) select a person in the room at random to monitor the backchannel and cue you into questions

A successful introduction should

- a) establish your credibility
- b) explain the relevance of your topic to your audience
- c) lay out a map of your speech
- d) All of the above

Which of the following best describes the role of a conclusion in a speech?

- a) The help the audience remember the primary message from the speech
- b) To summarize the main points of the speech
- c) To lead into a Q&A session
- d) All of the above
- e) Only (a) & (b)

You have been invited to speak to a class of Grade 3 students (ages 8 and 9) on ways to avoid catching a cold. Which of the following would be the most effective way to get their attention at the beginning of your speech or presentation?

- a) Pretend to sneeze into your hands several times as you walk up to a student. Then wipe the back of that hand across your nose before extending it to the student for a handshake.

- b) Ask them “How many of you like catching colds?”
- c) Tell a story about the time you got to skip school for a week because you caught a bad cold
- d) Provide data that show 2 percent of all colds progress to life-threatening conditions like pneumonia or pleurisy

Which of the following is NOT a function shared by BOTH the introduction and the conclusion of a speech?

- a) Identify the main points
- b) Get the audience’s attention
- c) Make the topic important to the audience
- d) Present the speech’s thesis

Which of the following principles of outline creation is INCORRECT?

- a) Your outline should be based on a thesis statement which presents one, and only one, idea.
- b) Your outline should show that you have developed interest and variety when referring to terms.
- c) Your outline should show that you adequately supported your main points.
- d) Your outline should show that you have presented similar ideas in parallel ways.

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# Presentation Aids

## Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- explain how visual aids can improve the quality and impact of a presentation,
- distinguish unique benefits of different types of visual aids, and
- develop visual aids that are consistent with standard presentation quality criteria

## Topics

- Six things visual aids can accomplish
- Three key visual aid purposes: emphasis, support, and clarity
- Methods and materials
- Designing slide decks
- Using colour
- Helpful hints

## Introduction

Presentations can be enhanced by the effective use of visual aids. These include handouts, overhead transparencies, drawings on the whiteboard, PowerPoint slides, and many other types of props. Once you have chosen a topic, consider how you are going to show your audience what you are talking about. Visuals can provide a reference, illustration, or image to help the audience to understand and remember your point.

Visual aids accomplish several goals:

- Make your speech more interesting
- Enhance your credibility as a speaker

- Guide transitions, helping the audience stay on track
- Communicate complex information in a short time
- Reinforce your message
- Encourage retention

## Emphasis, Support, and Clarity

The purpose for each visual aid should be clear and speak for itself. If you can't quickly link the purpose of a visual aid to the verbal message, consider whether it should be used. Visual aids can be distracting or confusing if they are not clearly connected to what you are saying.

Perhaps you want to highlight a trend between two related issues, such as socioeconomic status and educational attainment. You might show a line graph that compares the two, showing that as socioeconomic status rises, educational attainment also rises. People learn in different ways.

Some of us learn best using visual stimuli; others learn by taking notes or by using tactile objects. So, by using visuals to support your presentation and, if possible, tactile aids or demos, you can help a significant proportion of the audience learn about your topic.

Clarity is key in the use of visual aids. Limit the number of words on your slides. No more than 10 words per slide, with a font large enough to be read at the back of the room or auditorium, is a good rule of thumb.

## Methods and Materials

### Slide Decks

The most common visual aid used in presentations, **slide decks** may be developed using software such as PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, or Google Slides. These tools allow you to show text, images, and charts and even to play audio or video files. They are an excellent enhancement to your presentation, but they do require a contingency plan. Computers sometimes fail to work as planned, so make sure you have a whiteboard or handout as a backup in case of any technical issues. You can minimize the risk by testing out equipment ahead of time.

Also, remember that these are an *aid* to your central, verbal message. Resist the urge to read directly from them with your back to the audience, or to pack slides full of text in lieu of speaking all of the information you want to get across.

### Flip Charts, Whiteboards, and Large Prints

**Flip charts** and **whiteboards** are a good choice when you don't have access to a computer and projector. Alternatively, you can print some visual aids like charts and graphs in large sizes and show them during your presentation. If you plan to get a lot of audience input and want to write or draw things out, then a whiteboard is an ideal choice. But make sure your writing is large enough to be seen at the back of the room and that it is easy to read.

### Handouts

If it will be helpful for your audience to refer to the information you're sharing at a later date, they'll appreciate it if you leave them with a handout. But never give **handouts** to the audience at the beginning of your speech. They will be distracted by reading and tune you out. If you decide to use one, let the audience know at the beginning of the speech that you'll provide it at the end. This will relieve them from having to capture all your content by taking notes, and keep their attention focused on you while you speak.

### Demonstrations and Tactile Aids

If your presentation is about how to do something, for example, how to cook a particular dish or how to use a tool, you will want to show the audience a **demonstration**. Sometimes it is helpful to pass around a **tactile aid**, for example, a model. These can be very helpful if you want your audience to learn by doing. Make sure to pass items around during pauses in your presentation so that you don't lose the audience's attention. If audience members need to move around to use a tactile aid, make sure the location has enough space to make this possible.

## Using Visual Aids

### Designing Slide Decks

Using PowerPoint or a similar program, You'll be able to import, or cut and paste, words from text files, images, or video clips to represent your ideas. You can even incorporate web links.

