



Durham
University

The Italian Constitution



Skills:

Presenting Your Work

Presenting your work

Occasionally at school and college you are asked to present your work to others. At University level, expect to be asked to do this frequently - it does get easier with practice. No matter how you are asked to present your work, these simple considerations should be your starting point:

Content – make sure you have included everything you need to, no more, no less.

Length – imagine the information is being presented to you – does it feel overwhelming or too short?

Ease – your presentation should be easy to hear or easy to read and always easy to understand.

Apppearance – this is always important, take the time to make it look good, which may help with clarity.

Recap – always provide a summary.

In all cases, put yourself in the place of someone in the audience. Will you learn something? Is it clear? Will they understand it?

Essays and Written Projects

There are often guideline outlining how exam bodies, schools, colleges or universities want written essays and projects presented. This can sometimes be very prescriptive including details as to what information should be on a cover page, where to put page numbers, font size, how to caption pictures or photographs, inclusion of contents pages etc. At school or college level, you may not have to provide so much detail, but in order to make your written work as clear and as easy to navigate as possible, it's worth taking a few tips from University guidelines – for example, adding in page numbers can often be helpful for both you and the person who will mark your essay.

Provide a cover page with the basic information (e.g. your name or student number / essay or project title / subject / date submitted / word count).

If your essay is particularly long (remember to check your permitted word count) or you have a project with lots of sections, consider adding in a contents page.

Ensure your lines of text are properly aligned - text can look messy if not. Ensure any graphs, photos or images are properly labelled and also aligned correctly.

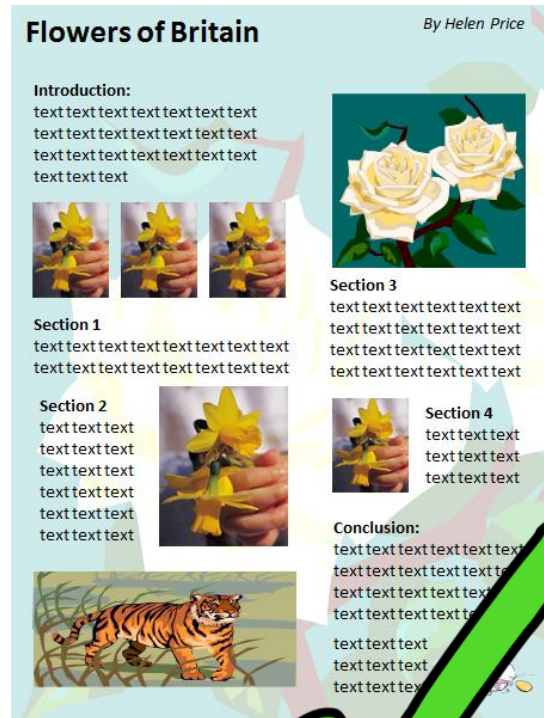
Make your titles, paragraphs, chapters or sections clear. Try making titles bold or underlining them - leave appropriate gaps and spacing.

Be consistent with your font style and font size (never less than 12pt). There are some font styles you should avoid at all costs such as Comic Sans.

Posters

A good poster should not only have appropriate content but also be visually appealing and easy to navigate. Most posters are now produced on a computer but the following information is still useful for hand-made posters. The biggest mistakes people make when producing posters are:

