

Basics

Delivering presentations is a key skill in academic settings. It is essential to plan your presentation carefully and to try to anticipate any difficulties ahead. When delivering, you should try to use positive body language – including posture, facial expression and eye contact – to keep the audience's interest. Being able to answer questions successfully and using notes rather than a script are key aspects of effectively delivering a presentation to an academic audience.

The academic context

In the academic world, there are numerous situations where you need to deliver presentations. Examples include: projects, coursework, tutorials and seminars.

Key features

- Plan your presentation in distinct stages. The process is different for different types of presentation; here's an example:
 - 1 Identify the topic.
 - 2 Research and make notes.
 - 3 Organize the material and write a draft.
 - 4 Write any slides and add visuals.
 - 5 Edit the presentation.
 - 6 Practise and re-edit.
- Learn your material and use notes rather than a full script, if you can. This will keep you more engaged with the audience.
- Consider who is in the audience: use examples, explain difficult terms if necessary, and check the audience has understood your point if you are unsure.
- Think about your delivery: are you using your voice effectively? Can people hear you at the back? Are you using positive body language? You can ask a friend to be your 'audience' and give you advice about these points when you practise.
- Make time for questions at the end, and think about what the audience could ask. When answering questions, be polite, even if you have to say that a question is irrelevant, and always admit that you don't know an answer.

Challenges / difficulties

It takes practice to deliver effective presentations. Practise with friends several times to get timing and other aspects right.

How can I develop this skill?

Try to listen to as many different presentations as you can to see how other people do it.

Learning outcome

When you have mastered this skill, you will be able to plan an effective presentation, use positive body language, use notes without reading from a script, consider the audience and deal with the audience's questions. You should feel confident delivering an effective presentation.

Theory to practice

 **01 Listen to the first part of a presentation and read the transcript. Answer the questions.**

Hello. I'm Josh, and I'm a fourth-year education student at the City College. Thank you for coming to my talk about 'Exam entry to British higher education'. I'm very interested in this topic as my goal is to be a university education counsellor. Obviously, each of you will need to attain one of these to progress to university here. Hands up if you've already decided which exam to take ... not many, I see. I'll begin by looking at standard A-level entry – general advanced level exams taken by 16- to 19-year-olds here in the UK. Then I'll turn to international exams, such as the IB – that's the International Baccalaureate – or the US GMAT system – that's the Graduate Management Admission Test – as alternatives to A-levels. Finally, I'll look at standard English exams such as IELTS and TOEFL for students whose first language is not English. These are changing right now, so some of you will need to take notes. Everybody following so far? ... Good, let's begin ...

- 1 Does the speaker say why they chose the topic?
- 2 Does the speaker highlight the significance of the topic?
- 3 Does the speaker explain specialized terms?
- 4 Does the speaker check that the audience understands?
- 5 How could the speaker try to make the presentation more interesting for the audience?

Ways to get more practice

- Write quick presentation outlines for topics that are familiar. Present your ideas to friends in one minute and listen to their feedback about how you did.
- Watch presentations on the internet as much as you can, and note down key ideas and questions you would like to ask as you listen.