

# Seminar Presentations

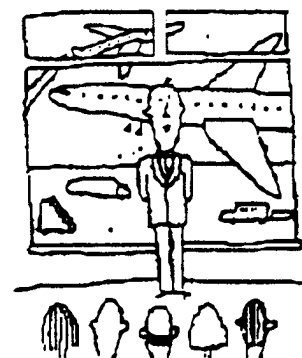
*Many courses at UNSW require students to give oral presentations in tutorials and seminars. During your studies, you may be required to give many presentations. Most students are nervous when they first have to speak in front of an audience, but with practice they can become effective presenters.*

## An Overview

Courses usually have a week-by-week tutorial topic and reading list for which all members of the tutorial group are expected to do some background reading. This may include a seminar presentation component where one (or more) students 'present' a topic to other students, who then join in a discussion.

Giving a seminar presentation can involve:

- reading background material
- preparing your presentation
- leading the discussion
- preparing necessary handouts or visual aids
- preparing relevant and thought-provoking questions
- submitting a written assignment based on the presentation topic



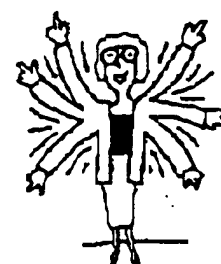
## Choosing a Topic

In tutorials and seminars, presentation topics are set well in advance. You may be permitted to choose the topic you will present, or a topic may be allocated to you. If you can choose your topic, the best choice is always the one that interests you the most.

Make sure that you fully understand the question(s) and that you are sure of what you have to do. Do you have to present an argument, explain or discuss something, be critical? If you are unsure of the objectives of your presentation, check with your tutor.

## Seminar Papers

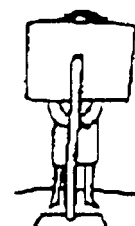
After you give your seminar, you may be expected to submit a seminar paper. It should be written in continuous prose (not point form) and be fully referenced. It can be altered or changed, based on the results of the tutorial discussion. Check with your tutor for details.



## Preparing a Presentation Based on Course Readings

### Background Reading

Research your topic. You must demonstrate an understanding of the main points of your course reading, but you may need to read further. Use your tutorial reading list to find additional relevant information.



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Examine and consider the course readings carefully. Express your own conclusions about what opinion/argument/thesis you think the author is trying to express. Demonstrate an ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the material presented in the text.

## Timing

Most presentations have a time limit, so find out how long your presentation should be. The amount of time you have will determine the amount of information you are able to present. To keep within the allotted time, you need to plan carefully. Consider:

- the time limit
- the amount of information available, and how much of it you can cover
- how much detail you can include
- dividing the material into sections, with subject headings
- the most effective way to present your information (OHT's, slides, videos, handouts, whiteboard etc.)
- deleting less important topics from the paper rather than hurrying to cover everything

If you write a 'script', allow roughly 400 words for each five minutes.

## S t r u c t u r i n g Y o u r P r e s e n t a t i o n

Have a clear, organised structure for your presentation. Structuring a presentation is no different from writing an essay or a report; it requires an introduction, body and conclusion. Like an essay, these sections of your talk need to fit together, and be linked clearly. A poorly structured talk will confuse and frustrate an audience.

**Presentations should have the following structure:**

### Introduction

A good introduction will capture the audience's attention. An introduction is like a series of signposts that tell your audience what direction your presentation takes.

First greet the audience. Introduce yourself (even if they already know your name).

Try starting with a question or simply saying: "*today I would like to talk to you about . . .*"

*Tell your audience what you are going to talk about. State:*

- what your topic is, and what your presentation will cover
- an outline of the main points
- any necessary history or definition of terms.

### Body

The body of your presentation is where you develop the main points of your talk, and present examples and evidence.

The information in the body needs to be well structured. Decide on an organising principle. It could be by chronological order, theme or order of importance.

- Move from one point to the next by using transitional phrases (such as 'Firstly . . . secondly' . . . 'finally').
- Offer evidence to support any claims being made ('for example . . .')
- Emphasise important information. Tell your audience when information is particularly important or interesting. Tell them why.

### Conclusion

The conclusion is usually a summary of the main points made in the body of the talk. Don't introduce any new information in the conclusion. Take the opportunity to show that you have covered all the points you made in your introduction.

- Work out how you will finish your talk. You can signal your conclusion with the phrase '*In conclusion . . .*'
- Restate the main points
- Re-answer the question

# Preparing to Speak

## Gaining the Audience's Interest

Decide on how you will keep the audience interested. Plan an opening that will attract interest and direct the group's attention to your topic. You can start with an icebreaker such as a controversial statement, a quotation, a personal anecdote, a question or a 'show of hands'.

