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Oral Presentations

In: Designing and Managing a Research Project: A Business Student's Guide

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Pub. Date: 2021

Access Date: April 20, 2021

Publishing Company: SAGE Publications, Inc

City: Thousand Oaks

Print ISBN: 9781544316468

Online ISBN: 9781071849279

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781544316499>

Print pages: 313-330

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Oral Presentations

“I learned a lot. Besides the knowledge that the course taught us, I also improved many skills.”

Business Student

This chapter will examine a range of issues relating to presenting your results in an oral presentation. An oral presentation may not be essential for all research projects but is often required. If you have the opportunity to give an oral presentation, you need to clearly explain your research in a way that is appropriate for the audience and the assigned requirements. You also need to provide support for the arguments presented in the report so that the audience will agree with the findings and recommendations. In business, some managers are often too busy to fully read a written report and so will make a decision largely based on the strength of an oral presentation (Waller, 2012). Such a presentation can be used to outline the research problem, methodology undertaken, main findings, and recommendations. It is a very effective tool to reinforce key elements of the research project. Like your written report, the oral presentation is an opportunity to sell your findings, and clear communication is critical.

Oral presentations are delivered in an audiovisual manner (unlike written reports), which immediately attracts the audience's attention to what is being communicated. Although they are oral, there are almost always visuals to improve the communication of ideas. Effective presentations, academic or business, require preparation and share some important elements. There are several main phases of the presentation that need to be considered:

1. Activities before the presentation
2. The presentation, including the content and the presenting style
3. The wrapping up, at the close of the talk, and activities that round off the presentation

The following discussion expands on the issues that relate to giving an oral presentation.

Before The Presentation

For an effective presentation, you must undertake some groundwork setting up before the actual presentation begins. Only skillful communicators with extensive experience in public speaking can successfully ad lib a presentation or speech with no preparation. When presenting research findings, it is very important that you prepare before you present because you want to incorporate critical issues and present your work effectively. In fact, the less experience you have with oral presentations, the greater the amount of preparation that will be needed. Some things you will have to address are the following:

Know Your Audience

It is *vital* that you know about your audience before you begin your presentation: Try to discover, who is your audience? What do they already know about your topic? What do they want to know about your presentation? And what information do they need to know from your presentation? By answering these types of questions, you can better focus your presentation and pitch it at the level, and with the language, that will satisfy the audience's requirements. This can result in the best use of your presentation time and reduce any misunderstandings between you and your audience. Within your assigned topic, some of the questions identified above may be easily addressed, and the answers will equally affect your presentation style and coverage of the material.

Know Your Surroundings

This can be difficult for those people who may not know where they are making their presentation, but it can be helpful to go to the classroom or lecture theatre before you present to get a feeling for its physical surroundings. To be comfortable in the room where you are going to present, it might be a good idea to see the layout of the room, find out where you will be positioned, and test the sound, projector, computer, software compatibility, Internet access, and so forth. This is especially important with the increased use of multimedia materials. For example, if you develop a PowerPoint presentation, using a version that is more advanced than the version on the computer you are supposed to use, you might have a problem getting your slides to work. Similarly, you should test the online connections if you are having slides that will link to an Internet site and play videos to confirm that the link is available and that you have access to the Internet from the room. This will be an even more important issue if there are time constraints. Thus, the more time you take to set up your talk, the less time you have for the presentation. Being more confident in your physical surroundings can assist you in being more confident in your oral presentation.

Plan Your Presentation

Planning your presentation is extremely important, because a planned presentation is a good presentation, and you must thoroughly know the topic you are presenting. You should plan the structure of your presentation (see The Presentation section), what is to be said (and by whom if it is a group presentation), what is to be shown in a visual format, and how long it will take to present it. (As will be discussed in the next section, practicing the presentation will also ensure that your plan actually works.)

Planning and understanding all areas of your presentation can reduce any nervousness about giving the presentation and make you more confident in what you are saying. However, even if you plan, you may need to be flexible. For example, if one person in your group talks for too long, it might require adjustments in other components of the presentation. It has been said that for presentations "planning begins with your purpose," so from the start, you should be very clear what is the purpose of your presentation (Deakin, 2017; e.g., to

entertain, inform, teach, or persuade). Your professor should help you in planning your presentation.

