

Presentations tips and useful phrases

For each tip below, brainstorm useful phrases to do the good things, and cross the bad recommendations off (without brainstorming suitable language).

Beginning the presentation/ Introduction

- You really should show that you have noticed the audience/ try to make a personal connection to the audience
- I'd recommend always mentioning your company or university/ introducing yourself with some general information, like you would if you were meeting face to face
- I'd generally recommend introducing yourself with information that is relevant to the topic of your presentation
- My advice is to state your aim
- I'd strongly recommend explaining the structure of the presentation
- Don't forget to ask the audience questions
- I would advise you to use rhetorical questions
- My recommendation is to survey the audience
- My chief recommendation is to try to make your presentation seem timely/ up to date
- It's a good idea to use quotations
- I would suggest using humour
- My suggestion is to apologise (after or in advance) for your presentation
- If I were you, I'd state when you expect questions
- If it were me, I'd clearly mark transitions, e.g. between the introduction and the main body of the presentation

Ending

- One idea is to summarise what you have said during the presentation
- Make sure you summarise what you have said during the presentation and say what conclusions that information leads to or what the most important point is (i.e. add something extra at the end)
- Your only option is to stand around in silence waiting for more questions and if there are no more say thank you and sit down.
- Whatever you do, give a reason for ending the Q and A stage.
- I'd definitely invite further questions later.

Body language and gestures

- It's generally best to stand in one position for the whole presentation
- One thing you could do is move your body as much as you can.
- Using gestures that have clear meanings works for me
- The most important thing to do is to read the information off the PowerPoint slides
- Avoiding eye contact would probably work.
- Pointing at things as you refer to them might help.

Preparation

- Preparing a script and reading from it is worth a try.
- I can't recommend putting all the information on the PowerPoint slides in full sentences strongly enough.
- Some advice I'd like to pass on to you is to prepare fifteen slides for a five minute presentation.
- I highly recommend using a font size of 6 to 8

Miscellaneous tips

- Have you thought about trying to get through without pausing?
- My personal recommendation would be to fill silence/ think aloud.
- Feeling free to go off topic for a while always works for me.
- Without fail, correct yourself if you make grammar mistakes.
- By far the best thing to do is to only correct yourself if the meaning might not be clear.

What's the most useful advice above?

Underline the useful language above for giving recommendations.

Use similar sentences to give more advice on presenting.

Suggested answers

Beginning the presentation/ Introduction

- Show that you have noticed the audience/ Try to make a personal connection – “I can see...”, “It’s nice to see...”, “I’m sure you are all..., so...”
- Mention your company or university/ introducing yourself with some general information – It is much better to do the thing below.
- Introduce yourself with info relevant to the topic of your presentation – “... which is why I am interested in...”, “and my area of research is today’s topic, which is...”
- State your aim – “By the end of my presentation, I want to show you that/ prove to you that/ change your mind about...”, “I aim to...”, “The purpose/ aim of today’s presentation is...”, “My purpose in presenting this to you is...”
- Explain the structure of the presentation – “I’ve divided my presentation into...parts.”, “I’ll start by...”, “First/ First of all,...”, “In the second part,...”, “(And) then/ After that/ Next”, “Last/ Last of all/ Lastly/ To finish up/ The last stage.../ Finally/ I’ll end with...”
- Ask the audience questions – Not usually a good idea and difficult to do properly, as they might not know if they should answer. It is better to do one of the two things below.
- Use rhetorical questions – This can be okay, e.g. “Have you ever wondered...?”, “Imagine.... How would you...?”, “Did you know that...?”
- Survey the audience – “How many people here...?”, “Hands up if...”, “Please raise your hand if...”, “Let’s have a show of hands.”
- Make it seem timely/ up to date – “According to the latest research,...”, “I read just this morning that...”, “One of the most pressing problems in the modern world is...”
- Use quotations - “I’d like to quote...”, “There’s a famous quotation that goes...”, “... once said...”, “... is famous for saying...”, “I can’t put it better than... who said...”, “The words on this slide come from...”
- Use humour – “I found a joke about this on the internet that goes...”, “... Only joking!”, “In my field we often joke that...”
- Apologise for your presentation – This is not a good idea as people are likely to start thinking those negative things.
- State when you expect questions - “Please leave all questions until the end of...”, “Please feel free to interrupt/ ask questions at any time/ stage.”, “I will leave ten minutes at the end for questions/ for a Q&A session.”, “If anything I say isn’t clear, please let me know.”, “I’ll be happy to answer any questions at the end.”
- Clearly mark transitions – “So”, “Right”, “Okay”, “Moving on to...”, “The next thing I want to speak about...”, “I think I’ve covered that point, so now...”, “I think I’ve covered that point, so now I want to speak about...”, “Moving on to the next slide/ topic/ point/ section/ part of my presentation,...”, “Let’s move on to...”, “That leads us on nicely to the next point I want to deal with, which is...”

