

ORAL PRESENTATION SKILLS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE



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Preface

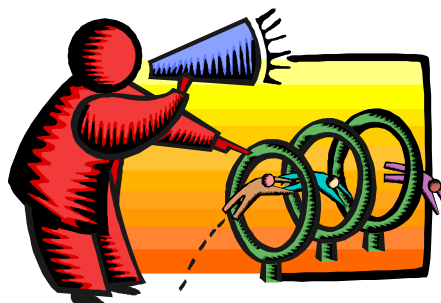
This text, the result of years of experience and research, is intended to be an aid for anyone wishing to speak in public to fellow students, colleagues or other interested groups.

This text provides the essential elements and some tips on preparing and organizing a successful oral presentation in English or any other language. The same structure can also be used to some extent in the context of a written text, i.e. dividing the text into three parts - introduction, development and conclusion. Other useful elements for the written text include expressions to indicate lists, narrative, links and examples. In return, we would ask you the reader and practitioner to send any comments, corrections or questions to make about this document to Carl.Storz@int-evry.fr.

This short paper is divided into several sections, each one being based on a particular point which is important to think about in preparing for and giving an oral presentation. The first one deals with preparation and planning, the most important stage. The second one deals with the structure of the speech and necessary language. The third speaks about visuals and how to make the best use of them. The fourth discusses how to create interest and establish and maintain a relationship with the audience. The fifth deals with body language and finally, the sixth contains a few comments on using the voice and correct pronunciation. Actual language used to express the above is given in *italics*. Comments and questions you could ask yourself in preparing each part are also included. At the end, you will find a bibliography of materials available in the Resource Center of the Department of Languages and Humanities at the INT for further work on oral presentations or listening practice.

It is also important to remember that there are perhaps several formulae for an oral presentation, this being just one.¹ Are you explaining a procedure, trying to convince or persuade, give information or outline possible courses of action? What you are trying to do in your presentation should have a bearing on how you present. There are also cultural aspects to take into consideration in that different communities will react differently to the same presentation: English-speaking as against a French-speaking audience, a scientific forum, a literary group or an assembly of business managers. Each one will expect and react in various ways according to the linguistic, scientific, academic or business culture it is familiar with. Different people speak in different ways in different languages and different conventions depending on to whom, where, when and why they are speaking. All of these questions are, of course, vital to take into consideration during the preparation.

Remember anyone can give a good presentation. Don't worry if you are not naturally extrovert. Preparation and practice can be the keys to success!



¹ Most companies probably offer some kind of training in presenting. Some even have specific guidelines or style sheet for slides. Also over time you will develop your own personal style.

I. PREPARATION AND PLANNING

I.1 ESSENTIAL PREPARATION AND PLANNING CHECKLIST

This is a checklist of the essential elements to consider in preparing and planning an oral presentation. Use it yourself by filling in the boxes on the right under "My Ideas".



<u>QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF</u>	<u>EXAMPLES</u>	<u>MY IDEAS</u>
1. What is the aim?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ü to buy my product ü to adopt my recommendations ü to join the club ü to give me a job 	
2. What is my title?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ü The new Mokia 2001 ü How to reduce production costs ü The INT Chess Club 	
3. Who am I speaking to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ü What are the benefits to the audience of my product/report/speech? ü Are these people the decision makers? ü What do they know of the subject? ü How does this change my approach? ü What sort of questions will they ask me? What are the answers? ü What aspects will they be interested in? 	
4. What are the main points I want to make?	1, 2, 3; first, second, third; point a, point b, point c	
5. What do I want the audience to do after listening to my presentation?	We must invite them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ü to buy my product ü to accept my findings ü to join the club ü to give me a job 	

1.2 Other questions concerning physical aspects.

Who is the audience?

How many people will there be in the audience?

Check beforehand, if you can, the place where you are going to make your presentation.

Where will it take place?

How big is the room?

What equipment is there in the room? What equipment do I need?

Does the equipment work?

Are you going to need a black or whiteboard?

Have you got chalk and / or a felt tip pen?

Do you need an overhead projector or a screen?

Are they in place? Is there a podium? Where are you going to put your notes /papers /transparencies?

Do you need an adapter or extension lead?

Can the information be seen?

Can you present the information and not get in the way?

