

# Advice for PowerPoint Presentations

## Opening

- Assume the audience is interested in what you have to say
- Prepare to introduce yourself and thereby offer a **definite beginning** to your presentation. Good afternoon, My name is... and I am going to discuss...
- Speak with authority – not too softly spoken, yet not shouting
- State your points clearly to give them more authority
- Don't undermine yourself by apologising for or excusing anything about your presentation. Don't put yourself down.
- Don't use minimising words, such as a bit, a little or just... If it is important enough to say, state it with authority as a professional.

## Non-verbal cues

- Consider the room where the presentation will occur. If possible, influence the placement of the computer and the projector screen. The computer should be in front of you, so that you can see what is being projected and there is **no need for you to turn your back to the audience**. You should be able to stand quite close to the screen, in the event you wish to point to something and so that the audience can look at you and the screen without much adjustment to their focus. This will help you to feel more comfortable and in control. This then will make the audience have more confidence in your authority.
- **Eye contact** with the audience is very important. This will help to hold their attention and will make you appear in control. It is, however, ok to look at notes and the computer screen, but not too often or for too long.

- **Be heard! Slow down and breathe.** Many people speak too quickly or too softly when nervous and forget to breathe. This is uncomfortable for the audience as well as the speaker. If you don't breathe, you won't be able to think and it will be difficult to calm down.
- Practice with a friend, who is sitting at an appropriate distance away, in order to get the tone and voice level right. Practice will give you more self-confidence.
- Rely on your **natural hand gestures**, but don't fidget. Your own comfort level will influence your audience's. **Hands should not be in pockets** or playing with your hair or face.
- Don't move backwards and forwards or from side to side constantly. Try to stand with your feet a hip distance apart and your feet parallel, as much as possible.
- Don't cover your mouth with your hands or any papers.
- Avoid umming and ahing.
- Timing is very important – make sure that you have practiced and that you can complete the presentation within the allotted time.

## Role of the PowerPoint Slides (PPT)

**You and your 'story' are the presentation and the PPT is there to support you.**

- Don't use the PPT as your script.
- You should be clearly leading the presentation and there should only be a little duplication of the exact words on the slides
- The audience will generally be able to read the PPT before you read it through out loud, so if you are not providing a significant amount of additional information, they will stop listening to you.
- Use the PPT to add meaning and interest, provide an impact, or stimulate memory
- Don't split the audience's interest with too many words or too much information on the slides. They should be able to quickly absorb the information on the slides and then re-focus their attention on the speaker as the authority on the subject.

- The font size should be large enough to see from the back of the room – usually a minimum of size 28.
- There should be a strong contrast between the font colour and the background colour. It is often better to have a darker background and a lighter font. If the audience can't see the words, they will get frustrated and may switch-off.
- Use of pictures is helpful and makes the audience more interested
- Using the 'Build' function on PowerPoint can help the audience to focus on just the point you are making at the time. You can then slowly introduce the additional information as you decide when the audience needs to progress to the next point.
- A good use of PowerPoint allows you to project forms/questionnaires to offer information about your research methodology. Bringing real information to life makes your talk more interesting.

## Language use

- Explain any words or acronyms that anyone in your audience may not know
- Use 'sign posts' to make it clear that you are moving on to another point, ie first, second, next, finally, another aspect, several further factors to consider.
- Use link words, ie furthermore; as a result; what I am suggesting; here we can see; for instance; this is proved by, to help show your thinking.
- Make sure that you proof-read each slide
- Follow the Faculty Reference Guide for your Reference List.

## Addition of special touches

- Give real life examples, if possible, and/or tell a story to illustrate a point – but remain professional in the tone.
- Ask a question within the presentation (not actually expecting a response from the audience). This stimulates the audience's

thinking for a moment and makes the presentation seem more interactive.

- Where appropriate, a practical demonstration can add value to a talk.

## Endings

- Be clear and definite, signalling the end
- Plan what to say
- If required, show the reference list before asking for questions.
- Have a slide which backs up your invitation for questions and wait for the audience to respond, keeping eye contact
- Keep the volume and tone at a strong level
- Option may be to offer a few relevant questions for discussion

**Notes from 'lectures' by Guy Fearon entitled 'Presenting with PowerPoint' with additions by Helen Stamps, ELT, UH, 2012.**