Practice Your Presentation

As the saying goes, “practice makes perfect.” You may not end up with a perfect presentation, but by practicing your public speaking skills and specific presentations, the result will definitely be a more effective presentation. Especially if you are using any visual aids or slideshow technology (such as PowerPoint, Keynote, or Prezi) that you are not familiar with, it is important to practice before you present as it will look unprofessional to make basic mistakes during your presentation.

You can practice in front of family or friends who will give you feedback as well as experience with the content of what you are saying and the timing of the presentation. Some people may find it more comfortable to practice by themselves, which can be done in front of a mirror or into an audio/video recorder. Again, being more familiar with what you are going to say will give you more confidence and help reduce nerves. Practice also allows for you to see if visuals are clear and whether your talk can be delivered within the time allocated and if the technology works.

Video Example

On the website, there are interviews with students who are giving advice on how they prepared for their oral presentation. What was the main piece of advice from the students? (<http://polonskywaller.com/>)

The Presentation

In business, there are a number of different types of presentations (e.g., impromptu, from memory, and scripted) that can be made for various situations (e.g., a staff member leaving, a new product launch, imparting consumer information, a conference poster session, and revealing research results). When it comes to the actual presentation of your research, there are a number of skills that can be used that will assist in an effective oral presentation (Polonsky & Waller, 2004).

Presentation Content

An important part of an oral presentation is the content of what is being communicated. While planning what will be in the content of your presentation, there are several things to keep in mind, including the following:

Structure the Presentation

Make sure that your presentation has a planned structure, with a clear beginning, middle, and end that flow in a logical way. To begin, explain to the audience what you are going to talk about; then give them the information they want to hear (e.g., the overview, results, and recommendations of the project); and finally, conclude by summarizing what you have told them. Malhotra, Hall, Shaw, and Oppenheim (2007) describe this as the “tell ’em” principle:

1. Tell ’em what you’re going to tell ’em.
2. Tell ’em.
3. Tell ’em what you’ve told ’em.

Make it simple, easy to understand, and within the time limit. To do all this effectively and professionally, it cannot be done without a planned structure. You might even want to have one of your first overheads communicate this to the audience. A possible structure for your business project presentation is found in [Table 14.1](#).

Table 14.1 Presentation Structure

Topic	Issues	Approximate Percentage of the Speech (%)
1. Introduction	Introduce speaker(s) and the structure of the presentation	5
2. Research Problem	Basic background to the topic Research problem, objectives/hypothesis	15
3. Research Design	Explain methodology in nontechnical terms Data collection	10
4. Results	Data analysis Tables with results that answer the research objectives/ hypothesis Interpretation	40
5. Recommendations	Clear recommendations that answer the research problem	20
6. Conclusion	Summing up and emphasizing the main points	10
7. Field Questions	Thank audience and ask for questions	–

You should also be aware of the concentration curve, which states that memory retention is greatest at the beginning and end of any presentation (Ehrenborg & Mattock, 2003). This is particularly true for any talk more

than 5 minutes long. It is, therefore, important that you plan a strong beginning and end with an emphasis on the most important information. Ways to try to create some extra peaks of attention include voice loudness, pitch, and so forth; equipment changes; body language and position; interacting with the audience; telling a joke or story; using videos or visuals; and keeping a clear, flowing structure (Ehrenborg & Mattock, 2003).

Beware of the Beginning

The beginning, or introduction, of your presentation is very important and can set the scene for the rest of your presentation. You should use the time carefully to get the audience's interest regarding the project and the topic. Two things you should *not* do in the introduction stage are to begin with an apology for what you are about to say, or to begin with a joke or story that may not be funny or that could embarrass or offend some audience members. These things can start your presentation on a negative note, which could affect the audience's reaction and negatively affect your energy levels for the rest of the talk. You should be professional at all times during the presentation.