Do you need a pointer?

Will you need to dim the lights or draw the curtains?

Are you going to need handouts or any other documents? How many? Do they present a good image of you and your company?

When?

What time of day is it? What day is it? Will the audience be more or less receptive when listening?

How long?

In relation to what the audience knows or time constraints, what can I eliminate if necessary?

Other

Am I dressed appropriately? Shoes polished? Are my hands and fingernails clean?



Experienced presenters are able to improvise and adapt to changing circumstances but you may have only one chance to present your information, so be prepared.

II. STRUCTURE OF AN ORAL PRESENTATION

A good oral presentation is well structured; this makes it easier for the listener to follow.

Basically there are three parts to a typical presentation: the beginning, the middle and the end (or introduction, body and conclusion). We are going to look at each part in turn and present the language needed to express both the structure and the content.



II.1 THE BEGINNING OR THE INTRODUCTION

The beginning of a presentation is the most important part. It is when you establish a rapport with the audience and when you have its attention. More detailed techniques can be found in part IV.

II.1.A Get the audience's attention and signal the beginning.

Right. Well. OK. Erm.	Let's begin.
Good. Fine. Great.	Can we start?
Shall we start?	Let's get the ball rolling.
	Let's get down to business.



In English-speaking countries it is not uncommon for the speaker to begin with a joke, an anecdote, a statement made to surprise or provoke in order to gain the audience's attention, to make people want to listen, to feel relaxed and even to introduce the subject. This may or may not be appropriate in your country; you are probably the best judge. Certainly humour is difficult to convey and would not be appropriate in all contexts.

A good technique is to try to get your audience involved in your talk either by asking direct or rhetorical questions. Ask for a show of hands for example, in response to a question or, present information in such a way that the audience can identify with it. You can give an anecdote, unusual or surprising facts, or an illustration from real life could be employed here.



II.1.B Greet audience.

It is important to greet the audience by saying something like:

Hello	ladies and gentlemen.
Good morning	members of the jury.
Good afternoon	esteemed guests
Good evening	members of the board
Fellow colleagues	Mr. Chairman/Chairwoman
Thank you for your kind introduction	

II.1.C Introduce oneself, (name, position, and company)

Do this not only to give important information so people can identify you but also to establish your authority on the subject and to allow the audience to see your point of view on the subject (you are a student, researcher, responsible for, director of, neophyte, layman).²

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce myself.

² It is a good idea to put your name, company's name, company logo, title and date of the presentation on all the transparencies or handouts.

Good morning everyone, I'd like to start by introducing myself.
My name is...

I am a student at the INT
I am a doctoral candidate,
I am X. Y. from 3 Com. I'm the manager of...
I am a researcher from ... I've been working on the subject now for X years...
I've had wide experience in the field of ...

Good morning, my name is Lawrence Couderc. I am a student at the INT and I would like to talk to you today about some of my findings in a study I did on...

Sometimes, especially when invited to speak, the host introduces the guest, gives the same information as above and then gives the floor to the guest speaker.

I am very pleased and proud to introduce ...who is.... He/she is known for...
Now I'll turn the floor over to today's speaker. (to take the floor, to have the floor, to give the floor to someone.)



II.1.D Give title and introduce subject

What exactly are you going to speak about? Situate the subject in time and place, in relation to the audience and/or its importance. Give a rough idea or a working definition of the subject.

I plan to speak about...
Today I'm going to talk about...
The subject of my presentation is...
The theme of my talk is...
I've been asked to give you an overview of...

Cultural aspects may be important here; scientists want to demonstrate their work and findings while managers and humanities people want to share ideas and reflections with their audience. It may be the result of a desire to persuade and convince. It may be comparison of two or more products, plans or proposals.

Why are you going to speak about it?
I have chosen to speak about this because...
I was asked to speak about X because...

Have you set any limits on the scope of your talk? What won't you speak about? It may be very useful to eliminate certain areas before you start so as to avoid confusion or deviation from your main task. It also protects you from criticism later for not covering certain aspects or issues.



Have you estimated the time it will take?³ It is useful to give the listeners some idea of how long you will speak so as to maintain their attention better.
I will not speak about...
I have limited my speech to
My talk will last about 15 minutes

³ Concerning time, professional people are very often pressed for time. The average person's attention span is also very, very short. Conclusion: the shorter the better!