Ending

- Summarise what you have said – It’s a good idea but the tip below is better.
- Summarise what you’ve said during the presentation and say what conclusions that information leads to or what the most important point is (i.e. add something extra) – “This means that...”, “The consequences of this are...”, “The government should therefore...”, “For those reasons, I hope you all...”, “I hope I’ve convinced you...”, “If there is one thing I’d like you to take away from this presentation, it’s...”, “To restate my main point,...”, “I think all this proves that...”, “It is quite difficult to draw conclusions,

but...”, “What conclusions can we draw from all the info we’ve seen today? Well,…”

- Stand around in silence waiting for more questions and if there are no more say thank you and sit down. – See the two tips below for much better ways.
- Give a reason for ending the Q and A stage. – “I can see that the next presenter is eager to get started, so...”, “I need to hand over to my colleague, so...”, “I seem to have run out of time, so...”, “I’m sure you are all ready for lunch, so...”, “I’ve already gone on for too long, so...”, “If there are no further questions,…”
- Invite further questions later. – “Here is my email address if...”, “Please come up and talk to me if...”, “I’ll be around all day if...”, “If anyone still has any questions, I’ll be happy to answer them individually.”

Body language and gestures

- Stand in one position for the whole presentation – This is a bad idea as it will be boring, might block people’s view and you will always make eye contact with the same people.
- Move your body as much as you can. – This would be very distracting.
- Use gestures with clear meanings. - “Attention please”, “Hi”, “Over here”, “Silly me”, “Secondly”, “Pass it along”, “Right!/ Okay!...”, “Remember...”, “Raise your hand”, “That’s a difficult question”/ “Let me think”, “Hope so”, “So so”/ “More or less”
- Read off the slides – This is bad body language and pointless to listen to.
- Avoid eye contact. – This is a bad idea.
- Point at things as you refer to them might help. – “If you look at this,...”, “This is an example of...”, “Over here...”, “I’m pointing at...”, “These three bullet points represent...”, “Figure One is...”, “These figures (= numbers) come from...”, “This chart/ diagram/ bar chart/ table/ line graph/ pie chart/ axis/ column/ row...”, “You can see from this... that...”, “I’d like to draw your attention to...”

Preparation

- Prepare a script and read from it. – Much better to prepare notes, although you could write out the introduction in full.
- Put all the information on the slides in full sentences. – If you do this they could just read the slides without you being there.
- 15 slides for a 5 min presentation. – One or two per minute is usually about right.
- I highly recommend using a font size of 6 to 8 – This is probably too small.

Miscellaneous tips

- Try to get through without pausing – This is a terrible idea. Good use of pauses makes it more interesting and easier to understand.
- Fill silence/ Think aloud. – “Well”, “I have the information here somewhere.”, “Just a second while I look at my notes/ find the right page in my notes.”, “What was I going to say next? Oh yes,...”, “How can I best explain? I suppose...”, “That’s a difficult/ an interesting question.”, “Let me think.”, “Let me see.”, “Erm.”, “Where was I? Oh yes.”, “What is the next point? Oh, yes...”, “What’s the word?”
- Feel free to go off topic. – This is fine as that is the difference between a presentation and a speech or performance, as long as you get back on topic soon! - “That reminds me of...”, “By the way,...”, “Anyway,...”, “Getting back to the main point,...”, “Where was I? Oh, yes...”, “As I was saying,…”
- Correct yourself if you make grammar mistakes. – A bad idea as the presentation will be much longer and more boring.
- Only correct yourself if the meaning might not be clear. – “I meant to say...”