



**Harper Adams
University**

Guide to Effective Speaking



Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Initial Preparation	1
2.1 Objectives	2
2.2 Audience Analysis	2
2.3 Venue Preparation.....	3
2.4 The Plan	3
2.5 The Prompts	3
3. Content and Structure	4
3.1 Stage 1 Brainstorming / Mind mapping (see study guides)	4
3.2 Stage 2 Structuring and Selecting.....	4
3.3 Stage 3 Illustration	5
3.4 Stage 4 Opening and Closing a Presentation.....	6
3.4.1 Opening.....	6
3.4.2 Closing	6
4. Visual Aids	7
4.1 Preparation of Visual Aids – slides.....	7
4.2 Common Mistakes	8
4.3 Questions	8
4.3.1 The Basics.....	8
4.3.2 Handling Difficult Questions.....	8
5. Putting Yourself Across	9
5.1 Coping with nerves.....	9
5.2 Common Mistakes to avoid.....	10
References:.....	11
Appendix 1	12

1. Introduction

Many skills are needed to be effective, but the ability to communicate ideas in a coherent and convincing manner is one of the most important skills you can develop.

Want to graduate? Want a good job? Want to be understood? The key to answering these questions positively will be in your ability to communicate your ideas. Think about what links Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey – they can all speak effectively. As a student you will undertake several presentations throughout your course so it is important to get it right from the beginning.

Whether you are dealing with one person or a hundred the capability to present your ideas and concepts with the maximum impact is essential.

2. Initial Preparation

Before diving straight into your presentation it is important to take a step back from the content and take time to consider the presentation as a whole – Why? Who? Where? When? How?

Why?	Decide on the Objective
Who?	Research the Audience
Where?	The Venue –Prepare the environment
When?	The Plan
How?	The Prompts



Grant (1997) recommends that if you can answer the following questions you are already half way there:-

- Is the object of your presentation to inform? Persuade? Encourage dialogue?
- Can you, in 60 seconds, write down the most important points you want your audience to remember?

- What about the audience. Are they experts in the subject? Can you judge their expectations?
- Do you know when and where the presentation will take place?
- How will you present? From notes? From memory? Use visual aids?

2.1 Objectives

When you are asked to do a presentation the first thing you must do is to understand why you are doing the presentation, so you must decide on the general and specific objectives.

General Objectives

- To inform (Aids awareness)
- To promote or sell (A new product launch)
- To entertain (An after dinner speech)



Specific Objectives

- Depend entirely on the subject matter

Setting clear objectives helps:-

- Clear the presenter's mind
- Allows content of the presentation to be based on achieving the objectives
- Measure for success – were the objectives achieved?

2.2 Audience Analysis

After deciding on the objectives, thinking about the audience is the next stage in preparing to give a successful presentation. It is important, as a presenter, that you know some details about who you are presenting to. Try to find out the following information about your audience.

Size:	5, 50, 500
Demographics:	Age, gender etc.
Where are they from?	Work, colleagues, industry etc.
Attitudes, beliefs, values:	Attitude to the subject & you as a presenter
	Are there any hidden agendas?
What do they know?	About the topic/are there any experts?

How to find out?

- Obtain a list of people (with their titles)
- Try to talk to some of the audience beforehand



2.3 Venue Preparation

Never take the venue for granted always go to the venue room in advance. As the presenter it is up to you to check, because at the end of the day it is you up at the front if things go wrong.

Check the seating arrangement, is it suited to the room, audience size, the purpose of the presentation. Will everyone be able to see you and any visual aids you are using, and is it going to be comfortable for the audience? Remember to check the temperature and ventilation for the room, there is nothing worse than sitting through a presentation in a hot room.

Remember to check the equipment, the sound system, podium, AV equipment (OH) / data projector) and lighting. Also make sure you know how to use the equipment.

Don't forget Getting there (do you know exactly where it is, traffic and parking). Always arrive early.

2.4 The Plan



The plan covers two aspects:

- 1 The time up to the presentation. Decide on a timetable of when you are going to prepare the presentation include visual aid preparation etc.
- 2
- 3 The length of your presentation. It is important to plan your presentation so it doesn't overrun. Also anticipate varying concentration levels from your audience.