Prepare the Ending

The end of your presentation is just as important as the beginning. By the end, you should have achieved your purpose, satisfied the audience's basic informational needs, summed the main points, and pointed to future action or future research. After a great deal of effort working on your project, it is not appropriate to leave the ending of your final presentation as a spur-of-the-moment grab for words. The ending is your last chance to sell your work and thus is an opportunity to emphasize issues of importance. Everything should be planned from beginning to end.

Be Visual

Visual aids can assist in effective communication during oral presentation because (a) people are visually minded; (b) memory retention is increased; (c) visualization encourages organization; and (d) misunderstandings are less likely to occur (Luck & Rubin, 2007). Visual aids also have the effect of diverting the audience's attention away from the speaker to the visual (illustration, graph, or slide), thereby giving the speaker a few moments in which to relax, gather thoughts, and prepare for the next point (Elliot & Windschuttle, 2001). Designing overheads that communicate information in a visually appealing way is important. Therefore, to help in the explanation of the project results or to emphasize particular points, it is worthwhile to use visual aids. These can include overheads, slides, PowerPoint or Prezi presentations, flip charts, smart boards, chalkboards, whiteboards, magnetic boards, videos, and practical examples. However, if you use these devices, make sure that they assist in presenting the results and are not interfering in, or diverting attention away from, the communication of the intended ideas. This can occur when the slide is crowded with words in a small font that is illegible to the audience, or the images used are irrelevant to the information being explained. Students can also seek to get too innovative with technology and forget to focus on the key information in their presentation.

There are a wide range of presentation tools that you can use, and we have described three that are

frequently used for traditional presentations in [Table 14.2](#). These allow you to do much more than present information, including to structure your thoughts and ideas. Of course, no matter which support tool you use, it is important to ensure that this assists with getting your point across rather than just being a technology that you use. “Cool technology” is, however, no substitute for useful content, and technology needs to support the content.

Table 14.2 Some Alternative Presentation Software

Presentation Program	Company Webpage	YouTube/training
Prezi	http://prezi.com/support/	https://www.youtube.com/user/PreziVideoChannel
PowerPoint	https://products.office.com/en-AU/powerpoint	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNtEcD6U-ew
Keynote	https://www.apple.com/keynote/	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yp2dL7Mx5o https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JejNtuyyMA

As mentioned above, the presentation should be tested and practiced before the final presentation. Also, ensure that these can be delivered within the time constraints of the presentation. Problems can occur, for example, when the information is too cluttered or too small to be read by the audience and where there are too many information-packed slides or too few to keep up with the spoken information. Do *not* just photocopy or cut and paste sections of your written report onto a slide. While it is technically a presentation of your work, a direct copy of tables may not be an effective example for the oral presentation. Presentation slides should be developed specifically to communicate the key issues.

Discussion of the ways to present the results is found in [Chapter 11](#); the same suggestions apply to visuals within an oral presentation. Though you do need to present the findings, you need to present all the associated information as well. Visuals are tools that allow you to emphasize things as well as lead the audience through the discussion. You, therefore, need to make sure that you stick to the key issues, as you can distract the audience by trying to discuss every issue in minute detail. Keeping the discussion focused will allow you to keep the audience focused.

We do caution the group allocating the development of materials or slides to one person in the group, as the presentation materials need to flow with the presentation; therefore, the person presenting the material needs to understand what he or she is discussing. In one case, one member of a group incorporated very sophisticated links and graphics, which the other members of the group did not know how to use. These tools could have made things more informative, but instead, they made the group look disorganized and confused. Having people develop overheads for their section, which are then merged into one style and structure, is better at ensuring a consistent feel as the presenters know their slides.

Student Example

An example of the PowerPoint slides used for one past student presentation is posted on the website. (<http://polonskywaller.com/>)

Presentation Style

Once the content of your presentation has been planned and prepared, effort must be made to ensure that your presentation style effectively communicates your message. Even if you have all the information necessary in your presentation, your overall presentation could be ruined by poor presentation style. Improving your public speaking and presentation skills will increase the effectiveness of your presentation. The following are some suggestions to improve your oral presentation style and prevent it from becoming an embarrassing mess. [Table 14.3](#) provides some links to sources that discuss various aspects of presentations discussed within this section, as does the list of additional support materials at the end of the chapter.

