



In this hand-out;  
Opening your presentation  
Successful endings  
Dealing with nerves



## Opening your presentation

Grabbing the audience's attention right at the start is vital. You want them to sit up and listen and think you are worth listening to.

- ⇒ Get the full attention of your audience. Wait until everyone is quiet, is seated, has stopped talking, has found pen and paper and is listening.
- ⇒ Explain to the audience 'what is in it for them'. What is the benefit of listening to you?
- ⇒ Tell the audience who you are and why you are speaking to them. Build up your authority.
- ⇒ Go through the structure of your presentation. Give them direction.

## How to open a presentation

### **Anecdote**

Safer than a joke. Establishes a more personal contact between you and the audience. Helps to relax both you and the audience.

### **Shock opening**

Can really make the audience sit and listen. You need to be confident about it however. If in doubt, try a safer option.

### **Historical**

Relating the topic to what happened in the past, showing progress made, etc...

### **Quotation**

Can be a very neat way to open and close a presentation. Make sure it is not clichéd.

### **Current affairs**

Referring to some relevant news item can be effective and the audience should be familiar with it as well. It helps give relevance to the presentation and its purpose.

### **Statement or statistics**

Don't use too many. One or two well chosen ones combine the shock element with brevity.

### **Comparisons**

Well chosen comparisons can be very dramatic.

### **Question**

Direct a question to the audience to help them get involved.



## Ending the presentation

The end of the presentation is very much like the opening. You want their full attention.

- ⇒ Signpost the conclusion: 'in summary...' or 'in conclusion...'
- ⇒ The last few words said by the speaker are what tend to stay with the audience so try and make them memorable.
- ⇒ Use some of the suggested ways for opening your presentation when you close it.
- ⇒ Hold your position at the end of the presentation:
  - Don't lose your energy
  - Do not appear to be in a rush to leave
  - Do come to a definite close
- ⇒ You might want to pose a question to the audience which they can consider after the presentation or by calling the audience to action.
- ⇒ Think of the close of the presentation as being the 'take home message' – the thought that your audience will take away with them.

## Dealing with nerves

### Prepare yourself

Spend plenty of time practising and preparing your presentations. If possible practise in the room that you will present in and get used to using the equipment you will use on the day. The more time spent in rehearsing your presentation and getting familiar with its content the more comfortable you will feel on the day. Take time to prepare visual aids or prompt cards in advance too. Also think about what questions you might be asked and prepare answers in advance.

### Think positive!

Think positively about your presentation and it can improve your prospects, so tell yourself;

*I am good at this*

*I will enjoy this*

*I will do well!*

### Visualisation

Visualise yourself doing well. Go somewhere quiet and close your eyes, take a few deep breaths and visualise your whole presentation from start to finish. See yourself feeling happy in the situation, calm and in control. Hear that you have a loud, clear, slow paced voice and imagine that your audience are listening and interested in what you are saying. You understand that your audience want you to do well. See yourself complete your presentation successfully where you end by competently dealing with any questions.

### Further resources on nerves

The University library holds a number of books on presentation skills and many of these include sections on dealing with nerves.

[www.presentationmagazine.com](http://www.presentationmagazine.com) has an interesting section on public speaking including nerves.