I will speak for 15 minutes.

You may want to give acknowledgements here too. If you have been sponsored, supported or encouraged by a particular firm, organization, professor, etc. you may want to recognise their contribution. Your research and paper may have been the work of a collaborative effort and you should acknowledge this too giving the names of all the participants.

At some point you should ask a question or somehow try to determine the attitude and knowledge of the audience. How do they feel about the subject? You will then have to modify the contents, as you never know exactly what to expect.

Have you ever heard of...?

You may already know...

I feel sure that some of you...

Every day you encounter...

To get the audience's attention and perhaps to find out where they are you could introduce the subject by saying:

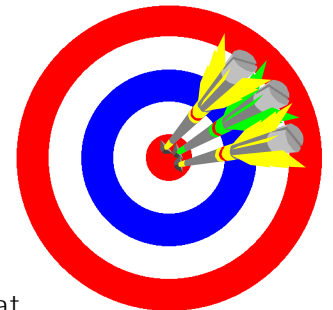
Have you ever heard of/seen X?

You've probably seen countless times...

You may have wondered...

II.1.E Give your objectives (purpose, aim, goals)

The main purpose of an informative speech is to have the audience understand and remember a certain amount of information. You should therefore have two purposes: a general purpose and a specific one. The former is to inform: to give an overview, to present, to summarize, to outline; to discuss the current situation or to explain how to do something or how something is done. The latter is what you want the audience to take away with them after listening to you, what you want them to do, what they should remember.



My purpose in doing this paper is to give you a solid background on the subject of oral presentation skills so that in the future, at the INT or elsewhere, you can deliver a successful speech in front of a group.

What I would like to do today is to explain

to illustrate...

to give you the essential background information on...

to outline...

to have a look at...

What I want my listeners to get out of my speech is...

If there is one thing I'd like to get across to you today it is that...

Once you have established your specific objectives you may go on to formulate your content.⁴

II.1.F Announce your outline.

You want to keep the outline simple so 2 or 3 main points are usually enough.

Concerning grammar the headings of the outline should be of the same grammatical form.

I have broken my speech down/up into X parts.

I have divided my presentation (up) into Y parts.



⁴Change the purpose of the speech (or the time, place and audience) to see how the outline changes.

In the first part I give a few basic definitions.

In the next section I will explain

In part three, I am going to show...

In the last part I would like/want to give a practical example...⁵

II.1. G Questions and comments from the audience.

You should also let the audience know at some point in the introduction when and whether they may ask questions.

I'd ask you to save your questions for the end.

There will be plenty of time at the end of my speech for a discussion.

You may interrupt me at any moment to ask questions or make comments.

Please stop me if you don't understand anything I say but could you keep any specific questions until after I've finished.

II.1.H Make a transition between the introduction and the body.

You should refer to your transparency or outline.

Now let us turn to point one.

Let us now move on to the second part, which is, as I said earlier....

If you are giving a technical presentation a glossary might be useful and avoid unnecessary interruptions. Always explain abbreviations and say acronyms giving their full name when you first mention them and be especially careful with the pronunciation.

⁵ Notice the variety of ways of indicating parts (in the first part, section, part three, the last place) and variety of grammar, i.e. verbal forms that follow.

One student actually began with definitions of key technical words that would come up in the speech. What do you think of that idea?

Depending on the context or specific cultural environment you may or may not want to use a transparency. For example, in a professional corporate context it may look a bit scholastic to project an outline. However, in giving a paper, since the objective is didactic you could put it on a transparency and refer back to it from time to time.

11.2 THE MIDDLE OR THE BODY

11.2.A Content.

What information should you give in your speech? All your information should support your purpose. In most cases you will have to limit the content, as time is usually precious!

11.2.B Quantity

How much information should you give? Enough to clearly develop your ideas. Don't forget to illustrate through examples.

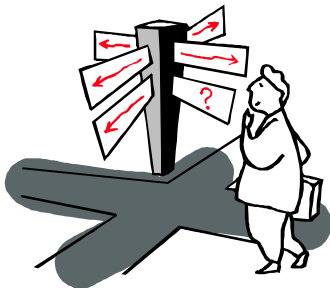
11.2.C Sequencing your ideas.