Table 14.3 Video and Online Links to Oral Presentation Tips

“Presentation Skills—How to Improve Your Presentations” (3:24 [min:s])	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bt8YFCveNpY
“Effective Presentation Skills: Using Eye Contact” (4:49)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSZfqCBUpOs
“Making Effective Professional Presentations—Northern Illinois University” (11:00)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbEIO7RvfKg
“10 Simple Rules for Making Good Oral Presentations—Phillip Bourne” (10:00)	http://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.0030077 Video: http://www.scivee.tv/node/2903
Checklist for Oral Presentations	http://www.deakin.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/810686/Checklist-for-Oral-Presentation_Deakin-Study-Support.pdf

Don't Read

Listening to a presentation that is being read word for word is very boring for the audience. Reading hinders the communication process and often can prevent any eye contact between you and the audience, which is very important for holding people's attention. Knowing your material before the presentation and being confident with what you are going to say and when you will say it can reduce the dependence on reading (Waller, 2012). If you need help with remembering information, then use palm cards or visual devices

(e.g., PowerPoint slides or other devices mentioned previously) with the main points written to assist your presentation. Thus, you need to remember to *communicate* the key points to your audience, not to *read* to them. You also need to be careful that you do not try to put too much information on slides, which can result in reading these to the audience. This can also distract the audience as they focus on reading the slides and not listening to the presentation. Therefore, slides should be designed to display key points that guide you through the presentation. If you know your topic, you should be able to expand on these points, thereby making the presentation more interesting.

Speak Up and Be Clear

Your audience must be able to hear and understand what you say, so it is important to speak up and clearly. Everyone in the room should be able to hear you. Speaking quickly or mumbling will only distract the audience and prevent your message getting across. The loudness of your voice may have to differ depending on whether you are presenting in a classroom or a lecture theater, and whether you have a microphone or not. It may then be important, as mentioned above, to visit the room first to test the physical surroundings. Of course, in a group presentation, people may have differing levels of skill and experience. It is always difficult to decide whether everyone should be involved. You might not want to have too many presenters. Issues can also arise when some people are not effective oral communicators. On one hand, not including them in the presentation prevents them from developing their skills, but on the other hand, ineffective presenters can negatively impact the overall grade. There is no easy answer. However, allowing everyone to participate, even in a small way such as introducing the other presenters, will help build skills and teamwork within the group.

Use Your Voice

It is important for a presenter to use his or her voice. There are a wide range of voice qualities involved in oral presentations, including speed, pitch, loudness, and rhythm. To communicate effectively, the speaker must control all these aspects of his or her voice. For example, to communicate less anxiety when speaking, a speaker should lower the pitch, slow down the pace, and use subtle pauses between key points (Elliot & Windschuttle, 2001).

Use Your Body

Body language features, such as position, posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact, may influence the audience's perception of both you as a speaker and the presentation of the results. It is important for you to express confidence in what you have done. Therefore, you should stand erect with you head up (i.e., don't look at the floor), avoid hiding behind objects like a desk or lectern, keep gestures to a minimum but use them effectively to emphasize points, establish various eye contact points, and dress professionally (Ehrenborg & Mattock, 2003). When you take yourself seriously, you are more likely to appear confident and thus be more believable. The audience will know if you are scared or intimidated, as your voice or presentation style will give this away.

Be Interested/Enthusiastic

Show that you are interested in your project results and get the audience interested too. If you are not interested, why should the audience be? This interest and enthusiasm will also encourage and energize you in your presentation style. After undertaking all the project research activities, no matter what the final results are, you do have an interesting story to tell others—so tell them! Try to keep the audience awake, attentive, and involved. Unfortunately, a monotone voice and seeming lack of enthusiasm for the project will quickly be communicated to your audience and make it hard for them to stay engaged, even if they are interested in the topic.

