

Oral Presentations

This guideline gives students advice on how to prepare, how to structure and how to deliver oral presentations. Please also consult our guidelines for [academic research](#).

Introduction

Just like essays and term papers, oral presentations are a form of academic work. Regarding the choice of topic, research of primary and secondary material and the structure, your presentation should meet all academic requirements. Nonetheless, oral presentations differ from term papers regarding their form of communication, which is oral and multimedial. A presentation should convey its contents to an audience that will not know much about the topic. Accordingly, a presentation should focus on only few arguments and theses and facilitate comprehensibility by the use of different media.

Structure

Once you settled on a topic and a research hypothesis and finished your research, you need to structure your presentation. During your time at university, you will be asked to do presentations of varying length. It is important to stick to the required time-frame and to plan how much time to spend on the different parts of the presentation.

Introduction 15% of the presentation (ca. 4 minutes of a 20-minute presentation)

- attracts your audience's attention (teaser)
- introduces the topic of the presentation
- presents your research hypothesis
- explains the outline

Main Part 75% of the presentation (ca. 15 minutes of a 20-minute presentation)

- outlines theoretical concepts
- provides an analysis of the primary material
- focuses on your main theses and arguments
- use few but poignant examples to illustrate the arguments
- indicate quotes and paraphrases

Conclusion 10% of the presentation (ca. 1 minute of a 20-minute presentation)

- briefly summarises your thesis and arguments
- offers your audience points and questions for discussion
- refers to the teaser you used at the beginning
- be creative: use a picture or a quote that summarises and rounds up your presentation

Delivering the Presentation

Speech Manuscript

In order to maintain contact to your audience it is helpful to speak freely for most part of your presentation. Sometimes, however, it might be necessary to read off your paper. This might be the

case if your presentation contains a number of terms that are particularly important. Moreover, a speech manuscript helps you to prepare and to practice your presentation. A speech manuscript should:

- be readable (font size, typeface)
- have pagination
- contain a reminder of how much time you planned for each part
- give instructions, such as when to use media, make rhetorical breaks, allow for questions, etc.

Practice

Practicing your presentation has a number of advantages. You can check whether you stay within the required time-frame, whether certain terms are appropriate for an oral presentation and you will gain confidence and security.

- practice your intonation
- include the use of media
- practice in front of a mirror, or even better, an audience, which can give you feedback
- if you give a group presentation, you should practice in your group

Speaking in Front of an Audience

Speaking in front of an audience has to be practiced. Few people are naturally talented speakers. The following advice can help you to give a good and confident oral presentation:

- Be prepared: if you check the room, the media available, come with a back-up in case something does not work, you will be less nervous.
- Body language: find a position fit for a presentation that is comfortable to you, make calm movements, keep your hands close to your body centre.
- Voice: speak loudly and clearly, make breaks which you can use to drink or just to take a breath.
- Stay in contact: maintain eye contact to your audience: this way you can check whether your audience is still following you.
- Mistakes: do not apologise for having made mistakes, your English or your accent. If you do make a mistake try to dub it, your audience will not notice.

Media

There are a number of media available for oral presentations. Media support your presentation by making it more vivid and helping the audience to follow and comprehend your arguments. From the sheer number of possibilities presenters run the risk of a media-overkill. Do not use too many different media in your presentation.

Power Point

A Power Point Presentation Contains

- significant or longer quotes
- key words or key phrases
- pictures, film- or audio sequences
- your works cited
- do not give a word-for-word repetition of what you say
- the content should differ from your handout, otherwise one of the two becomes redundant

Layout

DOs	DON'Ts
neutral layout and background	lots of colours, symbols and pictures, "themed backgrounds" (such as old yellow paper for a presentation about Shakespeare)
font colour sets off of the background	text in pale colours, or colours similar to the background
big font size and readable, neutral typeface (Arial, Times Roman)	unreadable or mixed typefaces
limited number of lines per slide	slides packed with texts
a number of slides that you can easily get through during your presentation	use more slides than you need to fill up the Power Point
contains all necessary information (title, name of presenter(s), lecturer, seminar title, date) on a title slide,	leaving out necessary information (sources, references, head titles, etc.)
references all sources	
supports the speaker, increases comprehensibility	mere entertainment for the audience