At first, you might be overwhelmed by the possibilities, and you might be tempted to use all the bells, whistles, and sounds, not to mention the flying, and animated graphics. If used wisely, a simple **transition** can be effective, But if used indiscriminately, it can annoy the audience to the point where they cringe in anticipation of the **sound effect** at the start of each slide.

Stick to one main idea per slide. The presentation is for the audience's benefit, not yours. Pictures and images can be understood more quickly and easily than text, so you can use this to your advantage as you present.

If you develop a slide deck for your presentation, test these out in the location beforehand, not just on your own computer screen, as different computers and software versions can make your slides look different than you expected. Allow time for revision based on what you learn.

Your visual aids should meet the following criteria:

- *Big* - legible for everyone, even the back row
- *Clear* - the audience should "get it" the first time they see it
- *Simple* - simplify concepts rather than complicating them
- *Consistent* - use the same visual style throughout

### Font

Another consideration that you'll need to make when designing your slide decks is **font**. As previously mentioned, think about the people at the back of the room when choosing the size of your text, to make sure it can be read by everyone.

A common mistake that presenters make is to use **decorative fonts**, or to incorporate many different fonts in their slides. This not only creates a mixed message for the audience but also makes your message difficult to read. Choose legible, common fonts that do not have thin elements that may be difficult to see.

### Colour

When considering your choice of colours to use, **legibility** must be your priority. Contrast can help the audience read your key terms more easily. Make sure the background colour and the images you plan to use complement each other. Repeat colours, from your graphics to your text, to help unify each slide. To reduce visual noise, try not to use more than two or three colours.

According to the standard **colour wheel**, colours are grouped into primary, secondary, and tertiary categories. Primary colours are the colours from which other colours are made through various combinations: blue, red, and yellow. Secondary colours—green, orange, and purple—combine two primary colours, while tertiary colours are made from combinations of primary and secondary colours.

## The Colour Wheel



Figure 3.3.1 The Colour Wheel by Laura Underwood

Colours have relationships depending on their location on the wheel. Colours that are opposite each other are called complementary, and they contrast, creating a dynamic effect. Analogous colours are located next to each other and promote continuity and sense of unity.

Blue-green **colour blindness**, and red-green colour blindness are fairly common, so avoid using these colour combinations if it is important for the audience to differentiate between them. If you are using a pie chart, for example, avoid putting a blue segment next to a green one. Use labelling so that even if someone is colour blind, they will be able to tell the relative sizes of the pie segments and what they signify.

Colour is also a matter of culture. Some colours may be perceived as formal or informal, or masculine or feminine. Certain colours have understood meanings; for example, red is usually associated with danger, while green signals “go.” Make sure the colours you use align with your message. If you are discussing climate change or the natural world, for example, you’d be more likely to use blues and greens rather than metallic colours to avoid confusing the audience.

### **Helpful Hints**

Visual aids can be a powerful tool when used effectively but can run the risk of dominating your presentation. Consider your audience and how the portrayal of images, text, graphic, animated sequences, or sound files will contribute or detract from your presentation. Here are some hints to keep in mind as you prepare yours.

- Keep it simple
- One idea per slide
- Avoid clutter
- Use large, bold fonts that can be read from at least 20 feet away
- Use contrasting colours for a dynamic effect
- Use analogous colours to unify ideas
- Do not use clip art
- Proofread each slide with care
- Test in the presentation room beforehand
- If you are using a computer for your visual aids, have a backup plan

### **Conclusion**

Using visual aids takes time and practice. The more you practise before your speech, the more comfortable you will be with your visual aids and the role they serve. Know your material well enough that you refer to your visual aids, not rely on them.

## Learning Highlights

- Visual aids include handouts, overhead transparencies, whiteboard drawings, slide decks, and more.
- Visual aids should provide emphasis, clarity, and support to your presentation strategy
- Popular slide decks include PowerPoint, Prezi, and Google Slides.
- Avoid using more than two or three colours to keep visual “noise” low.
- Slide decks should be (1) big (type font); (2) clear; (3) simple and consistent.

## Check Your Understanding

Which of the following is a good example of a phrase that suggests that you are introducing illustrations?

- a) Considered by many
- b) To name an example
- c) Many people say
- d) Is it widely believed

In an informative speech or presentation, it is a good idea to:

- a) Speak on a subject that your audience already has background knowledge about
- b) Rely on pathos to convince the audience by appealing to their emotions
- c) Use visual aids to give the audience a representation of information in the speech
- d) All of the above

Which of the following presentations would be more effective with the use of a physical or animate object?

- a) A slide presentation on a new employment policy

- b) A slide presentation on the different features of a mountain bike
- c) A personal finance workshop on real estate investing tips
- d) A lecture on the psychological effects of pharmaceutical drugs

All of the following should be practised for designing an effective slide presentation, except:

- a) Limiting text to one or two fonts
- b) Bolding, italicizing, and capitalizing important information
- c) Presenting no more than five to seven lines of text per slide
- d) Using a font colour that blends in well with the background

If a presenter is using slides in a well-lit room, which of the following colour schemes should be used on the slides to maximize legibility?

