Language of Presentations

This page is about the words and expressions that we use when making [presentations in English](#).

Simplicity and Clarity

If you want your audience to understand your message, your language must be **simple** and **clear**.

Use short words and short sentences.

Do not use jargon, unless you are certain that your audience understands it.

In general, talk about concrete facts rather than abstract ideas.

Use active verbs instead of passive verbs. Active verbs are much easier to understand. They are much more powerful. Consider these two sentences, which say the same thing:

1. Toyota sold nine million vehicles last year.
2. Nine million vehicles were sold by Toyota last year.

Which is easier to understand? Which is more immediate? Which is more **powerful**? #1 is active and #2 is passive.

Signposting

When you drive on the roads, you know where you are on those roads. Each road has a name or number. Each town has a name. And each house has a number. If you are at house #100, you can go back to #50 or forward to #150. You can look at the signposts for directions. And you can look at your atlas for the structure of the roads in detail. In other words, it is easy to navigate the roads. You cannot get lost. But when you give a presentation, how can your audience know where they are? How can they know the structure of your presentation? How can they know what is coming next? They know because **you tell them**. Because you put up **signposts** for them, at the **beginning** and **all along the route**. This technique is called '**signposting**' (or 'signalling').

During your introduction, you should tell your audience what the structure of your presentation will be. You might say something like this:

"I'll start by describing the current position in Europe. Then I'll move on to some of the achievements we've made in Asia. After that I'll consider the opportunities we see for further expansion in Africa. Lastly, I'll quickly recap before concluding with some recommendations."

A member of the audience can now visualize your presentation like this:

Introduction	• Welcome • Explanation of structure (**now**)

Body	- Europe - Asia - Africa
Conclusion	- Summing up - Recommendations

He will keep this image in his head during the presentation. He may even write it down. And throughout your presentation, you will put up signposts telling him which point you have reached and where you are going now. When you finish Europe and want to start Asia, you might say:

"That's all I have to say about Europe. Let's turn now to Asia."

When you have finished Africa and want to sum up, you might say:

"Well, we've looked at the three continents Europe, Asia and Africa. I'd like to sum up now."

And when you finish summing up and want to give your recommendations, you might say:

"What does all this mean for us? Well, firstly I recommend..."

The table below lists useful expressions that you can use to signpost the various parts of your presentation.

Signposting	
Function	**Language**
Introducing the subject	- I'd like to start by... - Let's begin by...

	• First of all, I'll... • Starting with... • I'll begin by...
Finishing one subject...	• Well, I've told you about... • That's all I have to say about... • We've looked at... • So much for...
...and starting another	• Now we'll move on to... • Let me turn now to... • Next... • Turning to... • I'd like now to discuss... • Let's look now at...
Analysing a point and giving recommendations	• Where does that lead us? • Let's consider this in more detail... • What does this mean for ABC? • Translated into real terms...
Giving an example	• For example,... • A good example of this is... • As an illustration,... • To give you an example,... • To illustrate this point...
Dealing with questions	• We'll be examining this point in more detail later on... • I'd like to deal with this question later, if I may...

	- I'll come back to this question later in my talk... - Perhaps you'd like to raise this point at the end... - I won't comment on this now...
Summarising and concluding	- In conclusion,... - Right, let's sum up, shall we? - I'd like now to recap... - Let's summarise briefly what we've looked at... - Finally, let me remind you of some of the issues we've covered... - If I can just sum up the main points...
Ordering	- Firstly...secondly...thirdly...lastly... - First of all...then...next...after that...finally... - To start with...later...to finish up...

The Presentation

This page is about the actual presentation itself as opposed to other aspects of giving presentations in English.

Most presentations are divided into 3 main parts (+ questions):

1	**INTRODUCTION**	**(Questions)**
2	**BODY**	

3	CONCLUSION	
	Questions	

As a general rule in communication, repetition is valuable. In presentations, there is a golden rule about repetition:

1. Say what you are going to say...
2. say it...
3. then say what you have just said.

In other words, use the three parts of your presentation to reinforce your message. In the introduction, you tell your audience what your message is going to be. In the body, you tell your audience your real message. In the conclusion, you summarize what your message was.

