

Let's get on with it!



What is a SEMINAR PRESENTATION?

A seminar presentation is a well-planned talk given on a researched topic, which stimulates discussion. This discussion takes place immediately after the presentation.

An effective presentation can be achieved if you go through a process. As shown in the diagram, you must plan, prepare and practise your presentation before you go on to present it. The first three overlap and are separate from the actual presentation. (See diagram below).



Before your Presentation (Plan/Prepare/Practise)

01 RESEARCH your seminar topic. You can gather information from a variety of sources which include conversations, interviews, print and non-print media, field trips, original experiments, library sources and personal experiences.

02 WORK OUT how much supporting detail you can fit into your presentation, given the **TIME** allotted. Thus extra material has to be learnt so you can speak without additional notes. It is important that your presentation does not exceed the **TIME LIMIT** your lecturer gives you.

03 STRUCTURE your seminar. Like an essay, a seminar presentation should have 3 distinct parts - an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

Introduction

There are two main parts:

- a clear well prepared opening sentence which focuses on your topic. It may state your objective or present the problem you will deal with in the seminar. It tells the audience what you are going to talk about.
- a brief outline of the structure or plan of your talk. It should be clear to your audience what route you will take to reach your objective, or to explain your problem and offer solutions for it.

Body

The body consists of a clear and concise coverage of each section listed in the outline, keeping to the order presented in the introduction. It might consist of:

- the main points to build up a convincing argument, perhaps under various headings.
- a list of the main parts of a mechanism or system with sub-sections.
- stages in a process, with substages, if any.
- classification.

Conclusion

Concluding remarks should be brief but confident, making a strong ending. Usually they are followed by a request for comments or questions.

04 Think about how you can use **VISUAL MATERIALS** to enhance your performance. These should be large, vivid and relevant. It is much easier for listeners to understand figures if they can see them as well as hear them. There is a range of visual

materials you can use - PowerPoint, overhead projector, handouts, posters, maps, pictures, brochures, whiteboard, audio visuals and many more.

Here are some tips for preparing your visual aids:

- Plan and produce your visuals well in advance of the seminar presentation date.
- Have a clear purpose for each visual. You may wish to: give an outline or overview of the main points you intend to cover, illustrate or emphasize a main point in your argument, provide statistics to prove a point, or display a diagram of a process or a system.
- Create clear and uncluttered visuals without too much detail and with all the letters large enough to be read from the back of the room. Font 22+ is recommended.

05 Think about the **LANGUAGE** you will use - make it as simple and natural as possible. Avoid long sentences and highly technical vocabulary. Instead be clear, accurate and concise.

Below are some examples of useful language:

Suggested introductory phrases

This morning/afternoon/evening

I'd like to	discuss.....
I'm going to	talk about....
I want to	consider.....
	report on ...
	give a brief report on

My topic this morning is.....

During the next ten minutes, I will explain.....

Suggested phrases for summarising the outline:

First I will	explain....
Secondly	describe....
Finally	outline....
	report on.....
	define.....
	analyse....

First/To begin with

Second/Next/After that....

Then....

Suggested phrases to indicate transitions

I'd like to move on now to ...
I turn now to ...
Moving now to ...
Having looked at ... I will deal with ...
Next I will describe/explain/define/
analyse/list the findings, etc.

Suggested phrases to begin the conclusion

So...
We've seen that...
It is clear from the information I have given,
that...
In short, it appears that/it is clear that...
To sum up, it can be stated that...
In conclusion, we can/may say that ... etc

06 **PRACTISE** as much as possible. This is a vital part of seminar preparation.

Practise to:

- get to know your material and gain confidence.
- pronounce any awkward words or phrases well.
- get your timing right.

Think ahead about the questions you may be asked, and how you can answer them.

During your Presentation (Present)

01 Voice

→ Volume

Your voice should be loud enough to be heard at the back of the room, or use a microphone. Keep your head up to effectively project your voice across the room.

→ Pace

Not too fast so that your audience can't follow, but not too slow so that your audience becomes bored. Intonation should be lively; avoid a monotone if possible.

02 Presence

- **Appearance**
Let the setting, whether formal or informal, determine what you wear. Conform to the expectations of the setting. If this is professional, then dress smartly.
- **Posture**
Your body should be upright and relaxed but not slouching. Avoid distracting gestures, e.g. swaying, pacing, fidgeting, etc.
- **Eye contact**
This is very important! Move your eyes around the group as if you are talking to people personally.

