

Tips for giving presentations at university

Whether you are presenting in-person or remotely, in a group or individually, the following advice will help you prepare and deliver a successful academic presentation.

Content and Purpose

1. Be clear about your aim. For example, is it to inform, persuade, explain, evaluate or something else? Check the brief and instructions carefully. This will help you to select, prepare and organise the relevant content.
2. If you are being assessed for this presentation, check which criteria are being used to grade you and work out what your tutor is looking for.
3. Be aware of the diverse needs of the audience. What do they need to know? How will they best understand it? What are they likely to know already? Keep inclusivity at the heart of your presentation.

Preparation and Practice

1. If you are presenting as a group, you will need to spend time together on organisation and preparation. Set up a group in Microsoft Teams for communicating, gathering and shaping your material. Take time to check that everybody understands the brief and ensure a fair allocation of the preparation tasks.
2. Brainstorm what you already know about your topic and identify gaps in your knowledge.
3. Select your sources, read and research to find out more. Consider what to include and what is less relevant.
4. Decide how many main points you want to include in your presentation and how you want to organise them. This could be thematically, chronologically or by the relative importance of the information.
5. Prepare your notes in a style that will help you deliver clearly and fluently.
6. Be confident with key academic vocabulary by checking meaning and pronunciation in advance.
7. Practise the full presentation. Ask for specific and constructive feedback from others and act on it.
8. If you are presenting remotely, check the technical aspects of this in advance so you feel confident. If you are presenting in person, check the room and the acoustics.

Visuals

1. Remember that visuals are for support; they are not a substitute for content.
2. Make sure your visuals are accessible and inclusive of all members of the audience. If you are not sure about this, consult the [accessibility checklists](#) or complete the Digital Skills training on [Creating Accessible Resources](#).
3. Find out more about getting the best out of PowerPoint or Sway for presentations by checking the Digital Skills resource: [Designing Presentations using Microsoft PowerPoint and Microsoft Sway](#).

4. If you are creating visuals as a group, make sure you agree on the format and style so that the whole presentation is coherent.

Delivery

1. Make sure your introduction includes a brief overview of what you are going to include in your talk.
2. Speak clearly and slowly. Vary your pace. Slow down for main points and pause so the audience can absorb key information.
3. If you are presenting in-person, be aware of non-verbal communication. Consider what your body language is saying to the audience. Keep an open posture, facing the audience.
4. If you are presenting remotely and not able to see your audience, pause to check with the audience that your pace is appropriate.
5. If you are presenting as a group, be strict with timings and hand over smoothly.
6. Recap main points in a brief summary at the end of your presentation.

Coping with potential problems and questions

1. If presentations make you nervous, find some relaxation techniques that work for you, such as slow breathing or mindfulness.
2. Remember that issues such as going blank, missing out a point or experiencing technical hitches are common. Try not to let them throw you off course.
3. When you are asked a question, pause, then restate the question so that the rest of the audience know what was asked. Answer to the best of your ability. If you are not able to answer, be honest, but suggest a source where the answer could be found.

Post-presentation

1. Reflect on your strong and weak points.
2. Ask for feedback and use this constructively.
3. Identify one or two areas for improvement.
4. Be positive; this is a learning process!