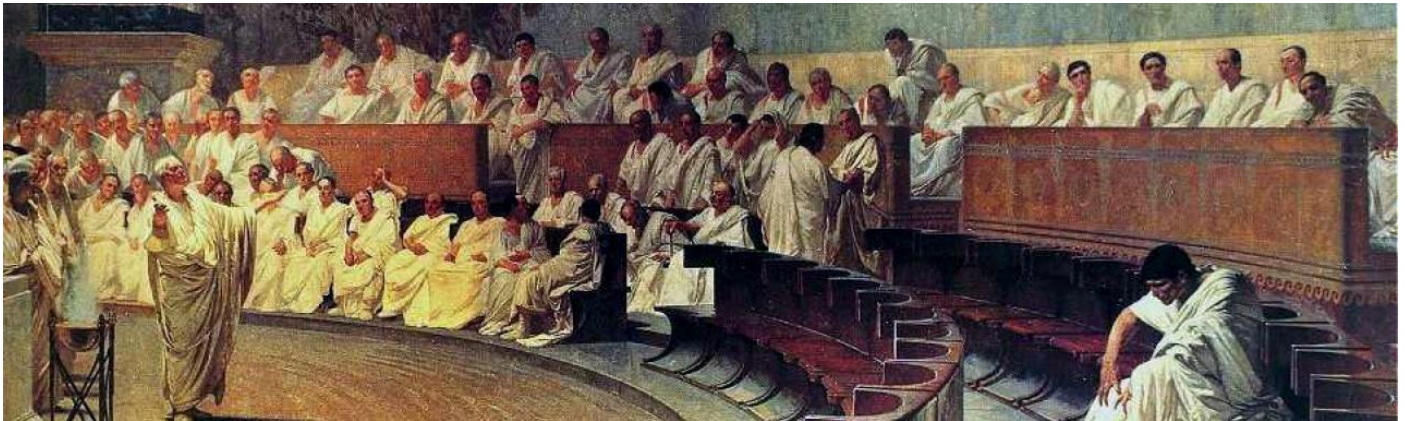
- **Too much information!** Posters are a real test for balancing aesthetics with key information. You may be able to write an essay of 2000 words on a topic but presenting that information on a poster is going to mean condensing it down to about 10% of the essay length. Decide what is most important and edit it down – then edit it down again and ask a friend or relative to see if they still understand the information you’re trying to get across.
- **Too small!** Often when you try to cram too much information onto a poster, your text becomes so small that it’s uncomfortable to read.
- **Too fancy!** Pictures, images and graphs are great but you have to be just as selective with these as you are with your text. The worst thing you can do is use a picture as your background that is too busy meaning your words will be lost and extremely hard to read.
- **Too confusing!** Just as with an essay, the information in your poster needs to ‘flow’ – and this means making sure the reader of your poster isn’t left wondering where to look next. Go left to right, up and down like columns or any other way that makes sense of your information.
- **Too obscure!** If you can get your message across with limited text and amazing graphics then go for it but be very sure that those graphics mean as much to your audience as they do to you.



The one thing to remember is that aesthetics are subjective – so long as your work is clear, easy to navigate and contains all the information it should, you will produce a good piece of work.

Verbal Presentations

Verbal presentations can be the most nerve-wracking of all but with good preparation they can also be a fantastic way to demonstrate both your knowledge and your skills. It's normal to feel nervous before presenting to an audience, some of the most famous people in the world still admit to being nervous before addressing crowds, but the important thing is to learn how to control your nerves enough to do justice to yourself and what you have to say, be it in the classroom, on a stage or even in a meeting. Take a deep breath and remember that people want to hear what you have to say.



Just as with written presentations discussed above, remember to be CLEAR.

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| Content | It's often said that people will only remember 3 things from a verbal presentation, so make sure those three things are your most important points. Just as with a poster presentation, a verbal presentation requires you to condense information so before you even start writing out a talk or presentation, know what those three key points are. |
| Length | You will probably be given a set time for your presentation which may be as little as 5 minutes (which can feel like a lot longer when you're preparing for it!) or even, 15 or 20 minutes. Even at undergraduate level, you are rarely asked to speak for longer than this. You must keep within this time limit which means you need to give yourself adequate time to practice with a stopwatch. Verbal presentations are often a test of your time management skills in addition to your knowledge. |
| Ease | Just as if you were presenting a poster, you must remember that your audience, perhaps your classmates, may not know as much about your topic as you do so make your information easy to understand by giving a little bit of background or context. The audience should also be able to hear clearly what you are saying so you must listen to yourself and reflect honestly on your own style – do you have a tendency to talk too quickly, do you mumble, are you a quiet speaker? Put yourself in the position of the audience, they want to hear what you have to say so make it easy for them! |
| Appearance | When giving a verbal presentation, it's mostly about what you say and how you say it but don't forget to think about your own appearance. If you are expected to speak to lots of members of your school, to teacher or to visitors, try to dress smartly as this can often make you feel more confident and prepared for the occasion. You must, however, be comfortable – don't wear something that you can't stop thinking about and that is distracting to you. Also, think about how you stand and how you hold yourself as these are important visual clues – head up, shoulder back and relax. |
| Recap | Remember – every kind of presentation needs a beginning, middle and an end. Ensure you give a little background or context, get your key messages across and then briefly summarise those key messages you want your audience to remember. |