- a) A dark background with light text and visuals
- b) A dark background with dark text and visuals
- c) A light background with dark text and visuals
- d) A light background with light text and visuals

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# Communicating with a Live Audience

## Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to

- explain the preparation process used to deliver a presentation,
- describe ways to cope with mistakes and surprises during a live presentation,
- describe important audience factors to consider in delivering an effective presentation, and
- critique and provide constructive feedback on a professional presentation.

## Topics

- Preparing to present
- Managing anxiety
- Coping with mistakes and surprises
- Reading your audience
- Constructive verbal and non-verbal feedback

## Introduction

This chapter focuses on what to do when presentation day finally arrives. You have had the opportunity to learn about your presentation style, mapping out an effective strategy, and making the most of presentation aids, so you should be well poised to communicate interpersonally with a live audience.

You will first learn about how to prepare to present by taking a deeper look at what you should be doing during rehearsals, considering how you'll dress comfortably and professionally and how your setup will include contingency plans.

You will learn effective approaches to managing anxiety, such as how to cope with your body's reaction as well as how to cope with mistakes or surprises that may pop up in the speech, with the technology or through some other external distraction.

Having an understanding of how to read your audience for positive or negative cues is important during and post presentation, and you will learn about interpreting them in scanning their body language and during Q&A.

Finally, you will have a chance to critically reflect on the delivery of a presentation by learning about how to do a self-analysis, as well as give and receive constructive verbal and non-verbal feedback.

## Preparing to Present

### Rehearsing

To deliver your presentation to the best of your ability, and to reduce your nerves once you take the stage, you need to practise by **rehearsing**. As you do, try to identify the weaknesses in your delivery to improve on them. For example, do you often mis-speak the same words (e.g., *pacific* for *specific*; *ax* for *ask*) or do your hands or feet fidget? Use your practice time to focus on correcting these issues. These sessions should help you get comfortable and help you remember what you want to say without having to constantly refer to notes.

Try practising in front of a mirror, or even recording yourself speaking to a camera and playing it back. It's also helpful to get feedback from a supportive audience at this stage. Perhaps a few family members or friends could watch you give your presentation and provide some feedback.

If at all possible, access the room where you will be presenting. This way you can get a feel for its setup and decide how you will stand or move during your presentation.

### **Dress for Success**

While there are no definitive guidelines for how you should dress for your presentation, your appearance is an important part of your audience's first impression. If you want them to take you seriously, you'll need to look the part. While you don't have to wear a suit each time you present, there are some scenarios where this would be expected; for example, if you are presenting to a corporate audience who wear suits to work, you should do the same. You should dress one step above your audience. If your audience is going to be dressed casually in shorts and jeans, then wear nice casual clothing such as a pair of pressed slacks and a collared shirt or blouse. If your audience is going to be wearing business casual attire, then you should wear a dress or a suit.

Another general rule is avoid distractions in your appearance. Overly tight or revealing garments, over-the-top hairstyles or makeup or jangling jewelry can distract your audience's attention from your message.

### **Setting Up Your Environment**

Depending on the circumstances of your speech or presentation, you may have some choices to make about the environment. Perhaps you have a choice of meeting rooms that you can use, or, perhaps you have only one option.

If you have some flexibility, it is helpful to think about what sort of environment would best help you get across your message across. For example, if you are running a workshop, you might want to assemble participants in a circle to encourage collaboration and discussion. If you are holding a webinar, you'll need a quiet location with a strong Internet connection and a computer system. It is imperative that you think about what facilities you need well before the day of your

presentation arrives. Arriving to find that the equipment you expected isn't available is not a nice surprise for even the most experienced speaker!

If you have access to the location beforehand, you may need to move tables or chairs around to get things just the way you want them. You might choose to have a **podium** brought in, if you are aiming for a formal feel, for example, or you may need to position your flip chart. Double check that you have all the equipment you need, from whiteboard markers to speakers. It is far better if you can get comfortable with the room before your audience arrives, as this will make you feel more prepared and less nervous.

If you are using technology to support your presentation (i.e., PowerPoint slides or a projector), test everything before you begin. Do a **microphone check** and test its volume, view your slides on the computer you will be using, check any weblinks, play videos to test their sound, or make a call to test the phone connection prior to your teleconference. Your audience will get restless quickly if they arrive and are expected to wait while you fix a technical problem. This will also make you seem disorganized and hurt your credibility as an authoritative speaker.

### Contingency Planning

Well before the day of your presentation, ask yourself, *What could go wrong?* This might sound like a way for a novice presenter to stress oneself out, but it can actually be very helpful. If you anticipate the worst-case scenario and are prepared for it, problems on the day of your presentation are less likely to bother you.

Many of the possible problems can be avoided with **preparation**. Make sure you have notes with you in case you need them. Dress professionally so that you feel good about how you are presenting yourself. Getting there early to set up and test the equipment will prevent many technical issues, but having a handout with you will make you feel even more comfortable in case you have problems with your slides. Bring a bottle of water in case your throat becomes dry or you need a moment to pause.

Most other problems can be prevented with practice. Rehearse so that you are not reliant on your notes. This way, if a note card goes missing, it's no big deal. During your rehearsals you'll get used to pacing yourself, pausing for breath, and the timing of your speech so that this comes more naturally once you get onstage.

