



PREPARATION FOR EFFECTIVE SPEAKING

The following is a guide to preparing a talk:

1 DECIDE ON YOUR REASON FOR GIVING THE TALK

2 IDENTIFY YOUR TOPICS.

3 SET A GOAL.

- What is the general **purpose** of the talk? To inform/entertain/persuade/stimulate?
- Identify the specific purposes of the talk.
- What exactly do you want your audience to do/think/feel when you have finished?

4 ANALYSE YOUR AUDIENCE.

- Who are they?
- What do they already know about the topic?
- What is their specific interest in it?
- What are their attitudes and feelings about the topic?
- What are their attitudes and feelings about the speaker?
- What are their attitudes and feelings about related subjects and issues?
- How are they feeling (depends on time of day to a certain extent)?

5 IDENTIFY YOUR MAIN POINTS.

- Choose from three to five main points used to develop this summary.
- Decide the order in which these points will be used.
- Decide on a means of supporting each main point, e.g. statistics, visuals, stories, examples, analogies, case histories, quotations, authority figures.
- Work out sub-points to support the main points.

6 DEFINE THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR TALK.

- Prepare a precise introduction with an attention-getting statement, e.g. question, quotation, startling statement, a statistic, reference to the occasion, etc.
- Prepare the conclusion.
- Prepare transitions, or how you are going to move smoothly from one point to the next

7 CHECK THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

Make sure everything is ready. This applies to computers, display facilities (PowerPoint Presentations, leads, data projector, screen, pens, blackout, lights, Blue-Tack, drawing pins), ventilation, seating and visibility, microphone, lighting and heating.

8 ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS.

- Prepare backups of slides.
- Make sure disks and USBs will work on the computer in the room you are using (PC, Mac, etc.).
- Prepare paper backup with clear, large font text (useful if computer breaks down!).
- Prepare prompt cards, with brief notes to aid delivery, written in large writing.



SEMINARS & ORAL PRESENTATIONS



- 9 **PRACTISE YOUR TALK.**
Do this, if you can, in front of a helpful audience, including all the visual aids, as well as the words you intend to use. Be careful not to practise gestures – let them come naturally.
- 10 **BE KIND TO YOURSELF.**
Many people find giving an oral presentation a very frightening prospect. You are not alone in feeling scared. If you feel overwhelmed by the whole idea, come and see us in The Commons, or make an appointment to see a Counsellor. Don't suffer in silence – we are here to help.

Adapted from Beisler, F, Scheeres, H and Pinner, D 1987, *Communication skills*, Pitman, Melbourne.

DELIVERING YOUR TALK

BEFORE THE EVENT

1. Find out how long the seminar is, then allocate 60% of your time to your talk and 40% to the discussion.
 2. Give 60% of your delivery time to the development, 15% to the introduction and 25% to the conclusion.
- ★ **Discussion is an important part of a seminar. Discussion is used as a teaching strategy at Australian universities. Lecturers believe that students will learn from each other as well as from them.**

AT THE SEMINAR

1. Calm yourself before you talk. Make time to organise your notes, pens, PowerPoint slides, tables etc. and then take a few quiet minutes to compose yourself. Run through what you need to say and do, rather than focus on how you feel.
2. Introduce the topic clearly and tell the audience what they can expect to hear.
3. Do not read your assignment paper. Look at your audience and talk about the content in the paper.
4. Refer to the points on your prompt cards and speak about them naturally. Do not deliver a memorised, word-perfect address.
5. Use cohesion devices (linking words and phrases) to keep your audience informed as to where the talk is heading and how ideas relate to each other.
6. Display a knowledge of your subject by quoting two to four times from authorities (remember to include reference details). Do not quote what your lecturers said in lecture notes – they do not want to hear their own words repeated. Paraphrase and refer to references where appropriate.
7. Speak clearly and a little more slowly than normal.
8. Get your intonation right when emphasising major points, making asides, asking questions and making statements.
9. Control your hands. Do not fiddle with your clothing, hair, pencil or papers.
10. Look at your audience. Establish eye contact with most people at some stage of your talk. Make sure that you do not turn your face or body away from the audience when you are using audio-visual aids.
11. Look pleasant. Stand or sit in a relaxed way.



