

Developing Presentations Skills



As a student, you will be giving a lot of presentations. In your future job, you will probably also be giving lots of presentations:

- If you are a teacher, every class is like a presentation.
- If you are working in sales, every time you meet a customer is like a presentation.
- If you work in a company, any time you present a report or new idea, you are giving a presentation.



Doing a presentation is like juggling. You have so many things to do at the same time. You need to speak using your English *language* skills *confidently*, and in a strong *voice* with natural *body language*. You also need interesting *content* that is *well-organized* and easy to follow. Of course, most importantly of all, you need an opinion or message – and you probably need to do research to find information that supports your opinion.

This handout looks at:

1. Ideas to get you started and build your skills.
2. The do's and don'ts of giving presentations.
3. Some useful phrases you could use to structure your presentation.
4. A student essay on how to do a good presentation.
5. Bringing it all together: What makes a good presentation?

1. Ideas to get you started and build your skills

- Practice your spoken fluency. Try to give short (for example, one-minute and later, longer) presentations without preparation on topics you know about. For example, “What did you do on the weekend?” Don’t use notes: Just talk. You can practice this with a friend, or just talk to yourself.
- Watch other people doing presentations at school or on the web. Think about what they do well and how they could improve.
- Close your eyes and do some image training: Imagine yourself standing in front of people. Imagine yourself giving a presentation in a good, strong voice using gestures and eye contact.
- Work on reducing the use of Japanese ‘fillers’ (for example, “E-to”) and try to replace them with English ones such as “Hmm”, “Let me see”, “Well,” etc.
- Learn how to create good PowerPoint slides or a poster to support your presentations and get used to using the technology in the classroom.

Once you start building a bit of confidence, try:

- Working on fluency practice by doing exercises like repeating the same presentation in 3 minutes, then 2 minutes, then 1 minute.
- Starting to think about the differences between spoken and written language and the difference in style and language between different types of presentation.
- Working to improve the process you use for creating a presentation (brainstorm your ideas, organize them, and practice, practice...)
- Doing research on how to make good PowerPoint slides or posters to support your presentation and learn how to show the research you have done for your presentation.



2. Presentations: The Do's and Don'ts

There are many types of presentations, and each person will develop their own style. However, here is a list of basic “do's and don'ts” to get you started:

6.

Presentations: Dos and Donts

(Free images from <https://pixabay.com/>)



DO:

Before the presentation

- Think carefully: what is your topic? What is your message?
- Prepare well – research, plan and keep it focused on the topic/message
- Practice, practice, practice
- And practice (and check how long it takes to do)

During the presentation

- Relax
- Look confident (even if you don't feel confident)
- Smile
- Use gestures (in a natural way)
- Move around (in a natural way)
- Look at your audience (eye contact)
- Speak in a big voice
- Keep focused on the topic
- Try to be different and interesting (but be yourself)



DO NOT:

- Say sorry for being nervous
- Be shy (even if you feel shy)
- Just read from notes
- Just read from your PowerPoint/poster or just look at your PowerPoint/poster
- Look out the window or away from your listeners
- Memorize your whole presentation.



If you have a PowerPoint or poster:

DO:

- Use good quality photos or graphics
- Keep the poster/PowerPoint simple
- Use the poster actively – point to it, explain it
- Have a backup online or on your mobile phone (always have a backup online, on your phone, on a USB memory stick)

DO NOT:

- Put too many words on a slide
- Have lots of cute transitions from slide to slide
- Just read the slides