## **During the Presentation**

### **Managing Anxiety**

Studies have been done to assess how nervous or stressful people typically get during presentations, by examining people's physiological responses at three intervals: one minute before the presentation, the first minute of the speech, and the last minute of the speech. They discovered that nervousness usually peaked at the anticipation stage that occurs one minute before the presentation. They further found that as the speech progresses, **nervousness** tends to go down. Here are some things you can do to help you manage your anxiety before the presentation:

- Practice/rehearse in similar conditions/setting as your speech
- Be organized
- Think positively
- Analyze your audience
- Adapt your language to speaking style

During the presentation itself, there are four main areas where you can focus attention in order to manage your anxiety:

1. Your body's reaction
2. Attention to the audience
3. Keeping a sense of humour
4. Common stress management techniques

### **Your Body's Reaction**

Physical movement helps to channel some of the excess energy that your body produces in response to anxiety. If at all possible, move around the front of the room rather than remaining imprisoned behind the **lectern** or gripping it for dear life (avoid pacing nervously from side to side, however). Move closer to the audience and then stop for a moment. If you are afraid that moving away from the lectern will reveal your shaking hands, use note cards rather than a sheet of paper for your outline. Note cards do not quiver like paper, and they provide you with something to do with your hands. Other options include **vocal warm-ups** right before your speech, having water (preferably in a non-spillable bottle with a spout) nearby for dry mouth, and doing a few stretches before going on stage.

**Deep breathing** will help to counteract the effects of excess adrenaline. You can place cues or symbols in your notes, such as “slow down” or 😊 that remind you to pause and breathe during points in your speech. It is also a good idea to pause a moment before you get started to set an appropriate pace from the onset. Look at your audience and smile. It is a reflex for some of your audience members to smile back. Those smiles will reassure you that your audience members are friendly.

### **Attention to the Audience**

During your speech, make a point of establishing direct **eye contact** with your audience members. By looking at individuals, you establish a series of one-to-one contacts similar to interpersonal communication. An audience becomes much less threatening when you think of them not as an anonymous mass but as a collection of individuals.

A gentleman once shared his worst speaking experience: Right before the start of his speech, he reached the front of the room and forgot everything he was supposed to say. When asked what he saw when he was in the front of the room, he gave a quizzical look and responded, “I didn’t see anything. All I remember is a mental image of me up there in the front of the room blowing it.” Speaking anxiety becomes more intense if you focus on yourself rather than concentrate on your audience and your material.

## Keeping a Sense of Humour

No matter how well we plan, unexpected things happen. That fact is what makes the public speaking situation so interesting. When the unexpected happens to you, do not let it rattle you. At the end of a class period late in the afternoon of a long day, a student raised her hand and asked the professor if he knew that he was wearing two different coloured shoes, one black and one blue. He looked down and saw that she was right; his shoes did not match. He laughed at himself, complimented the student on her observational abilities, and moved on with the important thing, the material he had to deliver.

## Stress Management Techniques

Even when we use positive thinking and are well prepared, some of us still feel a great deal of anxiety about public speaking. When that is the case, it can be more helpful to use stress management than to try to make the anxiety go away.

Here are two main tools that can help:

- **Visualization:** imagining the details of what a successful speech would look and sound like from beginning to end; a way of hypnotizing yourself into positive thinking by using your mind's eye to make success real.
- **Systematic desensitization:** Gradual exposure to the thing that causes fear—in this case, giving a speech—can ultimately lead to decreased anxiety. Basically, the more practice you get speaking in front of people, the less fear and anxiety you'll have about public speaking. Organizations like Toastmasters that help people confront their fears by providing a supportive environment to learn and practise is a good option if you have a true phobia around presenting or public speaking.

## Using a Microphone

If you are using a microphone during your speech, there are a few cautions to be aware of. First, make sure you do a sound check and that you know how the microphone works—how to turn it

on and off, how to mute it, and how to raise or lower it. If possible, have it positioned to the height you need before you go onstage. Make sure the microphone does not block your face.

If you will be using a clip-on microphone (called a lavalier mic), you'll need to wear something with a lapel or collar that it can be clipped to. Make sure your hair and jewelry are out of the way to avoid rustling noises, and place the microphone 8 to 10 inches below your chin.

Finally, do not get too close to the microphone. Many people stand too close to the mic and end up hunched over it, creating bad posture and an uncomfortable position. If you get too close, the mic will pick up your breathing as well as your words and can also create that screeching feedback that will make your audience jump in their seats. Doing a sound check and getting comfortable with the equipment before you go onstage will prevent the majority of errors when using a microphone.

### **Coping with Mistakes and Surprises**

Even the most prepared speaker will encounter unexpected challenges from time to time. Here are a few strategies for combating the unexpected in your own presentations.

#### Speech Content Issues

What if a note card goes missing or you skip important information from the beginning of your speech? While situations like these might seem like the worst nightmare of a novice public speaker, they can be easily overcome. Pause for a moment to think about what to do. Is it important to include the missing information, or can it be omitted without hindering the audience's ability to understand your speech? If it needs to be included, does the information fit better now or in a later segment? If you can move on without the missing element, that is often the best choice, but pausing for a few seconds to decide will be less distracting to the audience than sputtering through a few "ums" and "uhs." Situations like these demonstrate why it's a good idea to have a glass of water with you when you speak. Pausing for a moment to take a sip of

water is a perfectly natural movement, so the audience may not even notice that anything is amiss.