2.5 The Prompts

The decision here is how to do the presentation:

- Use /don't use visual aids
- Deliver from script / notes / memory



The vast majority of presenters dislike using scripts, but they can be useful if you need to choose your words with care, or they have legal implications. Notes on cards or paper are a means of reminding a presenter of the main points of the presentation. When using notes remember to write good notes, make every effort to keep t your notes and always practice. If you are going to present from memory always plan in advance the structure of the presentation and provide the content from memory.

Whichever prompt you use, always remember to get “eye contact with the audience” and practise before the presentation.

3. Content and Structure

Now you have completed your initial preparation it is time to start on the actual content of the presentation. Almost all presentations will fail unless careful thought has been given to the subject matter. “Effective Preparation” is the key for a successful presentation. It is very difficult for the audience to concentrate on an unstructured rambling presentation especially if the main points are unclear.

The following stages could usefully be used when preparing a presentation, however this is only one method, you need to find a method that suits you.

3.1 Stage 1 Brainstorming / Mind mapping (see study guides)

Take an A4/A3 plain sheet of paper and state the objective at the top and main theme in the centre. Start at the circle and write down any ideas/thoughts on the subject letting your mind be as free as possible. Now group common themes together. See Figure 1 for an example of mapping.

3.2 Stage 2 Structuring and Selecting

Most people will now have amassed a large number of items. You need to look through those and select those you are going to use. For example for a 30 minute presentation you should have no more than 4/5 main points. When selecting information always remember your objective, the audience and length of your presentation.

Having decided what you are going to say you need to structure it into a format so that the audience will listen to every word.

Think

- Tell'em what you are going to tell'em
- Tell'em
- Tell'em what you've told them.



Tip: Listen to a news bulletin

3.3 Stage 3 Illustration

Illustrations can be used to simplify confusing figures into easy to understand charts and also you could give real life examples to back up your presentation/view.

Objective

To inform a group of 17 year olds, who are about to buy a car, the factors to consider?

