

Basics

Delivering effective presentations requires making it as easy as possible for the audience to listen and follow your ideas. In order to achieve this, you need to structure your presentations logically, use signposts to signal to listeners what is happening and use your voice to maximum effect.

The academic context

In the academic world, there are numerous situations where you need to deliver presentations. Examples include tutorials, project work and seminars. You might be asked to present projects, research and key ideas from your reading.

Key features

- Structure your presentation for the audience to follow: introduction, main points and conclusion.
- Include signpost phrases to inform listeners what is happening. For example:

- Introduce yourself:

Let me introduce myself – I'm ...

- Introduce the main points:

Today, I'm going to talk about ...

- State the purpose of the talk:

The reason I'm presenting this is to ...

- Outline the presentation structure:

My presentation is divided into three topics ...

- Introduce a main point:

Let's begin by looking at ...

- Refer to a visual or slide:

If we look at this chart of ...

- Cite a data source or reference:

This data is from ...

- Signal you have finished the talk:

Let me end by saying ...

- Invite questions from the audience:

I'll do my best to answer questions now.

- Summarize the key points:

In summary, I talked about ...

- Make an overall conclusion:

In conclusion, I think it's clear ...

- Use your voice to add interest and help the listener follow the talk and focus on what is important. For example:
 - Slow the pace.
 - Speak up to be audible.
 - Stress keywords (by stressing the key syllables).
 - Use pauses to break up sentences.

Challenges / difficulties

- It takes practice to deliver presentations using signposts and your voice correctly.
- Moving from a scripted presentation to only using notes can be challenging.

How can I develop this skill?

Practise speaking in groups or presenting ideas to a few people to gain confidence.

Learning outcome

When you have mastered this skill, you will be able to structure a presentation logically, using signposts effectively to signal where you are in your argument. You will be able to pause or use stress to highlight key ideas and words for the audience.

Theory to practice

Look at the presentation introduction and answer the questions.

Good afternoon. / I'd like to introduce myself. / I'm Lina, / a final year Biology student. / Today's talk is about / endangered animals around the world / and why they are in this situation. / The reason I chose this / is to highlight some of the key environmental issues / in our own country right now. / I've divided my presentation into four parts. / First of all, / I'll talk about the key species nearing extinction here. / Then / I'll move on to why each one is in danger. / After that, / I'll discuss what we can do to prevent their extinction. / Finally, / I'll try to outline some mistakes environmentalists have made in the past / regarding predictions about extinction.

- 1 What types of signpost phrases are highlighted?
- 2 Pauses are indicated with the symbol /. Do you agree with the placement? Would you pause anywhere else?
- 3 Which keywords would you emphasize?
- 4 Which syllables in the keywords should be stressed?
- 5 Can you read the extract slowly and clearly?

Ways to get more practice

Work with a partner. Take turns to talk about topics from your classes, organizing the information logically and emphasizing key ideas.

Listen to talks on the internet, and note down keywords and ideas you hear.