### Technical Difficulties

Technology has become a very useful aid in public speaking, allowing us to use audio or video clips, presentation software, or direct links to websites. But it does break down occasionally! Web servers go offline, files will not download, or media contents are incompatible with the computer in the presentation room. Always have a **backup plan** in case of **technical difficulties**. As you develop your speech and visual aids, think through what you will do if you cannot show a particular graph or if your presentation slides are garbled. Your beautifully prepared chart may be superior to the verbal description you can provide. Your ability to provide a succinct verbal description when technology fails will give your audience the information they need and keep your speech moving forward.

### External Distractions

Unfortunately, one thing that you can't control during your speech is **audience etiquette**, but you *can* decide how to react to it. Inevitably, an audience member will walk in late, a cell phone will ring, or a car alarm will go off outside. If you are interrupted by external events like these, it is often useful and sometimes necessary to pause and wait so that you can regain the audience's attention.

Whatever the event, maintain your **composure**. Do not get upset or angry about these **glitches**. If you keep your cool and quickly implement a "plan B" for moving forward, your audience will be impressed.

### **Reading Your Audience**

Recognizing your audience's mood by observing their body language can help you adjust your message and see who agrees with you, who doesn't, and who is still deciding. With this

information, you can direct your attention—including eye contact and questions—to the areas of the room where they can have the most impact.

As the speaker, you are conscious that you are being observed. But your audience members probably don't think of themselves as being observed, so their body language will be easy to read.

## **Handling Q&A**

Question-and-answer sessions can be trickier to manage than the presentation itself. You can prepare for and rehearse the presentation, but audience members could ask a question you hadn't considered or don't know how to answer. There are three important elements to think about when incorporating Q&A's as part of your presentation:

### **Audience Expectations**

At the beginning of your speech, give the audience a little bit of information about who you are and what your expertise on the subject is. Once they know what you do (and what you know), it will be easier for the audience to align their questions with your area of expertise—and for you to bow out of answering questions that are outside of your area.

### **Timing of Q&A's**

Questions are easier to manage when you are expecting them. Unless you are part of a panel, meeting, or teleconference, it is probably easier to let the audience know that you will take questions at the end of your presentation. This way you can avoid interruptions to your speech that can distract you and cause you to lose time. If audience members interrupt during your talk, you can then ask them politely to hold on to their question until the Q&A session at the end.

### **Knowing How to Respond**

Never pretend that you know the answer to a question if you don't. The audience will pick up on it! Instead, calmly apologize and say that the question is outside of the scope of your knowledge

but that you'd be happy to find out after the presentation (or, suggest some resources where the person could find out for themselves).

If you are uncertain about how to answer a question, say something like “That’s really interesting. Could you elaborate on that?” This will make the audience member feel good because they have asked an interesting question, and it will give you a moment to comprehend what they are asking.

Sometimes presenters rush to answer a question because they are nervous or want to impress. Pause for a moment, before you begin your answer, to think about what you want to say. This will help you to avoid **misinterpreting** the question, or taking **offense** to a question that is not intended that way.

A final tip is to be cautious about how you answer, so that you don’t offend your audience. You are presenting on a topic because you are knowledgeable about it, but your audience is not. It is important not to make the audience feel inferior because there are things that they don’t know. Avoid comments such as “Oh, yes, it’s really easy to do that...” Instead, say something like “Yes, that can be tricky. I would recommend...” Also, avoid a bossy tone. For example, phrase your response with “What I find helpful is...” rather than “What you should do is...”

## Critiquing a Presentation

### Self-Analysis

It is often said that we are our own worst critic. Many people are hard on themselves and may exaggerate how poorly a speech or presentation went. Other times, there’s not much exaggeration. In both cases it helps to do a post examination of your performance as presenter.

To provide a slightly more objective approach to analyzing the delivery of your speech or presentation, it may be useful to refer back to what we saw in chapter 1 related to what makes a good speech or presenter. Namely, did you

- make the most of your unique *voice*? Did the audience seem to understand you?
- make the most of using *body language*? Did your body confidently support what you were saying?
- use a *coherent structure*? Did the audience seem to make sense of your presentation? Was it logical?
- show *enthusiasm*? Did you show the audience you cared about your presentation?
- demonstrate *expertise*? Did you show your credibility by citing reliable sources and making a distinction between facts and your opinion?
- show you *practised* and *prepared*? Did your confidence show because you implemented a plan that included sufficient rehearsal, contingency plans, and other success strategies?

Honestly asking yourself these questions with the intention of uncovering your strengths and weaknesses should help you to become a better presenter. While it is important to review other kinds of feedback, whether from the audience, your peers, or an instructor, it is also useful to have a realistic understanding of your own performance. This understanding is part of gaining experience and improving as a presenter.

### **Giving Feedback**

In chapter 1 we reviewed the idea that speakers and audiences can't exist without one another. From the perspective of a speaker, the audience members are vital in helping him or her to understand how they are doing both during and after the presentation. Knowing what it feels like to be on stage is often motivation enough for many people to give non-verbal feedback or verbal feedback.