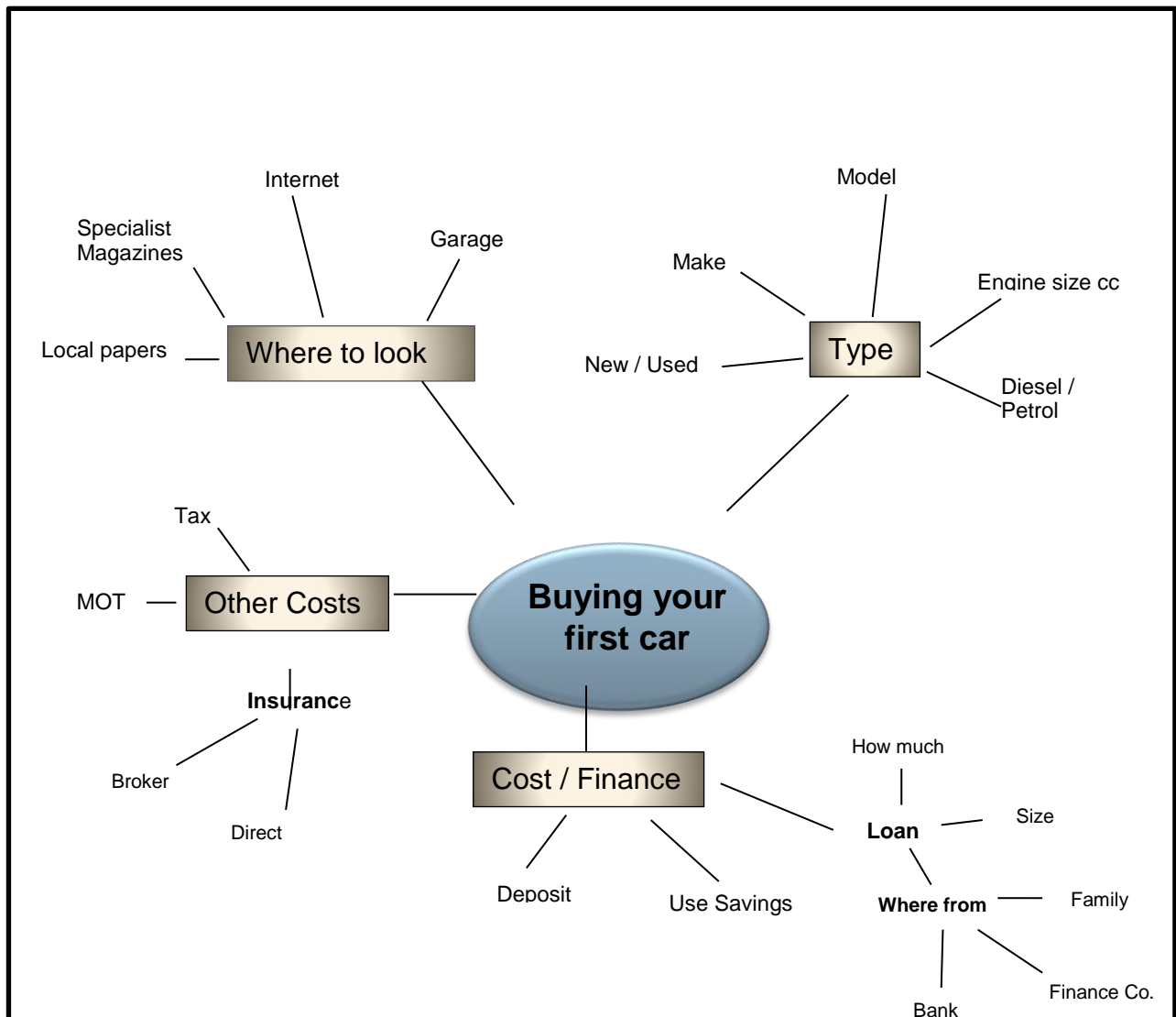


Figure 1 Buying your first car – an example of mapping

3.4 Stage 4 Opening and Closing a Presentation



3.4.1 Opening

What do you say? How do you get started?
Remember first impressions are often lasting impressions.

INTRO

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Interest | - Capture the audience's attention |
| Need | - Why does the audience need to listen |
| Title | } - Tell'em what you are going to tell'em |
| Ratings | |
| Objective | - State your objective (explicitly / implicitly) |

Ways to begin include:-

- | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Quotation | Joke | Rhetorical |
| Story/Anecdote | Statistic | question |
| Definition | An example | Fact |
| AV aids | Historical event | Title of speech |

or ask the audience a question, show your knowledge of them or develop a common bond

Always write your introduction last and use one which suits **YOU**.

3.4.2 Closing

The conclusion needs to summarise your presentation, provide closure and make a good lasting impression.

Remember

- Make it sound like a conclusion (“to conclude.....”)
- Let the audience know in advance (“the final point before I conclude....”)
- Make it the right length (5/10% of your presentation – sum up and sit down)
- Write it out
- Make the last words memorable (“I have one final thought to leave you with..” or “Let’s eat”)
- Provide an opportunity for questions (either an informal/formal Q&A session)

4. Visual Aids

The term visual aid encompasses a wide range of items. The most common types are slides (via OHP or data projector) flip chart, models, films and video and props. Visual aids will help the audience as they

- get their attention
- can give variety
- break up a long presentation
- can illustrate complex information
- can help the presenter to be more professional and acts as a prompt of what comes next.



4.1 Preparation of Visual Aids – slides

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Visual aids should complement your presentation- Don't forget to leave enough time to plan and produce your visual aids. |
| Keep them simple | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Graphs/charts will usually have more impact than a table of figures- Limit words (recommendations range from 8 to 25 words/slide)- Be consistent |
| Give time | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Let the audience have time to look at the slides- Don't leave a slide up that doesn't relate to what you are saying. |
| Talk to the audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Talk to the audience not screens, flipcharts or slides etc. |
| Check Equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Check the equipment before the presentation- Make sure you can use the equipment |
| Rehearse | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Practise until you are completely familiar with the content and you are happy using them. |

4.2 Common Mistakes

- Too many words / too much information on slides
- Spelling errors
- Inconsistent text (font, colour, size, upper / lower case)
- Not relevant to presentation
- Reliance on your visual aids (ALWAYS be prepared to give your presentation without your visual aids)

(See 'What makes a good PowerPoint' hand out – Learning Hub))

4.3 Questions

Question time can be a testing time. It gives the audience the chance to understand any point(s) they are unsure about or do not understand. Questions are usually best left until the end of the presentation, however make sure you inform your audience that there will be a question and answer session so they can jot down any questions they have throughout the presentation.