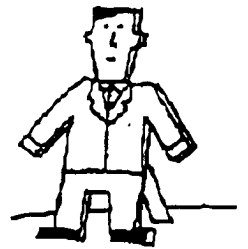
Humour brings the group over to your side. However, don't tell a joke or story that doesn't relate to your topic.

## Rehearse

- Rehearse beforehand and time yourself.
- Practice projecting your voice clearly. Vary your pitch and tone. A person who speaks in a monotone is boring to listen to.
- Be aware of body language and posture. Stand up straight. Use appropriate gestures to emphasise your points.
- When you are writing out your presentation, try to organise your information into main headings and supporting details or examples, much like an essay plan. If you know your topic well enough, you can give the talk from these headings and details. This technique prevents you from 'reading your talk' which is boring for your audience.

### Some opening examples:

- *Suppose you had an experience like this . . .*
- *Three out of five people in this room will die of heart disease.*
- *Who can tell us roughly how many Australians drive to work every morning?*
- *If there are any monarchists in the audience, please raise your hands . . . now, how about republicans . . . ?*



# Giving the Presentation

## Delivery

- Stand in a balanced position, facing the audience, feet apart.
- Speak clearly and try not to talk too fast. When we are nervous, we tend to talk quickly, so try to be aware of this tendency. Don't be afraid to pause.
- Maintain eye contact with your audience. It will help them concentrate because they will feel more involved. A good technique is to divide the audience into three sections (left, middle and right) and sweep your eyes across the room. If you don't want to look anyone in the eye, look at a point in the middle of their foreheads.
- Don't read straight from your paper. This is boring for your audience. A tutorial is not a formal conference paper, but an introduction to a discussion. Try to express your ideas in your own words.

## Performance Anxiety

Find a quiet place and take a few deep breaths. Concentrate on feeling your feet on the ground and remember that thousands of other students have been in the same situation and have survived. If you feel nervous, tell the tutorial group—they will understand. Remember, your audiences consist of your classmates and friends. They all want you to succeed, so try to relax.

# Tutorial Discussion

To begin the group discussion in the tutorial, it is a good idea to think of some questions that are relevant to your topic. At the beginning of your presentation tell your audience that you will be asking some questions at the end of your talk to prompt a discussion. It sometimes keeps people more alert if they know that they may have to answer some questions based on what they have just been listening to.

You can hand out copies of the questions or put them on an overhead transparency. You can also provide a summary of your talk, or a list of the main points to help promote discussion. Distribute these at the end of your talk. If you give them out before your talk people may not listen closely because they already have the information.



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## Answering Questions

After your presentation, members of your tutorial may ask you questions.

- Listen carefully to the question. Repeat or paraphrase the question so you are sure you understand it and so everyone in the audience hears it.
- If it is a long question, try breaking it up into sections, and answer them one by one.
- Be brief and to the point and avoid introducing new information. If you don't know the answer to the question, say so. It is OK to say "I don't know", you can always offer to find out the answer.

## M a k i n g   O v e r h e a d   T r a n s p a r e n c i e s   ( O H T s )

### General Principles

- Any visual materials you use should support and add impact to your presentation.
- Any messages on OHTs should be concise and simple.
- The impact of each visual message can be varied by the imaginative use of colour.
- Lettering should be clearly printed in bold colours and properly spaced.

### Hints for Making OHTs

#### Do:

- ✓ Print neatly. Don't use cursive writing.
- ✓ If making OHTs on computer, choose a font that is easy to read, like Helvetica, Arial or Times.
- ✓ Use a large font (at least 24 points). Use Bold type.
- ✓ Use 1 message per OHT (15-20 words).
- ✓ Check spelling and grammar.
- ✓ Work in the centre of the OHT. Leave a margin of about 4 cm, otherwise it may not fit the overhead projector frame.
- ✓ Choose diagrams, charts or pictures to support your spoken material. Use one image per OHT.

#### Do Not:

- ✗ Use small lettering or untidy handwriting. Your audience won't be able to read it.
- ✗ Cram too much information on one OHT. For example, don't reproduce the entire text of a presentation; just list the main points in bullet form.
- ✗ Use faded or pale coloured pens for lettering. Print in strong dark colours like red, black or blue.
- ✗ Squeeze lines or cramp letters together. The text on your OHT should be readable from the back of the room.
- ✗ Write too far toward the edge of the OHT or you will lose words under the edge of the frame.

### Basic Essay Structure

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion

#### Basic Essay Structure

all essays contain a basic structure:

##### Introduction

the introduction introduces the topic, defines time periods, indicates what is coming. it moves from general to specific.

Body : The body is composed of a number of main ideas. Each paragraph represent ONE idea. Each paragraph requires a topic (idea) sentence, and elaboration/explanation