Support Activities and Materials

Students frequently look to differentiate themselves and their presentations. This can be done in various ways. For example, students may dress up to support the theme of the presentation or seek to get audience participation. These activities are generally fine, as long as they are used to support the content being presented and do not distract from the presentation. Therefore, asking people what their favorite sporting team is might be relevant in a presentation on customer loyalty if it is linked up with the sporting team's performance later in the presentation, whereas asking something that does not add to the presentation could seem to distract the audience and take up time, which is usually limited.

The same caution needs to be raised when using video materials within a presentation. Though short “grabs” or advertisements as examples may highlight points, showing a 10-minute video in a 20-minute presentation would be unwarranted. This would reflect 50% of the presentation; therefore, its importance should be commensurate with the time allocated. Thus, make sure your visuals accentuate the points you are trying to make.

A second issue within supplementary materials relates to the question of whether you should distribute materials before or during the presentation (distributing at the end of the presentation will be discussed later). Distributing materials before or during the presentation could be valuable, especially if there are detailed tables that will be discussed, making it easier for the audience to follow the material. On the other hand, distributing the report, a set of PowerPoint notes, or other supplementary information at the beginning could serve to distract the audience. Audiences sometimes spend the time reading this distributed material instead of paying attention to the presentation, which explains the material, thereby reducing the benefit of the presentation.

Be Positive

You should be positive about your results, even if the final results do not give clear findings. Do not be negative, even as a joke, as this can make the audience negative toward your project and you as a researcher.

Keep to Your Time Limit

The audience will lose interest if the presentation is too long and does not hold their interest. Keep to the point, while providing the main information required by the audience, and aim to be finished within your time limit to leave time for questions. You cannot bore someone into understanding, let alone implementing, your recommendations. However, do not be too regimented. We had a group that timed how long slides took and then tried to have these change automatically. Though a nice idea in principle, when one person went over the time allotted and the slides continued at the same pace, the rest of the presentation seemed disorganized when, in reality, that was not the case.

Be Professional

It is important that you present in a formal fashion. While you may not have to present in business attire, it always seems that when students take themselves more seriously, this translates to the audience taking the presentation more seriously. Other issues to consider here relate to how members of your group behave when they are not presenting. If they appear to be disinterested (i.e., talking among themselves), how can you expect the audience to be interested? Your mannerisms are equally important, so things such as chewing gum or being disorganized distract from what you are saying. Other issues such as using a phrase too frequently can also distract in this regard. For example, an audience can get distracted when the presenter frequently says “Um.” Though this word or interjection is frequently used when people are nervous, it is a stylistic issue that you should seek to eliminate; the alternative may be to pause and take a breath.

Wrapping Up

The oral presentation has the benefit of going beyond the written words, as well as being flexible in activities. There are two final activities associated with the oral presentation that frequently occur at the end: dealing with questions and distributing supplementary materials. These two issues will be discussed next.

Dealing With Questions

One key benefit of an oral presentation is that you can directly deal with issues that are not clear to the audience right away. For example, though the material is clear to you, it might not be clear to the audience. In some cases, you are partly graded on how well you deal with questions. If you are given the choice of dealing with questions during the presentation or at the end, we suggest that you always deal with questions at the end. The main reasons for this are that a hard question might fluster you or others in your group, that questions can take up time (i.e., disrupt your rhythm), and that questions are not always about a core point of the presentation. Therefore, dealing with questions at the end allows you to present the material as you intended. The only negative with this approach is that if an essential point is not understood, it could detract from the remainder of the presentation and a quick clarification would have helped. Thus, you may suggest that points of clarification can be raised while you present, but this will require that you carefully manage the points raised and the time allocated to clarify the issues. It is important to realize that questions

are not necessarily an indication that there are problems with the presentation or report. Questions could be an indication that you have stimulated the audience's interest and thus are a positive sign that they want to learn more.