Here are a few possibilities for organizing your ideas: logical; chronological order; from general to specific; from known to unknown; from accepted to controversial; cause/effect; problem/solution. Whatever sequencing you choose, the headings should be all of the same grammatical form.

11.2.D Keeping the audience's attention

The beginning and the end or the first and last parts of a talk are what listeners will remember best. Think of ways you can keep the audience's attention throughout the rest of the speech. (See part IV.)

11.2. E Signposting or signaling where you are.



Just as when you are driving along a road that you don't know very well, you depend on signs to guide you, you need to guide the listener by using expressions to tell him/her where you are going. That is to say, first announce what you are going to say (give an example, reformulate etc.) and then say what you want to say. This is very like verbal punctuation. Indicate when you have finished one point and then go on to the next one. It is redundant in text but very useful in oral presentations.

Experienced presenters will also clearly pause, change their stance and the pitch of their voice as they move from one part of a presentation to another.

Listing information

Lists are often a necessary evil. Vary your language whenever possible and avoid reading directly.

There are three things we have to consider: one, two, and three.

A, B, C.

Now let us look at the first aspect which is...

First of all,...

In the first place...⁶

Linking ideas, sections/making transitions

Indicate the end of one section and the beginning of the next.

That's all I would like to say about... (subject of part A) and now let us turn to

Now that we've seen... let us turn to...

⁶ **Do not use, in a first time, at first, at last, firstable.**

Outlining options. If there are alternative ways of looking at a topic or proposal, outline them to show you are familiar with the different ways of dealing with a situation.

There seem to be two possible ways of dealing with this...

We've looked at this from the point of view of the manufacturer but what about if we were to...

A number of options present themselves at this point...

If what you are dealing with demands a comparison of strengths and weaknesses indicate clearly the different aspects and underline the points you feel are important or secondary.

What exactly are the benefits?

On the plus side we can add...

This is not the only weakness of the plan...

We cannot ignore the problems that such an action would create...

We do not need to concern ourselves with...

Of lesser interest are...

To be clear and concrete. Use examples, rephrasing, summaries etc.:

To give an example:

Now let's take an example.

An example of this can be found...

To illustrate this...

Let's see this through an example.

For example,

For instance,

e.g.

To rephrase:

Let me rephrase that,

In other words

Another way of saying the same thing is

That is to say

i.e.

To summarize:

To summarize

To sum up,

Let me summarize by saying

So that concludes my overview

In conclusion

Briefly said

In short,

What I've tried to show in this part...

To recap what we've seen so far...

To emphasize

What is very significant is...

What is important to remember...

I'd like to emphasize the fact that...

I'd like to stress the importance of...

to highlight...

to underline...

What I tried to bring out...

What we need to focus on...

To refer to what you have said previously:

As I have already said earlier...

As we saw in part one...

To repeat what I've said already...

To refer to what you will say:

We will see this a little later on.

This will be the subject of part 3.

We will go into more detail on that later.

For now, suffice to say...

To refer to what an expert says:

I quote the words of ...

In the words of...

According to...

Here I'd like to quote...

As Mr. X says in his book...

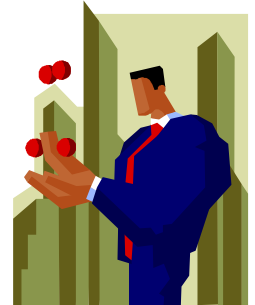
There is a famous quotation that goes...

To refer to common knowledge:

As you all may well know...

It is generally accepted that...

As you are probably aware (of)...



11.3 THE END OR CONCLUSION

The end of a talk should never come as a surprise to an audience; it needs special consideration.



11.3.A Content

The end or the conclusion of your talk should include four parts: a brief reminder of what you tried to show in your speech and how you tried to do so, a short conclusion, thanks to the audience for listening, and an invitation to ask questions, make comments or open a discussion.⁷

At the end you should briefly summarize your speech in a few lines to make sure the audience has retained the main points. Alternatives are: to state the point of the speech; give the essential message to retain; list the main points and what you want the audience to remember; review informally or indirectly by using a quote, a comparison or example.

Then you should give some kind of conclusion. That is to say you should give a message that logically comes out of the ideas developed in your speech. This could be a commentary, the lessons learned, some recommendations, or the next steps. You could also make a call to action; the audience should have to do something.