#### Non-Verbal Feedback

Let us now shift our focus from effective public speaking skills to effective listening. Boothman (2008) recommends listening with your whole body, not just your ears. Consider how confident you would feel speaking to a room full of people with their eyes closed, arms and legs crossed,

and bodies bent in slouches. These listeners are presenting non-verbal cues communicating that they are uninterested and unimpressed. Meanwhile, a listener sitting up straight, facing you with an intent look on his face, is more likely to offer reassurance that the speaker's words are being understood.

Eye contact is another non-verbal cue to the speaker that you are paying attention. You don't want to be bug-eyed and unblinking; the speaker might assume there is a tiger behind her and begin to panic as you seem to be doing. However, attentive eye contact can indicate you are listening and help *you* to stay focused too. There are some cultures where maintaining eye contact would cause discomfort, so keep that in mind. Also, you may be someone who listens better with eyes closed to visualize what is being said. This can be difficult for a speaker to recognize, so if this is you, consider incorporating one of the following non-verbals while you listen with eyes closed.

Nodding your head affirmatively, making backchannel responses such as “Yes,” “Umhum,” or “OK” can help the speaker gauge your interest. Even the speed of your head nod can signal your level of patience or understanding (Pease & Pease, 2006). Leaning in as a listener is far more encouraging than slumping in your seat. Miller (1994) suggests the “**listener's lean**” demonstrates “ultimate interest. This joyous feedback is reflexive. It physically endorses our communiqué.” Nevertheless, sending too many non-verbal responses to the speaker can go wrong, too. After all, a conference room full of people shifting in their seats and nodding their heads may translate as a restless audience that the speaker needs to recapture.

### Verbal Feedback

While speakers sometimes want all questions held until the end of a presentation, asking questions when the opportunity presents itself can help you as a listener. For one, you have to listen in order to be able to ask a question. Your goal should be to ask open-ended questions (“What do you think about...?” rather than “We should do ..., right?”). You can use questions to confirm your understanding of the speaker's message. If you're not entirely sure of a significant point, you might ask a clarifying question. These are questions such as “What did you

mean?” “Can you be more specific?” or “What is a concrete example of your point?” These can help your comprehension while also offer the speaker feedback. When asking questions, approach the speaker in a positive, non-threatening way. A good listener doesn’t seek to put the speaker on the defensive. You want to demonstrate your objectivity and willingness to listen to the speaker’s response.

Finally, **paraphrasing** what has been said in your interactions with the speaker can be another useful tool for a good listener. Imagine the difference if, before you respond to an upset colleague, you take a moment to say, “I understand you are disappointed we didn’t consult you before moving forward with the product release...” before you say, “we didn’t have time to get everyone’s input.” Reflecting back the speaker’s point of view before responding allows the speaker to know you were listening and helps foster trust that everyone’s voice is being heard.

Non-Verbal Feedback (constructive)	Verbal Feedback (constructive)
Listen with whole body	Ask open-ended questions
Use appropriate eye contact	Questions confirm understanding of message
Nod affirmatively (mmm hmm, yes, OK)	Ask clarifying questions (can you give an example of/did you mean...)
Use <b>listener’s lean</b>	Use paraphrasing to demonstrate accurate understanding
Non-Verbal Feedback (not constructive)	Verbal Feedback (not constructive)
Closed body position	Asking closed questions
No eye contact	Asking questions that don’t relate to speaker’s message
Inattentive, distracted (playing with phones,	Asking rhetorical questions

engaging in side conversations etc.)	
Slumping, yawning	Making your own speech instead of asking a question

Table 3.4.1 Constructive vs Not Constructive Verbal and Non-Verbal Feedback

### Receiving Feedback

Being open to receiving feedback is the only way to have a better picture of your performance as a presenter or speaker. Combining self-analysis with the feedback of your audience or peers is your opportunity to better understand your strengths as a presenter and what resonated well with your audience.

It may be a bit more uncomfortable to look at things that did not go well or receive feedback that's judgemental, biased, or otherwise laden with emotion. In the first chapter of this module, you learned about self-awareness. When receiving and making sense of feedback, it is very important to be self-aware and honest with yourself. This honesty will help you distinguish between an environmental situation, a situation that lies with the audience member, or a situation with the presenter.

### Conclusion

In this chapter you learned about useful tools such as rehearsing, dressing appropriately, and having a contingency plan that help you prepare to present to a live audience. You examined approaches that would be useful during the presentation itself, such as keeping a good sense of humour and attention on your audience to manage anxiety, and what steps to take for a critical review afterwards to close the feedback loop.

## Learning Highlights

- Preparing to present includes rehearsing, deciding what to wear, how to set up the environment, and making an appropriate contingency plan.
- Keeping attention on your audience, a good sense of humour, and knowing stress management techniques are good ways of managing anxiety.
- Mistakes or surprises can happen with the speech, the technology, or through external distractions.
- To effectively critique a presentation, it's good to balance self-analysis with giving and receiving constructive verbal and non-verbal feedback.

## Check Your Understanding

Why should you dress appropriately for the occasion at which you are speaking?

- a) To give the audience confidence in your abilities
- b) To show that you are easy going and approachable
- c) To play up your physical attractiveness
- d) All of the above

While managing a Q&A session following his presentation, Eric finds himself unable to answer a question posed by one of the audience members. Which of the following tactics should Eric take to maintain control of the session?