3. Some useful phrases you could use to structure your presentation.

| <i>Part of the presentation</i> | <i>Informal/casual phrase examples</i> | <i>More formal useful phrase examples</i> |
|---|---|--|
| Introduction (where you say hello, say what you will talk about, and show the structure) | Hi, everyone. Today, I am going to talk about (<i>main topic</i>). I will start with (<i>title of part 1</i>), then talk about (<i>part 2</i>) and finally (<i>part 3</i>). | Good morning/afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My goal today is (<i>topic and reason giving presentation</i>) My presentation is divided into three parts. First, I will look at (<i>title of part 1</i>) Then, I will talk about (<i>part 2</i>) Finally, I will be discussing... (<i>part 3</i>) |
| Main part of the presentation (beginner) <i>Don't forget to give examples and supporting information for your points: For example...</i> | OK. First, ... (<i>part 1 in detail</i>) Secondly, ... (<i>part 2 in detail</i>) And finally, ... (<i>part 3 in detail</i>) | First, I would like to talk about... (<i>part 1 in detail</i>) Second, I will talk about... (<i>part 2 in detail</i>) Third, I would like to say... (<i>part 3 in detail</i>) |
| Main part of the presentation (more advanced phrases) <i>Giving examples and supporting information: For instance,... Let me give you an example...</i> | Let's begin with... (<i>part 1 in detail</i>) The next point is... (<i>part 2 in detail</i>) My final point is ... (<i>part 3 in detail</i>) | To start with, I would like to discuss ... (<i>part 1 in detail</i>) I now want to go on to... (<i>part 2 in detail</i>) This brings me to my next/last point, which is... (<i>part 3 in detail</i>) |
| Conclusion (where you summarize your points, thank everyone for listening and, if you can, answer questions) | So, to review, I talked about (<i>titles of parts 1, 2 and 3.</i>) Thanks for listening. (Do you have any questions?) | In conclusion, I'd like to say... (<i>summarize the reason for the presentation and the main points.</i>) Thank you for your time and attention. (If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them now.) |

When you use a PowerPoint or poster, these phrases might be useful too:

This slide/picture/graph shows...

If you look at this slide/graph/picture, you can see...

Here, we can see...

On this slide/picture/graph, we can see...

On the left/right, you can see...

At the top/bottom, you can see...

*Note: when you use a PowerPoint, remember the poster/PowerPoint is to support your presentation. **You** should be the center of your presentation. Stand in front of the poster/PowerPoint when you can. Keep your eye contact. Speak to your audience.*

4. A student essay on how to do a good presentation

What makes a good presentation?

There are a lot of different things that make good presentation, and many of them might not look important. However, lots of small points build up to a good presentation.

I think a good presentation isn't only reading in front of everyone. The most important thing isn't speaking but telling what you want to say and speaking in a way everyone can hear that will attract their attention. That means using a big voice, eye contact, gestures, having good information and so on are all important

It is also important to speak in a way everyone can understand. When I give a presentation, I take care to use as easy words as I can. This is true of both Japanese and English. If somebody gives a presentation and uses difficult words, we won't be able to understand and will not be interested. Therefore, we need to use easy words, use gestures and posters, and so on to help people understand.

There isn't a perfect answer to the question, "What makes a good presentation?" However, I think someone with poor English skills can give a good presentation, while many native English speakers cannot give a good presentation. I think the simplest answer is putting your "heart" into the presentation and having "guts" to go and do your best make a good presentation.

(221 words)

(Note: "having 'guts'" means being brave. It is slang and is not formal but has impact here.)

5. Bringing it together: What makes a good presentation?

There are many ways to talk about how to do a good presentation. Here are two that might help you.

The three P's.

This emphasizes the process of making a good presentation.

1. **Prepare.** This includes deciding topics, background research, organizing your ideas, and preparing visuals (for example, posters or PowerPoint) and handouts.
2. **Practice.** Once you have got it all together, practice is vital – both for timing but also to build confidence. Practice anywhere, anytime – out loud and in your mind. Image training by yourself and doing it with groups of classmates are good too.
3. **Performance.** The big event, and it is a performance. You must be organized, confident, smooth, clear, active – to put it simply, have a presence in the presentation. You also need to be ready to adapt (change or edit) what you have for the audience that you get, and to be ready to answer questions.

All three are equally important.

Once you have mastered the process of creating a good presentation, the following three points may help in making it better. In particular, point three.

1. **Visuals:** You want well-designed, attractive and informative posters, PowerPoint slides and handouts. This means careful thought needs to be put into thinking about who you will be presenting to, design and presentation.
2. **Content:** Naturally, the most important part of any good presentation is the content. It needs to be informative and new, so that people are interested, well organized or well argued, so people can understand your message, and there has to be a clear introduction that makes people want to listen, clear stages and a clear and satisfying conclusion.
3. **YOU.** You need to be the focus of any presentation, not your visuals (PowerPoint/poster.) You do this through 1. body (eye contact, gestures, moving around, having a relaxed but confident posture), 2. voice (speed, volume, intonation, effective use of pauses, correct pronunciation) and 3. atmosphere, which is the most difficult and comes from a combination of above. Just as it says under performance above, you want to be the center of everyone's attention, confident, smooth, clear and active. This only comes with practice doing a lot of presentations and thinking carefully each time about what you need to do to improve.

Once again, all three are extremely (very very) important.