Given that there will most likely be questions, you need to consider how these will be dealt with. This is especially important when there is a group presentation and questions may relate to different individuals' sections. Should the individual who presented the material deal with the question or should others in the group respond? This will partly depend on how sections of the presentation are allocated. For example, the presenter might not have worked on the section of the research related to the question; therefore, someone else might be better able to respond. To ensure there is no confusion as to who answers questions, you might allocate types of questions to individuals in advance, so the group members know who will handle what.

You should consider what questions people might ask, as in some cases it may be clear from your presentation that people might want more information about specific issues. For example, in past presentations, some groups have prepared additional overheads that they used to further explain points on the methodology or findings that they believed might be asked about during question time. When the questions were raised, they then referred to these additional materials. Such preparation indicates that a group really understands the topic and the audience. As mentioned earlier, having questions does not mean the points were not covered well in the presentation but rather may suggest that more depth is needed to explain the issue to some members of the audience. Thus, understanding the audience might indicate the types of questions they may ask.

Another problem that frequently arises in presentations of research is that someone will ask about an issue that you or the group did not consider. This sort of question often is difficult to address off the top of your head, although thinking on your feet is a valuable skill to have. You need to be careful that questions about unanticipated issues do not result in you or others in your group getting overly defensive. If you believe that the individual asking the question has not understood a point, then it is important to clarify the matter. This should be done in a civil and objective fashion; that is, do not attack the person. In some cases, the question is more a comment on what could be another way to analyze the data or a suggestion for future research and thus is designed to assist you in getting the most value out of what you have done, thereby better answering your question.

In some cases, the question asked might relate to an issue that was not considered in the research or that you do not know the answer to. There is nothing wrong with identifying that this is the case and simply informing the person who raised the question that the issue raised should be taken into consideration in future research. It is impossible to cover everything in one research project or the presentation of that research. If the person's question identifies an error, you should also recognize and acknowledge that this is the case. If this does arise, you should try and identify the impact on what you have done and presented. In some cases, errors may simply be related to typos. For example, in one place you mention you interviewed 20 people, and in another it is 25. If the problems are more fundamental, however, it may not be as easy to answer them off the top of your head. Ideally, these errors will not occur, but admitting something is wrong is often better than

trying to defend the error. An easy answer may be, “That is a good point and how it affects the project needs to be considered in future research.”

Table 14.4 Dealing With Questions About Support Materials

“Presentation Skills—Handling Questions With Confidence” (12:01 [min:s])	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQMtttZJG_Y
“How to Answer Questions on Your Presentation” (3:56)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hgk215R2zkc

Distributing Support Materials

The issue of supplementary materials was discussed in regard to distributing them at the beginning or during the presentation itself. It was suggested that distributing these early in the presentation might serve as a distraction, while these same materials distributed at the end of the presentation might serve to reinforce the points made in the presentation—timing is everything. At the end of the presentation, you might want to distribute an executive summary, PowerPoint notes, or even the full report. These materials distributed at this point can be referred to later by the audience when they are thinking about the topic. Some students have distributed other materials, similar to promotional materials. For example, a group discussing a brewery gave each person one of the company’s beers at the end. In another situation, students distributed brochures about the organization the presentation was about. However, if there are several presentations in a row, materials distributed about one project might distract the audience from listening to the other presenters. It should be noted that in a business presentation in which there is a client, distributing materials at the end to reinforce what you have said is exceptionally valuable.

If you wish to distribute materials at the end, it might be beneficial to ask your professor in advance to ensure that he or she does not believe it will distract from other groups’ presentations. You should also make sure you have materials for everyone, especially if it is something everyone might want. For example, we once had a group who gave away free samples from a chocolate firm but then did not have enough for everyone, including their professor who was running the class; thus a good idea ended up looking disorganized. Failing to have enough “samples” in a real business presentation would potentially alienate members of the organization who did not receive the material. You should also stay well away from distributing anything that might be offensive to anyone. For example, a project on a company that produces condoms may be fine, but giving samples away could possibly offend some people in the audience.