- a) Improvise and make up an answer
- b) Promise to provide a more thorough answer at a later time
- c) Spend significant time on the question before responding
- d) Become hostile and defensive

What is critical listening?

- a) negative judgments listeners develop during a speech
- b) the practice of detecting flaws in a speech
- c) a listener's use of his or her opinions in order to mentally refute factual details in the speech
- d) the rejection of a message
- e) careful scrutiny of the ideas and logical elements of a speech

When is it a good idea to use audience analysis as a way to cope with the anxiety and stress of public speaking?

- a) When you are choosing a speech topic
- b) When you are deciding on the kind of language to use
- c) When you are giving the speech
- d) All of the above

Feeling light-headed, nauseated, forgetful, or inarticulate are all signs of what communication challenge?

- a) Speaking anxiety
- b) Lack of preparedness
- c) Defensive reacting
- d) All of the above

People who suffer from presentation anxiety are high strung. **True False**

Starting a presentation with a joke is a good technique for any presentation and presenter. **True False**

A solid technique to reduce nervousness is to imagine the audience naked. **True False**

Making mistakes in a presentation mean that the presenter “blew it.” **True False**

The natural state of the audience is empathy, not antipathy. They generally want the presenter to succeed. **True False**

If you write out your presentation word for word and memorize it, you’re golden. **True False**

The audience will always be able to tell when the presenter is nervous. **True False**

## Further Reading and Links

If you would like to read more about finding, using, and attributing Creative Commons–licensed materials, see the following sites:

- Presentation Skills

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/DeafStudiesTeaching/dissert/Presentation%20Skills.htm>

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## Presentation Module Conclusion

This module on how to present in a professional context examined three key themes over four chapters: knowledge of self, looking outside yourself, and performing interpersonally.

The first chapter focused on Your Presentation Style with the key theme of getting to know more about yourself. Here you examined your ideas about successful speakers, began to delve into areas of self-awareness and your values, and learned the nature of your own verbal and non-verbal presentation behaviours.

This knowledge allowed you to move on to Developing a Presentation Strategy, which focused on looking outside of yourself to develop a presentation strategy. You did this by revisiting some tools you first learned about in both the Writing and Foundations modules with FAST and AUDIENCE, respectively. With these frameworks in place, you began to brainstorm and keep track of your ideas using an outline to write your presentation. This included writing an attention-grabbing intro, a body using classical rhetorical proofs, and a conclusion that ended on a high note.

Presentation Aids continued the theme of looking outside yourself by focusing on visuals or other tools that can aid your presentation by lending emphasis, clarity, and support. You learned about several tools and techniques, such as how to use slide decks (e.g., PowerPoint) and use colours effectively to support your presentation.

Communicating with a Live Audience featured the final theme about working together with others (interpersonally). Here you should have learned how to prepare to present, how to manage anxiety, and how to cope with mistakes. You should have gained insight into how to read an audience's positive and negative cues as well as the elements involved in constructively critiquing a presentation.

These three themes of looking within, looking without, and coming together interpersonally have aimed to give you useful and insightful foundation and practice for how to present effectively in a professional context in the twenty-first century. What you've learned in this module will serve as good preparation for your presentations and give you a solid foundation for topics you'll discover in the module on Interpersonal Communication Skills.

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# Glossary

## Your Presentation Style

### **Adjustment**

The willingness to be flexible and adapt to the speaker's points and verbal detours without judgement or jumping to conclusions

### **Anticipate**

Regarding something as probable; to expect or predict something. Anticipating what a speaker will say before saying it can get in the way of active listening.

### **Attitude**

A settled way of thinking or feeling about something. Keeping an open or positive attitude is more beneficial to active listening.

### **Authenticity**

The quality of being genuine; of undisputed origin and not a copy.

### **Bias**

The inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.

### **Body Movements**

The way a speaker moves his/her body as a way to communicate with the audience and/or release nervous energy.

### **Deaf Spots (Psychological)**

Impaired ability to perceive and understand things counter to our convictions.

### **Dimensions of Self**

The four dimensions that make up the **Johari Window** by Luft and Ingram.

### **Emotional Reaction**

Arousing or being characterized by intense feeling.

### **Emphasis**

Putting stress on certain words in your speech to make them stand out as important.

### **Facial Expression**

When the look on a person's face communicates their mood, feeling, or state of being, sometimes unconsciously.

### **Fillers**

Placeholders for actual words (e.g, *uh*, *uhm*, *erm*, *ah*) that people typically use to fill space while speaking; they can become distracting to the listener.

### **Gesture**

A movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning.

### **Hearing**

An accidental and automatic brain response to sound that requires no effort.

### **Internal Monologue**

Self-talk that can be rational and reasonable or illogical and disorganized.

### **Johari Window**

Ingram and Luft's four-quadrant box of dimension of self: (1) what's known to me and known to others, (2) what's known to others but unknown to me, (3) what's known to me but unknown to others, and (4) what's unknown to me and to others.

### **Judging**

Forming an opinion or conclusion about something.

### **Listening**

To give one's attention to sound.