We will now consider each of these parts in more detail.

Introduction

The introduction is a very important - perhaps the most important - part of your presentation. This is the first impression that your audience have of you. You should concentrate on getting your introduction right. You should use the introduction to:

1. **welcome your audience**
2. **introduce your subject**
3. **outline the structure of your presentation**
4. **give instructions about questions**

The following table shows examples of language for each of these functions. You may need to modify the language as appropriate.

Function	Possible language
1 Welcoming your audience	- Good morning, ladies and gentlemen - Good morning, gentlemen - Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman - Good afternoon, everybody
2 Introducing your subject	- I am going to talk today about... - The purpose of my presentation is to introduce our new range of...
3 Outlining your structure	To start with I'll describe the progress made this year. Then I'll mention some of the problems we've encountered and how we overcame them. After that I'll consider the possibilities for further growth next year. Finally, I'll summarize my presentation (before concluding with some recommendations).
4 Giving instructions about questions	- Do feel free to interrupt me if you have any questions. - I'll try to answer all of your questions after the presentation. - I plan to keep some time for questions after the presentation.

Body

The body is the 'real' presentation. If the introduction was well prepared and delivered, you will now be 'in control'. You will be relaxed and confident.

The body should be well structured, divided up logically, with plenty of carefully spaced visuals.

Remember these key points while delivering the body of your presentation:

- do not hurry
- be enthusiastic
- give time on visuals
- maintain eye contact
- modulate your voice
- look friendly
- keep to your structure
- use your notes
- signpost throughout
- remain polite when dealing with difficult questions

Conclusion

Use the conclusion to:

1. **Sum up**
2. **(Give recommendations if appropriate)**
3. **Thank your audience**
4. **Invite questions**

The following table shows examples of language for each of these functions. You may need to modify the language as appropriate.

Function	Possible language
1 **Summing up**	- To conclude,... - In conclusion,... - Now, to sum up... - So let me summarise/recap what I've said. - Finally, may I remind you of some of the main points we've considered.
2	In conclusion, my recommendations are...

Giving recommendations	• I therefore suggest/propose/recommend the following strategy.
3 Thanking your audience	• Many thanks for your attention. • May I thank you all for being such an attentive audience.
4 Inviting questions	• Now I'll try to answer any questions you may have. • Can I answer any questions? • Are there any questions? • Do you have any questions? • Are there any final questions?

Questions

Questions are a good opportunity for you to interact with your audience. It may be helpful for you to try to predict what questions will be asked so that you can prepare your response in advance. You may wish to accept questions at any time during your presentation, or to keep a time for questions after your presentation. Normally, it's your decision, and you should make it clear during the introduction. Be polite with all questioners, even if they ask difficult questions. They are showing interest in what you have to say and they deserve attention. Sometimes you can reformulate a question. Or answer the question with another question. Or even ask for comment from the rest of the audience.

Presentation Review

This page summarizes the points that we have learned about making presentations in English.

In this seminar, you have learned:

• to allow plenty of time for preparation

- to ask the all-important question-words, why? who? where? when? how? and what?
- to structure your presentation into introduction, body, conclusion and questions
- to write notes based on keywords
- to rehearse your presentation several times and modify it as necessary
- to select the right equipment for the job
- to use equipment effectively
- to make use of clear, powerful visual aids that do not overload your audience
- to use clear, simple language, avoiding jargon
- to use active verbs and concrete facts
- to explain the structure of your presentation at the beginning so that your listeners know what to expect
- to link each section of your presentation
- to signpost your presentation from beginning to end so that your listeners know where they are
- to say what you are going to say, say it, and say what you have just said
- to overcome your nerves
- to establish audience rapport
- to be aware of your body language
- to understand cultural differences
- to control the quality of your voice
- to maintain interest by varying the speed, volume and pitch of your voice
- to deal with listeners' questions politely
- to respond to your audience positively