Groups and Group Members in Presentations

Throughout the chapter, we mentioned that having group presentations can bring about some additional challenges. We do want to return to these issues again briefly as they are indeed important. Members of

groups have different skills and abilities, and there is nothing wrong with letting people use their strengths. However, in some instances there may be broader objectives of the assignment that need to be achieved. For example, if the requirements of the assignment are that everyone must present, then everyone has to present. If this is not a requirement, then you might want to allocate the presentation tasks among only a few people in the group. Who will present and who will develop the presentation must be considered when you plan your assignment because the best presenter may have other skills that your group wants to use in other phases of the research. This means that choices need to be made as to what roles they should undertake. It would be unfair (or at least inequitable) to ask one person or only a few to take on all roles, even if they are willing to. If some members of the group are less comfortable with presenting, then as a group, you need to ensure that they are well practiced and supported, if they want to or are required to present. A harder issue arises when someone thinks he or she is a great presenter when in fact he or she is. One strategy to deal with this is to videotape a trial presentation, because seeing oneself “on-screen” often identifies deficiencies better than having other members of the group trying to explain any limitations that person may have.

We also referred to the issue of whether you allocate the development of the presentation to one person or whether it should be done as a team effort. As long as the presenter is completely comfortable with the style and content, there is no issue with others developing the materials. For this to occur, it means that the person developing the presentation actively consults the others on the team—that is, a true team effort. An alternative is where the material is developed and then given to the presenter, so he or she can “learn it.” This latter approach is less a team effort and works only if the presenter really can learn and understand the material. It also makes answering questions more difficult, as the presenter may not fully understand the material. A team presentation works best when it is a true team effort, just as all steps leading up to the presentation should be.

Assessment

An oral presentation may play an important part in the assessment of your project. For some student projects, there may be a specific mark for the oral presentation, and this could in fact comprise a majority of the marks. If there is a grade for the presentation, it is even more important for you to take note of what has been discussed in this chapter. Also, you should ask your professor, what is the criteria being used for the presentation mark? Ideally, there should be a marking sheet, which specifies the marking criteria, such as marks for verbal presentation, nonverbal presentation, time management, use of visual aids, and so on. The online materials include a sample of a marking rubric for an online presentation. If you know how you will be marked, then focus on doing the best you can in those areas. For students who are being marked for their oral presentation, we wish you good luck.

Table 14.5 Materials on Making Posters and Poster Presentation

“How to Create a Research Poster: Poster Basics” (webpage and links)	https://guides.nyu.edu/posters
----------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------

“Giving an Effective Poster Presentation” (11:55 [min:s])	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMSaFUrk-FA
“Making an Academic Poster Presentation” (webpage and links)	https://nau.edu/undergraduate-research/poster-presentation-tips/
“Overview—How to Design a Poster Presentation” (3:06)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m02leV4gxgE

Poster Presentations

Another form of presentation that can be undertaken by a student is to present his or her research as a poster. This can also occur at an academic conference or at a special event for students to explain their research findings or project to interested participants—usually located in a room. Each student has put together a poster with some of the main points of his or her research project. The poster is placed on an easel or pin board, and the audience or attendees freely wander among the posters and talk to each student. The student has a short time, sometimes 1 to 5 minutes, to summarize his or her research ideas. Then, the student is asked questions and, we hope, given helpful advice and encouragement. While this may not be as scary as talking to an audience, it is confrontational. And as it is more personal communication, there is the possibility that someone will not like or not be interested in the research project at all. It also means that you may have to repeat the discussion several times, as different people stop to discuss your work with you. However, there are strong benefits for the student who can gain valuable immediate feedback, and there is often more detailed discussion because those talking with you are often highly interested in your topic. There are specialized texts discussing how to develop effective posters (Rowe, 2017), and [Table 14.5](#) provides some links to materials on developing posters.