Some Examples

 <p style="text-align: center;"> The Pastoral and the Sublime in Peter Jackson's <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <small>Race, Place and Gender in Tolkien's <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> Seminar leader: Prof. Dr. Susanne Peters Speaker: Madeline Becker WS 2016/17 <i>The Pastoral and the Sublime in The Lord of the Rings Madeline Becker</i></small> </p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">1 Introducing the Term <i>Culture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Kulturbeutel (Engl. toilet bag) • Laboratory Cultures • American Culture, German Culture, etc. <p style="text-align: center;">○○○○○○</p>
  <p style="text-align: center;"> <small>Fig. 2 Romantic Pastoral Scene David Johnson, Untitled, 1867.</small> </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <small><i>The Pastoral and the Sublime in The Lord of the Rings Madeline Becker</i></small> </p> <p style="text-align: center;">○○○○○○</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Mount Caradhras</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <small>"By midnight they had climbed to the knees of the wall of cliffs to the left, above which the grim flanks of Caradhras towered up invisible in the gloom; on the right as a gulf of darkness where the land fell suddenly into a deep ravine."</small> </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <small>Tolkien, J.R.R. <i>The Lord of the Rings. The Fellowship of the Ring</i>. London: Harper Collins, 2007. Print. 375.</small> </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <small><i>The Pastoral and the Sublime in The Lord of the Rings Madeline Becker</i></small> </p> <p style="text-align: center;">○○○○○○</p>

Alternatives

There are alternatives to Power Point, such as [Prezi](#), [Sozi](#) or [KeyNote](#), which can be a welcome change for your audience. You should, however, stick to the usual formal requirements.

Handout

- consider whether it is handed out at the beginning or after the presentation; at the beginning you run the risk that the handout distracts the audience from listening, on the other hand, it helps to follow the main points of your arguments
- it summarises the main points of your presentation

- it should follow the structure of and use the same headlines as your presentation
- it should not be longer than 1-2 pages
- it should contain all necessary information (title of presentation, name of presenter, seminar title, name lecturer, date)
- it follows academic standards (typeface, font size, references)
- and it includes a list of works cited

Academic Poster

- visual and creative presentation of a research project
- presents the audience with an overview of a thesis, significant facts, theoretical concepts, etc.
- should contain an introduction, a main part and a conclusion
- elements: text, graphics, statistics, pictures, quotes
- format: DIN-A1
- presenter stands next to the poster to be available for explanations and questions

Blackboard, Overhead Projector, Flipchart, Whiteboard

Some of the media listed above might appear a little outdated. Nonetheless, they can be useful for your presentation. The use of Power Point has become standard, so that alternative media can be a welcome change.

- can be used interactively (e.g. brainstorming or mind-mapping with your audience)
- illustrate and visualise complex issues
- the audience may take notes while you give the presentation

Questions and Discussion

After finishing your presentation your fellow students get the opportunity to ask questions or discuss some points:

- you can try to direct the discussion by offering points and issues during the presentation.
- do not be nervous: in most cases your fellow students will ask out of sincere interest.
- you can prepare for questions by identifying the gaps in your presentation: what did you have to leave out because of the limited time-frame? Where would your fellow students want additional information? What might interest them?
- if you researched your topic thoroughly you will be able to answer most questions, if not, do not worry, no one expects you to know everything; you can pass questions back to the seminar group and try to answer them together.
- during discussions you should demonstrate your expertise on the topic and try to lead the discussion.

Further Reading

Broder, Simone. *Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten in Anglistik und Amerikanistik*. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015.

Echterhoff, Gerald, and Birgit Neumann. *Projekt- und Zeitmanagement: Strategien für ein erfolgreiches Studium*. Stuttgart: Klett Lernen und Wissen, 2006. Print. Uni-Wissen Kernkompetenzen.

Franck, Norbert, and Joachim Stary. *Die Technik wissenschaftlichen Arbeitens: Eine praktische Anleitung*. 16th ed. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011. Print. UTB Schlüsselkompetenzen, Kernkompetenzen 724.

Reiter, Markus. *Studieren mit Erfolg: Perfekt präsentieren*. Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel, 2012. Print.

Stickel-Wolf, Christine, and Joachim Wolf. *Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten und Lerntechniken: Erfolgreich studieren - gewusst wie!* 6th ed. Wiesbaden: Gabler, 2011. Print. Gabler-Lehrbuch.