Finally, some people like to read out presentations, some like to use flash cards and others use no prompts at all. Flashcards with prompts are probably the most useful, unless you do feel confident to do without anything. Reading from a set script is a mistake that many people, professionals included, are guilty of. The speaker will be looking down at their speech meaning they are hard to hear and their voice will tend to be more monotone and less interesting. If you must do this – don't forget to look up, project your voice and vary your tone. The most spontaneous *sounding* presentations are always the best (although they may have been weeks in the making!).

Above all – be confident. Even if you don't feel it, give the allusion of confidence and people will listen. If you make a mistake, just keep going and don't be too hard on yourself if your final presentation wasn't word for word what you had planned to say.

“There are always three speeches, for every one you actually gave. The one you practiced, the one you gave, and the one you wish you gave.”

–Dale Carnegie

PowerPoint Presentations

Much of the advice offered above for verbal presentations is exactly the same as for giving PowerPoint (or Prezi) presentations so in this section we will concentrate more on actual the slides in a PowerPoint presentation. Love them or hate them, PowerPoints are the most common presentation tool, at school, college, university or work. PowerPoint is a fantastic tool if used correctly, but if not, they can turn a decent verbal presentation into one that's difficult to sit through. Your slides are not the core of your presentation – you are!

Here are the top mistakes made when producing a PowerPoint and how to avoid them!

No Introduction:

A good presentation always tells the audience what to expect. This only requires one slide with a quick breakdown of the structure of your talk. It helps the audience relax and get a sense of your topic. The only slide to come before this should be a title slide with name and title of the presentation.

You also don't need too many slides – about 1 per minute should be enough. Any more and you may be trying to cram too much into your time.

Overview:

- Introduction and background
- Topic 1
- Topic 2
- Topic 3
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Useful links



Too fancy:

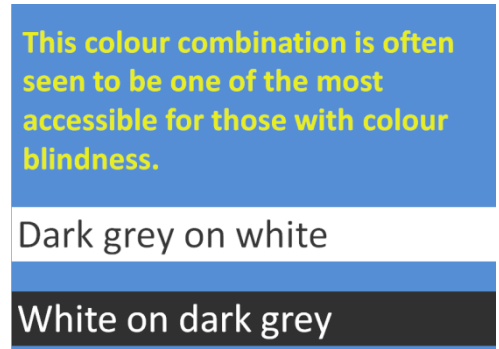
If you want your slides to have a subtle design to them, that are consistent and have a design that doesn't detract from your content, then go ahead. Beware the slides where the design is so fancy, that it's distracting, uses up valuable space and the theme is not even relevant to your topic. You don't have to pick a design from the PowerPoint bank – use a blank background and make your content the engaging part – not the border or background.



Too bright or too dark:

There are lots of suggestions for colour combinations on PowerPoint slides but just remember these two things:

1. Ensure your words contrast enough with the background to be able to read them clearly but don't make them so bright that they're uncomfortable to look at for a prolonged period.
2. Be consistent and ensure your font size is big enough and clear, don't use fancy fonts, your audience won't thank you for it and it makes it extremely difficult for those with dyslexia.