Table 14.6 Materials on Making Video Presentations

“Create an Effective Presentation (Harvard University)” (3:0 [min:s])	http://blogs.hbr.org/video/2011/03/create-an-effective-presentati.html
“How to Make Your Videos Look More Professional—Create Apple Videos” (8:21)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZP0qKVJOlc
“How to Create Presentation Videos Using Free Online Software” (8:07)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqTGeuGaVj0

Video Presentations

Within most of the discussion in this chapter, we focus on live presentations. But by using the tools identified in [Table 14.5](#) and other systems, students may (depending on the requirements of the assignment) also have the opportunity to create “video” presentations, which are assessed. These have the benefit of allowing you

several “takes” until you get material to flow smoothly. There are also other skills required in regard to editing, drawing in materials from other sources, and so on. We do not focus on these video presentations, but there are a range of good resources that discuss how to do this, and in many instances, the principles related to presentation content and the presentation style described below are the same.

Conclusion

Whatever its role in your project, an oral presentation is an effective tool to reinforce key elements, such as the problem, methodology, main findings, and recommendations. It is vital that you clearly explain your project to a given audience and provide them with the information they require. To make sure that you have an effective presentation, you *must* plan the presentation with a clear, logical structure and be confident with your content and in your presentation style.

Often, students have complained that they are too nervous when presenting. Nervousness is not a completely bad thing, as it helps produce adrenaline, which can assist in your presentation delivery. However, at its worst, it can affect the overall communication of ideas, as well as embarrass you and the audience. There may be a few ways to reduce nervousness before public speaking, such as breathing deeply and relaxing muscles, but as mentioned above, one practical way is to thoroughly plan and understand all areas of your presentation so that you are confident in what you will say. Remember, you have done the research and thus generally know more about the topic than your audience, and the presentation will be over before you know it, so it is important to give it your best shot!

Project Checklist

- * Will there be an oral presentation as part of your project?
- * When will this be presented?
- * Who will be involved in the presentation?
- * What preparation must be done beforehand?
- * Who will be the audience, and what do they want to know?

Table 14.7 Additional Video, Audio, and Interactive Resources

Resource	Brief Description	Link
“PowerPoint Presentations: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly” Steven H. Kaminsky	Webpage outlining some dos and don’ts of using PowerPoint with examples Resource type: website	http://www.shkaminski.com/Classes/Handouts/powerpoint.htm

<p>“Death by PowerPoint”</p> <p>Don McMillan</p>	<p>A humorous perspective on the most common mistakes made when using PowerPoint</p> <p>Resource type: video</p> <p>Duration: 4 minutes</p>	<p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjcO2ExtHso</p>
<p>“How to Avoid Death by PowerPoint”</p> <p>David Phillips</p>	<p>Practical tips for improving the quality of oral presentations and PowerPoint presentations</p> <p>Resource type: video seminar</p> <p>Duration: 21 minutes</p>	<p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOrHxRB3JrQ</p>
<p>“Great Openings & Closings”</p> <p>Deborah Grayson Riegel</p>	<p>Resource type: video tutorial</p> <p>Duration: 88 minutes</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyE1Kz0e--0</p>
<p>“15 Ways to Start a Speech or Presentation “</p> <p>Brian Tracy</p>	<p>Introduces techniques for opening a presentation</p> <p>Resource type: video</p> <p>Duration: 5:30 minutes</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dqmpiS5PzQ</p>

Case Study

The day has come to present the final report to the manager of HPS. The written report has been printed up and will be given to the manager with an oral presentation of the main findings, scheduled in one week. You and your project partner have allocated different parts of the presentation to each other, and the PowerPoint slides were prepared to include the main tables and graphics.

- Are there parts of the presentation that you would prefer to present? Why would you feel more comfortable with some parts than others?
- Think of three questions that the audience might ask about your presentation and develop an answer.
- In the questions, you are asked about an issue that was not the primary focus of your project. How might you respond to this question?
- How will you allocate responding to questions from the audience?

Chapter Questions

1. Describe the structure of your oral presentation.
2. Identify the key points that you want to make in your presentation.
3. How can the presentation be used to leverage your written report?

4. How will you allocate answering questions if you have a group presentation?
5. How would you respond to a question that highlights an error in your assignment?
6. What equipment is available in your presentation room, and what software (including versions) is available?

“Remember, the presentation will be over before you know it, so it is important to give it your best shot!”

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