Thirdly, thank the audience for being there.

Finally, ask for questions and comments or invite a discussion. If you choose the former, you put yourself in a superior position compared to the audience and should be considered as an expert. You will need to be very prepared intellectually and psychologically to transfer control to the audience and be able to answer any questions. However, in the case of the latter, you put yourself more or less on equal terms with the audience and do not have to be the expert with all the answers! The audience may have some clear ideas or some practical knowledge about the subject themselves!

Naturally you need to signpost the end of your talk. This may take the form of a recapitulation of the main points.

I'd like to summarize/sum up

At this stage I would like to run through/over the main points...

So, as we have seen today....

As I have tried to explain this morning BT finds itself in....

Or there may be recommendations or proposals that you wish to make;

As a result we suggest that...

In the light of what we have seen today I suggest that...

My first proposal is...

Above all when you conclude do not do it abruptly or as if surprised to get to the end of your talk.

In conclusion I would like to say that...

My final comments concern...

I would like to finish by reminding everyone that...

⁷ Do not introduce new information.

You may at this point wish to distribute a vocabulary list or more detailed information that you wish to make available.

I've prepared a slim folder of the proposals...

In the sheets that are now being distributed you will find a breakdown of the...

And finally you may well have to deal with questions.

I'd be happy to answer any questions....

If there are any questions please feel free to ask.

Thank you very much for your attention and if there are any suggestions or comments

11.3.B Dealing with difficult questions⁸

1. Make sure you understand the question.

Ø Ask a question to see if you understand

Ø Repeat the question in your own words to check that you have understood.

Ø If not, ask the questioner to repeat

2. In answering:

Ø delay the answer (ask for time and/or repeat the question)

Just a minute please. What is a...?

How can I put it?

I'm glad you asked that question.

That's a good question/point/remark.

Can I answer that question later?

Ø admit that you are not responsible.

I saw that in the work of...

Ø agree but give an alternative point of view

I agree with you but there is another way of looking at it.

11.4 SUMMARY OF PART II

To give a successful presentation and at the same time a good image of yourself or your firm, careful preparation and organization are required. You need to take into consideration who you are speaking to, when, where, and why, as all of these details will have an impact on your structure and content. A well-structured speech with a step-by-step approach is one that is easy to follow. Besides structure, it is also necessary to be relatively repetitive. A good 'rule' is announce what you are going to say, say it and finally, say what you've said.

Be careful with the figures. Pronunciation (proper names, cognates, numbers) and presentation are important, practice beforehand! This is equally important for the key words of your presentation. It is particularly annoying for the audience to hear the same word mispronounced repeatedly.

In addition to careful preparation - good structure and vocabulary – and organization, a message passes in other ways. According to experts 55% of the message is non-verbal. Using images (visuals); body language and voice are extremely important and will be examined in the following sections.

⁸ Palmer is very good on tactics to employ in dealing with difficult questions. (See bibliography)



III. VISUALS⁹

What are visuals?

- Ø graphs
- Ø maps
- Ø drawings
- Ø models
- Ø objects

charts
photos
images
video/film



What media are used?

- Ø transparencies/slides
- Ø Power Point[®] slides¹⁰
- Ø video projection/projector
- Ø handouts

It is often a good idea to give out a paper copy, called a handout, an outline, a glossary of key words, sources, any other visuals you plan to use, so people can take them away, not waste time in taking notes on key concepts.

What is the vocabulary of the equipment used?

- Ø blackboard, whiteboard, paperboard
- Ø chalk, felt tip pen or marker, eraser
- Ø podium, lectern, overhead,
- Ø overhead projector system (OHP)
- Ø screen
- Ø pointer
- Ø microphone, mike
- Ø opaque projector

What should you put on a visual?

- Ø key words
- Ø technical words
- Ø lists
- Ø examples
- Ø diagrams
- Ø charts

Vocabulary of graphs/chart

- Ø line graph (algorithmic, linear curve, line)
- Ø bar chart
- Ø flip chart
- Ø diagram
- Ø pie chart (segment, slice of the pie)
- Ø flow chart
- Ø organization chart

⁹ We have tried to give an overview of visuals here. For more information on describing visuals, especially graphs and the movement of the curve on a graph, see Simon Sweeney in bibliography

¹⁰ There is some resistance to the use of Powerpoint[™] everywhere. Criticism includes the pre-formatting, ubiquity, bulleted ideas, boredom, lack of personal style and so on. (See Parker, Ian. "Absolute Powerpoint". *The New Yorker*, May 28, 2001, pp. 76-83.)