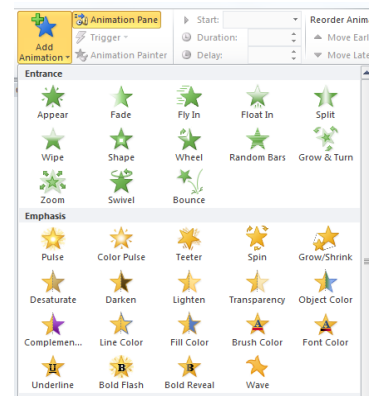
Too much text:

This is one of the most uncomfortable things to experience as an audience member. You're being asked to listen to the speaker whilst read an essay on screen (that's about font size 8pt to fit it all in) and perhaps even try to take notes at the same time! Then you realise that the person presenting isn't even really presenting to you at all – they're reading the text word for word from the screen...often at a different pace to you!



Too much happening:

When you first discovered PowerPoint, making use of all those things flying in and out, upside down, fading in, fading out and making noises was fun. Stop now. There is nothing more distracting than all of those animations happening in one presentation. The most you should ever need in a formal presentation is perhaps for images or text to appear or disappear using the most simple command you can find. Too many animations also allow the possibility of mistakes that you don't want to discover when you're up in front of an audience.



Your slides should act as your prompt, giving the audience something visually engaging to consider whilst you speak to them. Some of the best presentations contain only pictures, or key points of the presentation enabling the audience to note these down whilst listening to the rest of the information.

Know your content and present with confidence – people want to listen to what you have to say.

Further Resources:

Essay Presentation:

University of York example essay:

http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=6&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CD8QFjAFahUKEwigsZvNnOzGAhVJ7BQKHfgWAME&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.york.ac.uk%2Frop%2Fdocuments%2Fessay-on-referencing.docx&ei=3DquVaDTHcnYU_itglgM&usg=AFQjCNGvImcKI-8clFM3Au40wWdaHdbBag&bvm=bv.98197061,d.d24

Durham University Thesis format and appearance requirements (note that this is for Master's degrees and PhDs, but it gives you an idea of how to set out your own work): <https://www.dur.ac.uk/graduate.school/current-students/submissionandbeyond/thesis.submission/preparing.thesis/format/>

Posters:

Designing Conference posters (lots of tips and further links): <http://colinpurrington.com/tips/poster-design>

A very bad example of an academic poster and why: <http://colinpurrington.com/2012/example-of-bad-scientific-poster/>

University of Leicester advice, tutorials and templates: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/help-with/posters>

University of Liverpool's advice on poster making:

<https://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/computingservices/printing/making-an-impact-with-your-poster.pdf>

Verbal presentations:

Tips on oral presentations: <http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/professors-guide/2010/02/24/15-strategies-for-giving-oral-presentations>

Newcastle University's advice on giving oral presentations:

<http://lorien.ncl.ac.uk/ming/dept/Tips/present/comms.htm>

Tips from the University of Bath:

<http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCcQFjABahUKEwjWiJ7uve7GAhUEPhQKHZ9aAA8&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bath.ac.uk%2FImf%2Fdownload%2F50983&ei=K2qvVZbHI4T8UJ-1gXg&usg=AFQjCNHteOtNtnKJ-Bp-u84-UTF65K6MxA&bvm=bv.98197061,d.ZGU>

PowerPoint Presentations:

Tips from Microsoft Office: <https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/Tips-for-creating-and-delivering-an-effective-presentation-f43156b0-20d2-4c51-8345-0c337cefb88b>

A terrible example of a PowerPoint presentation:

http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=6&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CDcQFjAFahUKEwjdn46Jze7GAhUFjywKHem2AP8&url=http%3A%2F%2Fnob.cs.ucdavis.edu%2Fclasses%2Fecs293a-2011-04%2Fpresenting%2FWorstPresentationEverStandAlone.ppt&ei=HnqvVd2YHYWesgHp7YL4Dw&usg=AFQjCNE9_XZnlQ7E8GipjUt5uB6TxNJSZw&bvm=bv.98197061,d.bGg

How to make a great PowerPoint presentation: <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Great-PowerPoint-Presentation>