Hint: Avoid reading your presentation at all cost. Use short notes to refer to from time to time.

03 Attitude

Be enthusiastic and express a lively interest in your topic. Have fun and your audience will, too.

04 Structure

Follow a logical structure so that your audience can follow your thoughts. Make your transitions from one section to the next clear. The audience must know that you have finished one topic and are moving on to the next. Use a visual aid of your seminar plan if possible.

05 Content

- This is where you share the most important details of your topic. Make sure you time yourself well and keep the audience focused.
- Listing points is often useful: e.g. The first reason ... etc.
- Make the connections between different parts of the talk explicit, so that the audience does not get confused.

06 Nerves

It is normal to feel nervous. Try to keep in mind that your audience is sympathetic, and that although you feel nervous, usually, they will not perceive it. Slow deep breaths before starting can help to calm you down.

07 Using the Overhead Projector (OHP)/Document Camera

- First, project an outline of the seminar to show the audience the material you intend to cover.
- Use a pointer, placing it directly onto the transparency. If you want to point to the screen itself,

stand well back so that you can continue to face your audience.

- If you plan carefully you can lay one transparency on top of another and build up the information.
- Avoid additional writing on the transparency. Instead use the whiteboard for further notes.
- Turn the projector off between viewings. It may be a distraction. You will then have the attention of the audience.

08 Using PowerPoint

This can be a very exciting way of presenting visual information. However, it does have some disadvantages you should bear in mind during preparation.

- The projected image on a large screen is not the same as on the computer. Aim for sharp contrast between script and background. Check projected image before finalising your choice. Make sure your print is large enough.
- Fancy backgrounds look fun on screen, but their appeal fades after you have projected them several times. It is better to choose a simple design. Enhance your talk by using Clip Art or Animation.
- Limit the number of images and allow plenty of time between each one. Changing too many too fast will only result in your listeners losing concentration.

After your Presentation (Discussion)

Once you have presented to the audience, it is DISCUSSION time. You must invite the audience to ask questions and/or give comments. Here are some tips to help you with handling questions:

- If you are unable to answer a question, say so. Do not make up an answer for the sake of answering the question.
- Take a little while to think of an answer to the question before answering.
- If you are not sure of the meaning of the question, ask for clarification.
- Wait for the questions or comments to be fully expressed before answering.
- Don't spend too long addressing each question.
- If there are no questions, generate a discussion with a question/comment of your own.
(*Taito & Sameer, 2003*)



Activity

1. On the lines below write out the opening sentence for the seminar you will present. Then prepare to say it aloud, clearly and confidently while looking at your audience, not at the paper.

OPENING SENTENCE:

2. Make a plan of your seminar presentation which includes the main sections you will cover and the important points that will come within each of them.

Are you going to?

- Describe a mechanism or system?
(Analyse)
- Outline the steps in a process/procedure?
(Define/Classify)
- Give a preliminary report on the stages of a project that have been covered so far?
(Argue a case)

Write the second, and probably third or even fourth sentences of your talk. These sentences will summarise the plan you have just made, to give your audience a quick overview of what you will cover in your talk. Write as briefly as possible.

SECOND SENTENCE:

3. The following are some voice exercises you could try.

The first exercise is for consonants, the second for vowel sounds. With each, pronounce the sounds of the respective letters (i.e. 'puh', not 'pee'); say each about ten times over, getting faster and faster, but without losing the individual sounds.

→ Consonant exercise: *p - f - th - t - s - k - h*

→ Vowel exercise: *ee - ih - eh - ah - aw - uh - o - oo*

If you find you have problems with particular sounds, you can obviously concentrate on these; for example, the following is particularly good for exercising the mouth on r and l sounds:

→ *'Red lorry, yellow lorry'.*

For more Practice, try the following with someone else and then on your own:

→ *She sells seashells by the seashore. The shells she sells are surely seashells, so if she sells shells on the seashore, I'm sure she sells seashore shells.*

→ *Five fresh fish specials daily*

→ *Unique Tui Tubou*

→ *Another long block of non-stop talk*

→ *Pita Pepa picked a peck of pickled peppers. Did Pita Pepa pick a peck of pickled peppers? If Pita Pepa picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers Pita Pepa picked?*

→ *I slit the sheet, the sheet I slit; and on the slitted sheet I sit.*

Reference

Taito, M & Sameer, M. 2003. *English Language Skills Book 3 Listening and Speaking*, The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, The University of the South Pacific, Suva.