Why use visuals?

- Ø to focus the audience's attention
- Ø to illustrate points easier to understand in visual form but difficult in a verbal form (e.g. statistics)
- Ø to reinforce ideas
- Ø to change focus from aural/oral to visual
- Ø to involve and motivate the audience
- Ø to involve all the senses
- Ø to serve as logical proof
- Ø to save time and avoid putting information on a board
- Ø to avoid turning your back to the audience when writing on a board
- Ø to help the speaker

Text to put on a visual

- Ø name, conference/company and company logo, date, title of presentation. Try to do this consistently but not to the detriment of a table or image.
- Ø full sentences are not to be used, unless a quote is given, give round figures
- Ø N.B. keep text to a minimum

Size, layout, font (typeface) and size, colors.

- Ø Size - A4
- Ø Layout should be pleasant and easy to read: horizontal/landscape layout is preferable.
- Ø Fonts: Ariel, Helvetica, Times New Roman, Futura, Optima, Verdana, New Century, Schoolbook and Courier. Some companies impose a particular style.
- Ø Font size - maybe 20 or more depending on the size of the room you will be speaking in. A good idea is to use different sizes for different types of text: i.e. 20 for main headings, 16 for subheadings, 14 for other text.
- Ø Use CAPITAL LETTERS, bold face, italics, underlining, **reverse** (white on black) or **shading** to highlight.
- Ø If possible, use color transparencies (unless you are just showing text).

How many?

One every two minutes is sufficient. To show too many slides is worse than none at all.

General and miscellaneous tips.

Have the slides ready and in order.

Check to see if the OHP is plugged in, in working order and in focus.

Test the visual to see if people at the back of the room can see it.

Stand to the side of the screen and face the audience.

Mask to reveal only what you want the audience to see.

Use a pointer or a pen to draw attention to a specific point.

Visuals should be adjusted to the audience.

Visuals should supplement the spoken message.

Large enough for everyone to see. (Good idea to give out a paper copy, i.e. a handout, not at the same time though, as the audience may not look at you)

Don't display too much information, too many colors or typefaces.

Does the layout work?

Are there any spelling mistakes or grammatical errors? Remember they are going to be in plain view all the time of your visual.

How should you present a visual in a presentation?

It is not sufficient just to put up a transparency on the screen and expect the audience to turn its attention to it, to understand it and make the link with what you are saying. (See Giving Presentations Unit. 4) We would suggest the following strategy:

It is important to prepare your audience for what they are going to see. This keeps the audience on their toes and gives you the opportunity to position your visual correctly.

Let's look at the current distribution of the market, as you can see...

I'm going to show you now the most recent figures available...

My next slide concerns the method by which...

Remember to draw the attention of the audience to the points that you wish to highlight but avoid redundancy by describing everything that is in the visual!

As you can see....

The first line of figures is the most revealing...

Notice/observe how the increase has had an effect on the...

What is important here is the way that...

You can also try to rephrase your point to give it emphasis, giving the audience time to absorb the information.

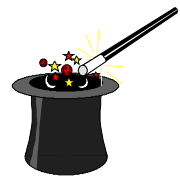
In other words the number of employees has a direct effect on the...

Or to look at it in another way every time you...

That is to say no matter what technique is used, the results remain

IV. CREATING INTEREST AND ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AUDIENCE

Do not assume the audience will be interested in what you have to say. Even if they are, minds wander and get distracted. From the very beginning you need to create interest and continue doing so throughout your speech. You need to put everything on your side to promote knowledge acquisition. In informing an audience you have to adjust to what people think, to constraints, maintain a dialogue (and not a monologue) and use attractive supporting materials. How can you do this?



Ø Arouse listeners' interest from the beginning. In the introduction show how your subject or what you are going to say affects or may affect their lives. In other words, make it personal.