### **Listening Reminder**

Giving oneself a cue to remember to pay attention to the speaker, such as a note or an image.

### **Pitch**

The quality of a sound governed by the rate of vibrations producing it; the degree of highness or lowness of a tone.

### **Posture**

A particular position of the body.

### **Pronunciation**

The way that you say your words, often informed by other elements such as accent (e.g., *to-may-toe* vs. *to-mah-toe*)

### **Rate**

The vocal speed of the speaker.

### **Self-concept**

What we perceive ourselves to be; involves aspects of image and esteem.

**Self-reflection**

A trait that allows you to adapt and change to the context or environment, to accept or reject messages, to examine your concept of yourself, and to improve.

**Silence**

The fact or state of abstaining from speech.

**Values**

Principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgement of what is important in life.

**Volume**

Quantity or power of sound; degree of loudness.

**Developing a Presentation Strategy****Asynchronous Delivery**

A presentation delivery not existing or occurring at the same time; previously recorded.

**Attention-Grabber**

A device, such as a story or anecdote, designed to get the audience's attention in the introduction.

**AUDIENCE (tool)**

A tool and acronym used to help analyze the audience as part of a pre-presentation strategy.

Stands for Analysis, Understand, Demographics, Interest, Environment, Need, Context, Expectation.

**Backchannels**

A secondary or covert route for the passage of information, oftentimes social media tools like Twitter, for certain kinds of presentations or speeches.

**Chunking**

Grouping together connected items or words so that they can be stored or processed as single concepts.

**FAST**

An acronym and tool to assist in developing your presentation strategy. Stands for Format, Audience, Style, and Tone.

**Format**

Choice between presentation styles such as speech, presentation, panel, or podcast.

**Podcast**

A digital audio file made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer or portable media player, typically available as a series, new instalments of which can be received by subscribers automatically.

**Rhetorical Proofs**

Classical way to make a solid argument using the three proofs of ethos, pathos, and logos (credibility, passion, logic).

**Style**

The personality you bring to your presentation through elements such as manner of dress, level of formality, use of humour, etc.

**Teleconference**

A conference with participants in different locations linked by telecommunication devices.

**Timing**

The amount of time allotted for a speech or presentation, usually including time for questions.

**Tone**

The overall mood of the presentation using tools like voice, body language, and self-confidence.

**Webinar**

A seminar conducted over the Internet.

**Presentation Aids****Colour Blindness**

The inability to distinguish certain colours.

**Colour Wheel**

A circle with different coloured sectors used to show the relationship between colours.

**Decorative Font**

A font that is highly stylized, usually a serif, and sometimes difficult to read.

**Demonstration**

A practical exhibition and explanation of how something works or is performed.

**Flip Charts**

A large pad of paper bound so that each page can be turned over at the top to reveal the next, used on a stand at presentations.

### **Handouts**

A piece of printed information provided free of charge, especially to accompany a lecture or advertise something.

### **Legibility**

The quality of being clear enough to read.

### **Slide Deck**

A presentation supplemented by or based on a display of projected images or photographic slides (e.g., PowerPoint).

### **Sound Effect**

A sound other than speech or music made artificially for use in a play, film, or other broadcast production or presentation.

### **Tactile Aid**

An aid that is of or connected with the sense of touch.

### **Transition (slide)**

The process of changing from one slide to another (e.g., using swipe, fade, or other visual or audio effects to indicate a slide change).

### **Whiteboards**

A wipeable board with a white surface used for teaching or presentations.

## **Communicating with a Live Audience**

### **Audience Etiquette**

The customary code of polite behaviour in society or among members of a particular profession or group, in this case between the audience and the speaker.

### **Backup Plan**

A plan made in case a file or other presentation item is lost or damaged.

### **Composure**

The state or feeling of being calm and in control of oneself.

### **Deep Breathing**

The action of breathing deeply, especially as a method of relaxation.

### **Eye Contact**

The state in which two people are aware of looking directly into each other's eyes.

### **Glitch**

A sudden, usually temporary malfunction or fault of equipment.

### **Lectern**

A tall stand with a sloping top to hold a book or notes, from which someone, typically a preacher or lecturer, can read while standing up.

### **Listener's Lean**

Leaning toward the speaker as a sign of interest and attentiveness.

### **Microphone check**

The act of testing the microphone for volume, function, position, etc.

### **Misinterpreting**

To interpret something or someone wrongly.

### **Nervousness**

The state of being anxious or apprehensive.

### **Offense**

Causing someone to feel resentful, upset, or annoyed.

### **Paraphrasing**

Express the meaning of (something written or spoken) using different words, especially to achieve greater clarity.

### **Podium**

A small platform on which a person may stand to be seen by an audience.

### **Preparation**

Something done to get ready for an event or undertaking.

### **Rehearsing**

Mentally prepare, practise, or recite (words one intends to say) for later public performance.

### **Systematic Desensitization**

To make less sensitive systematically by gradually increasing exposure to the thing one is afraid of, in this case public speaking.

### **Technical Difficulties**

A difficulty arising from a method of procedure; (now also) a technological problem.

### **Visualization**

Forming a mental image or imagining a presentation going well as a way to cope with public speaking stress.

### **Vocal Warm-Ups**

Prepare for speaking or a performance by exercising or practising using one's voice gently beforehand.