4.3.1 The Basics

- Always anticipate questions, think about the audience's interests, knowledge and attitude to your subject
- Listen to questions and seek clarification if it is unclear
- Repeat question so everyone in the audience has heard it; it also makes sure you heard it correctly and buys yourself a bit of time.
- DON'T GUESS – if you don't know admit it, suggest where they may be able to find out or say you will find out and let them know or throw it open to the audience.
- End the question and answer session strongly.

4.3.2 Handling Difficult Questions

- Plan ahead
- Don't guess
- Minimise any negatives
- Rephrase the question
- Seek allies
- Defer questions that require a long detailed answer (say you will answer on a one-to-one basis)
- Above all – keep your cool!



The most common reasons for failure in question and answer sessions are

- Not summarising the question for everybody else
- Answering a different question to the one that was asked
- Giving a long answer
- Not keeping check on the order in which members of the audience indicate they have a question to ask.

5. Putting Yourself Across

Having put a lot of thought and time into preparing your presentation, it should be in theory easy to get up and deliver it. However!

7% Verbal
38% Vocal
55% Visual

Verbal – The words used will be determined by the audience. Use simple language; think about whether all the audience will understand technical terms and at all costs avoid jargon.

Vocal – As the presenter you contribute to the audience's understanding of a message by your tone and pitch, expressions, pausing and speaking clarity.

Visual – Your body language (non-verbal communication) has an important effect so always remember to look at the audience, smile, avoid barriers, be natural, and be aware of any distracting mannerisms. Remember - dress for success! Always dress smartly.

5.1 Coping with nerves

The common reaction to being asked to give a presentation is sheer horror, it has even made it into the “top Ten Human Fears” along with spiders, so don't worry – you are not on your own. Everyone, even experienced performers, can be nervous. A little nervousness is good; it can give you an edge because it can help you focus on your presentation.

The common fears when doing a presentation are that you will perform badly and how audience will react to you. You must remember these fears are common and just because they plague you it doesn't mean you are not going to give an exceptional presentation.

Nervousness can be reduced by realising:-

- The audience wants you to succeed
- It doesn't show from the outside
- Audiences are sympathetic
- You were asked to speak so they are interested.



To some extent you need to find your own way of dealing with your nerves but bear in mind the following suggestions next time you give a presentation.

- **PREPARE and PRACTISE THOROUGHLY**
- Go to the venue, stand where you are going to speak and familiarise yourself with the room
- Try out your voice
- Practise in front of a mirror or fellow students
- Distract yourself for 10 minutes before you begin
- Stretching exercises – neck and back
- Breathe deeply
- Prepare answers to any anticipated questions
- Don't panic – take your time
- **PREPARE and PRACTISE THOROUGHLY**

5.2 Common Mistakes to avoid

The biggest mistakes presenters make:

- Starting with an inappropriate joke
- Not practising the presentation
- Not looking at the audience
- Being something they're not
- Not checking the venue beforehand
- Exceeding allotted time
- Using poor visual aids
- Not practising with their visual aids
- No audience analysis prior to presentation
- Guessing questions.

References:

Accenture. 2012. *The essential skills series – presentation skills*. [Online]. Youtube. Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xwa4c6xVpMg> [Accessed on 24 July 2012].

Grant, A. 1997. *Presentation Perfect*. London: The Industrial Society.

Learner Support Unit. 2006. *Effective Presentation Delivery*. [Online]. University of Bradford. Available from: <http://www.bradford.ac.uk/learnerdevelopment/resources/workshops/presentations/> [Accessed 15 November 2012]

University of Southampton. 2003. *Giving a talk*. [Online]. University of Southampton. Available from: <http://www.studyskills.soton.ac.uk/studytips/presentations.htm> [Accessed 05 August 2013]



Appendix 1

Top Ten Tips for Presenting

- 1 Talk – NEVER READ! Try to vary information for interest and don't mumble/gabble/drop voice.
- 2 Look at the audience.
- 3 Structure talk – introduction, body and conclusion.
- 4 Write down and memorise introduction (will be at most nervous at that point!).
- 5 Have notes (**not** full sentences) on hand held small cards – number and tie together with string.
- 6 Beware of jargon – keep to a minimum and explain if necessary.
- 7 Use 'verbal paragraphing' ie lead the audience from one sub-topic to the next.
- 8 PowerPoint slides
 - minimal writing
 - simple, bold diagrams
 - use cumulative slides
- 9 Don't read straight off a slide.
- 10 Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!