Ø Other techniques are:

- Give an unusual fact or statistic.
- Use words like you, we, us, our.
- Illustrate with a real life story or anecdote.
- Ask the audience to do something. "Raise your hands if you know."
- Ask the audience direct or rhetorical questions. (See below)

Ø Other tips:

- Be brief and clear in giving the subject and purpose.
- The speaker's attitude is important - knowledge, personality, openness. Be lively and enthusiastic.
- Use a variety of media sources.

Rhetorical questions

What is a rhetorical question? A question that you ask without expecting it to be answered. Why use such a question? In using such a question the speaker appears to be having a dialogue with the listeners. It also should catch their attention.

Have you ever seen/heard/experienced...?
How can we explain this?
What does that mean?
What can be done about that?
What does this imply for you, as a consumer?



Emphasizing/highlighting

Ø Say something is important.
The important thing to remember is...
The essential element is...

Ø Stress verbs with your voice.
We experimented with the concept over a period of three years.

Ø Add auxiliary verbs for emphasis.
We did see a noticeable difference.

Ø Change the word order
What I'd like to show today is the difference between the two products.
Good it may be, easy it isn't.

Ø Repetition
As I've said before...
Let me repeat

Ø Tripling, chunking and other techniques of word play and emphasis should be used as you become more fluent and confident.¹¹
This method is clearer, cheaper and more consistent.
Quality is not something that affects the bottom line, it is the bottom line.

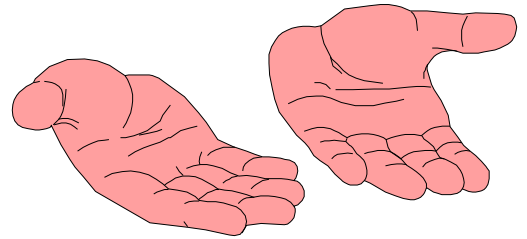
¹¹ For more of this see Mark Powell in bibliography.

V. BODY LANGUAGE

The golden rule is "Be natural and relax!"

What is body language?

Eye contact, facial expressions, posture, movements, gestures.



Why is it useful?

It is a natural part of communication:

- Ø to clarify meaning; it is very visual
- Ø to vent nervousness
- Ø to maintain interest
- Ø to emphasize and regulate

Below are just a few examples of both positive and negative body language:

Positive body language

- Ø eye contact to keep audiences' attention (Asian audience might feel aggressed.)
- Ø facial expressions should be natural and friendly. Don't forget to smile.
 - raise eyebrows to show surprise
 - open eyes wide
 - squint your eyes
 - knit your eyebrows to show consternation or puzzlement
- Ø posture – stand straight but relaxed (do not slouch or lean)
- Ø movement - to indicate a change of focus, keep the audience's attention
 - move forward to emphasize
 - move to one side to indicate a transition
- Ø gesture
 - up and down head motion or other movements to indicate importance
 - pen or pointer to indicate a part, a place (on a transparency).
 - shrug of the shoulders to indicate "I don't know!"
 - hands - back and forth = two possibilities, more or less
 - arm - movement back, forth

Negative body language

- Ø loss of eye contact: looking at notes, looking at screen, at the board, at the floor
- Ø don't stare, or look blankly into people's eyes
- Ø swaying back and forth like a pendulum
- Ø back turned to the audience
- Ø nervous ticks
- Ø hands in pockets

VI. VOICE AND PRONUNCIATION

Correct pronunciation is important if one is to be understood correctly. Incorrect pronunciation is perhaps the first cause of communication breakdown. If the listener is not accustomed to the speaker's native language, he/she will not understand a mispronounced word. Mispronunciation also tires the listener's ear and he/she will perhaps even stop trying to understand the speaker if it becomes too difficult.

VI.1 What is pronunciation?



There are two important aspects of pronunciation of individual words, word stress and the individual sounds themselves called "phonemes".¹² A suggestion: make sure you know how to correctly pronounce at least the key technical words or words that you repeat over and over again in your speech.

Just as in the case of individual words in English a particular syllable receives stress, so do particular words in a sentence. Sentence stress concerns stressing particular words in a sentence usually at regular intervals.¹³ English speakers stress words that are important for meaning such as: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, negatives, demonstratives and interrogatives. Unstressed ones include articles, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, and conjunctions.