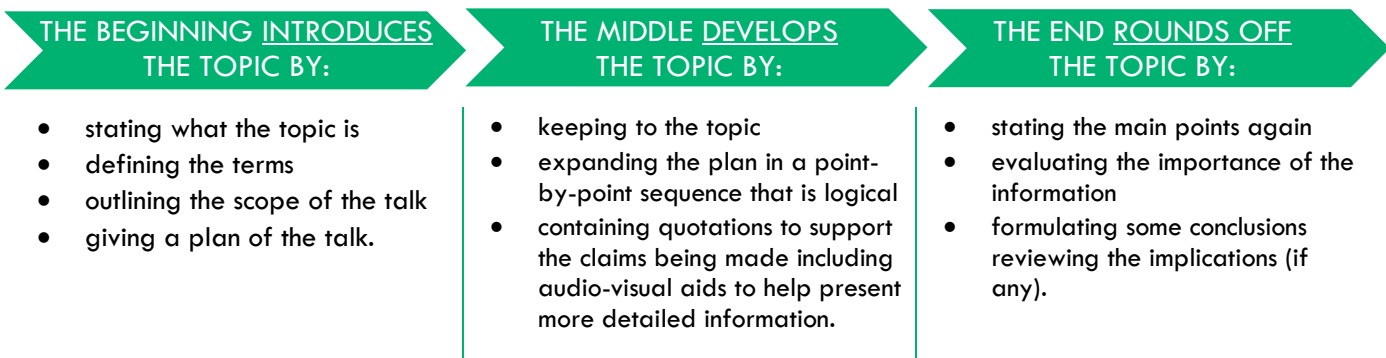
SEMINARS & ORAL PRESENTATIONS



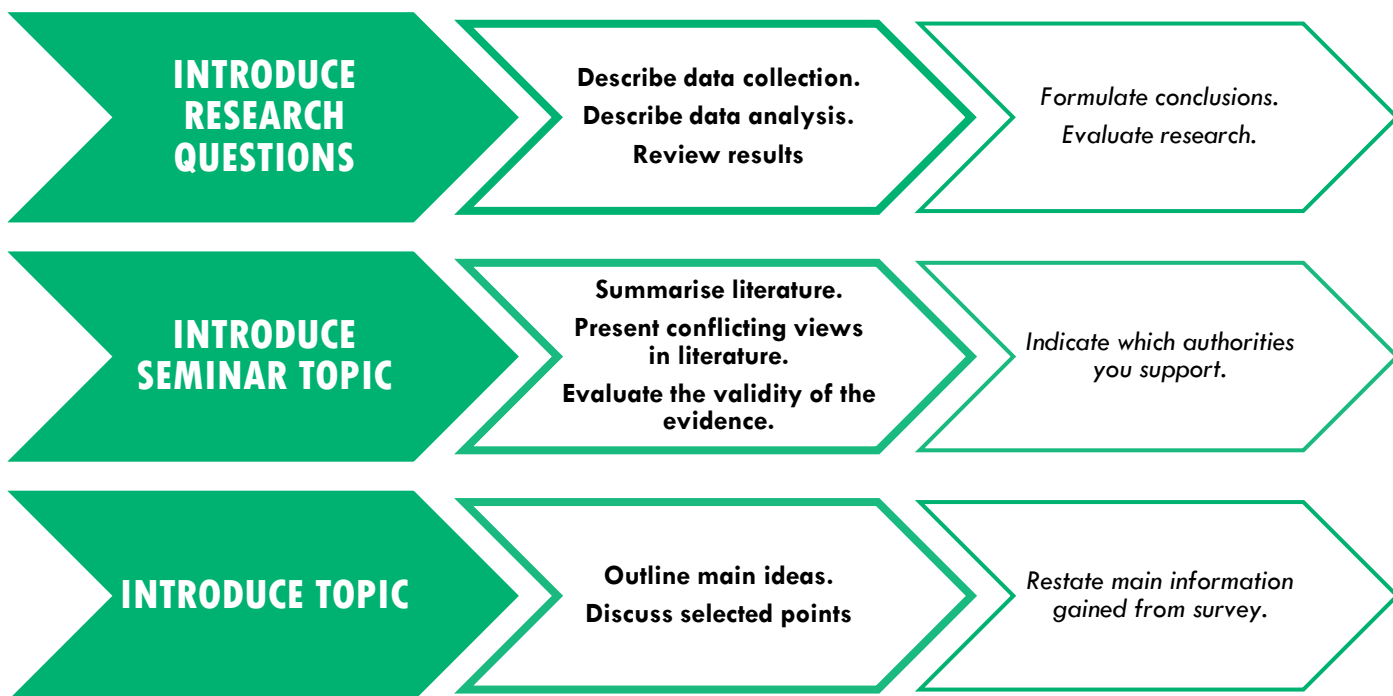
12. Do not hand out materials while you are actually speaking, as this will take the audience's attention off what you are saying. If the handout is necessary to understand the talk, or is used for students to add notes to, hand it out prior to the talk.

REVEALING THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR TALK

Formal talks are structured. They have a beginning, a middle and an end.



You can talk about any seminar topic following this basic plan. Common variations are:



When you give a seminar, your whole talk should aim to communicate your ideas. Your communicative task is to discuss, evaluate, review, describe, analyse, compare and explain your material. You must show your aim to your audience at the beginning, otherwise they will not understand the points you are making or why you are making them.

You should make it easy for your audience to follow your ideas throughout your talk and so you need to inform them frequently about the direction of your talk.





You should use linking words and phrases that tell your audience:

- what you are doing
- where the talk is heading
- what they should remember
- how they should relate these main ideas to each other.

These linking words and phrases are called cohesion devices. (See the SLC brochure *Linking words and phrases* for some ideas)

- You should always let your audience know how you want to handle the seminar. You have the right to decide whether you want to be interrupted or not. Make your position clear before you start your presentation.
- **Never** start your presentation by apologising for the quality of your work.

References:

McEvedy, M, Packham, G and Smith, P 1986, *Speaking in academic settings*, Nelson, Melbourne.

Martin, R, Cox 2007, *What every student should know about preparing effective oral presentations*, Pearson Allyn & Bacon, Boston.

PREPARE

The points in this handout can be summarised by the acronym **PREPARE**. A good speaker should **prepare** carefully for their talk and be:

P	URPOSEFUL	Indicate the structure of your talk and give your audience a clear sense of direction.
R	ELEVANT	Make your material relevant to the topic and to the audience.
E	NTHUSIASTIC	Show that you enjoy your subject.
P	ROFICIENT	Maintain control throughout your talk by researching and preparing your material carefully. Practise using the equipment in advance and be ready to answer audience questions.
A	CADEMIC	Use formal language and ensure that the style and content of your slides are appropriate.
R	ELIABLE	Provide sources for your information. Include references when necessary and be prepared to give your audience a short bibliography on request.
E	NGAGING	Keep your audience's attention by using good eye contact and delivering your material as a talk, rather than reading from your notes or reciting from memory. Use unobtrusive cards for your notes so that they do not hide your face.