Linking - (as in French) between a consonant and the following vowel and grouping words into thought groups - needs to be practiced.¹⁴

In the area of pronunciation, the basic problems of French speakers are:

1. Word and sentence stress - not all syllables in a word or in a sentence are stressed equally.
2. In unstressed syllables the vowel often becomes shorter (schwa: e.g. man in German).
3. Long English sounds are much longer than corresponding French sounds and the short sounds of English are shorter than French short sounds.
4. The voice is used to indicate meaning, and intonation is higher or more glided in English.

VI.2 Voice

The voice, or more precisely the qualities of the voice, should be used to its/their fullest.¹⁵ Qualities include loudness, speed (fast or slow), variety, pitch (high or low), silent moments or pauses. The voice is important:

- Ø to indicate importance, meaning
- Ø to create atmosphere and to avoid sounding monotonous and putting the audience to sleep!

¹² See Carl Storz. *English Pronunciation Notebook for Telecommunications Students*. Evry: INT, 1993.

¹³ For excellent practice work in the context of everyday expressions, see Carolyn Graham. *Small Talk Jazz Chants*. Oxford: OUP, 1986

¹⁴ See Judy B. Gilbert. *Clear Speech*. Cambridge: CUP, 1984.

¹⁵ See Tony Lynch. *Study Listening*. London: CUP, 1986.

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

For extra practice in preparing for an oral presentation (or English in general) we have used and would suggest the following titles, many of which are all available in the Language Resource Center. (E103)

On oral presentation:

Course materials for learners of English:

Comfort, Jeremy and Derek Utley. (York Associates) *Effective Presentations*. Oxford: OUP: 1996.

Ellis, Mark & Nina O' Driscoll. *Giving Presentations*. Harlow: Longman, 1992.

Howe, Brian. *Visitron, the Language of Presentations*. Harlow: Longman, 1985.

Lynch, Tony. *Study Listening*. London: CUP, 1986.

Powell, Mark. *Presenting in English*. Hove: LTP, 1996.

Sweeney, Simon. *English for Business Communication*. Cambridge: CUP, 1997.

Other books on oral presentation

Glickstein, Lee. *Be Heard Now!* New York: Broadway Books, 1998.

Hendricks, Dr. William et al. *Secrets of Power Presentations*. Franklin Lakes, N.J.: Career Press, 1996.

Slutsky, Jeff and Aun, Michael. *The Toastmasters International Guide to Successful Speaking*. Chicago: Dearborn Financial Publishing, 1997.

Wilder Claudyne and Jennifer Rotondo. *Point, Click & Wow! A Quick Guide to Brilliant Laptop Presentations*. 2nd Edition. Hoboken, N.J.: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

On pronunciation and the voice:

Gilbert, Judy B. *Clear Speech*. 2nd Edition Cambridge: CUP, 1993.

Graham, Carolyn. *Small Talk Jazz Chants*. Oxford: OUP, 1986.

Powell, Mark. *Presenting in English*. Hove: LTP, 1996. See "Using Your Voice" (Section 3)

Rodenburg, Patsy. *The Right to Speak: working with the voice*. London: Methuen, 1992.

Storz, Carl. *English Pronunciation Notebook for Telecommunications Students*. Evry: INT, 1993.

Many Web sites (mostly give more or less the same information) (checked 9/2002)

http://web.mit.edu/writing/Writing_Types/oral.html

<http://fbox.vt.edu/eng/mech/writing/workbooks/visuals.html>

(on visuals)

<http://rpi.edu/dept/llc/writecenter/web/presentation.html>

<http://writing.colostate.edu/references/speaking.cfm>

<http://business.englishclub.com/presentations.htm>

Famous speeches

- Speech Archives "Hear the Words that Changed the World" -. You can listen to important speeches in (especially US) history.

Poster sessions (A poster is a particular type of presentation and not jsut a visual.)

<http://writing.colostate.edu/references/speaking.cfm/posters/>

<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/writingcenter/ppt/index.htm>

On body language

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Bouvet, Danielle. La dimension corporelle de la parole. Paris: Peeters, 2001.
Bull, Peter. "What does gesture and to the spoken word? In Barlow, H. et al. Images and Understanding. Cambridge: CUP, 1990. (INT 9.54)
Cabin, Philippe. La Communication. Etat des savoirs. Paris PUF, 1998. (INT 9.492 CAB).