

Study **SMART**

BUILD THE SKILLS FOR YOUR SUCCESS



Speaking, Collaborating and Presenting

PDF resources included in this booklet

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Speaking, Collaborating and Presenting

What interpersonal skills do you need to succeed in your studies and the future workplace?

Speaking, Collaborating and Presenting

Presenting your ideas – confidently and coherently – in front of an anonymous crowd, among a room full of peers, with professional colleagues, or with clients, can still be a nervous affair for a lot of us. But it's a chance to tell your story, to be heard, and to make an impact. You can get better at it but it takes practise, feedback, and more practise. Attend Study Smart events to get a chance to access the expertise and space you need to practise your presentation, to use your voice, and to find your audience. And use this guide as your starting point.

STUDY SMART WEBSITE

Find this section on the Study Smart website here:

http://westernsydney.edu.au/studysmart/home/speaking_collaborating_and_prese



Communicating Your Ideas and Presenting

Communicating Your Ideas

Did you know that your university lecture, tutorial, seminar, or class is meant to be a participative experience for both students and academics? There is usually even scope for discussion in lectures. You need to be conscious of the expectations for each activity, and generally the academic will help to make their expectations clear early in the session. For example, you may need to be more formal in a lecture compared to a tutorial.

Remember that you're only human, and so is the academic. As long as you're polite, courteous, and engaged, you'll be fine. There are some helpful phrases below to get you started if you're feeling uncertain.

Phrasing

Your ideas and thoughts are valuable, even if people don't agree with you or they're contrary to the content being delivered in class. To make sure others can appreciate your perspective and not just switch off, you need to make sure you deliver your ideas properly.

If you're struggling to find the right words, or to know when to say the right words in your class, the following lists are for you!

Phrases for starting a conversation or discussion, and for asking someone's opinion:

Formal:

Could I ask...?
Could you tell me...?
Perhaps you could tell...

Informal:

I'm interested in...
What do you think of...

Phrases for interrupting:

Formal:

Excuse me for interrupting, but...
May I interrupt for a moment?
I'd like to say something, if I may.
May I ask a question?

Informal:

Excuse me...
Sorry, but...
Just a second...
Can I add something?
Can I say something here?
Can I ask a question?

Phrases to use when you are explaining your opinion:

First of all,...
The main reason is...
The main thing is...
The most important thing is...
Secondly,...
The other reason is...
Another reason is...
Besides that, ...
And on top of that,...
And finally,...

Phrases to use when you want to refer to a point in someone's argument:

The trouble is...
The problem is...
The trouble with...
The problem with...
The point is...
Don't forget that...

Phrases to use when you want to say something you think is new information:

Do you realise that...
Believe it or not,...
You may not believe it, but...
It may sound strange, but...
The surprising thing is...
Surprisingly,...
Oddly enough,...
Funnily enough,...

Phrases to use when what you are going to say may surprise or shock:

Actually,...
The only thing is...
To tell you the truth,...
To be honest,...
Frankly,...

Phrases to use when giving your opinion, but when you are not certain:

I think...
I suppose...
I suspect that...
I'm pretty sure that...

I'm fairly certain that...
I wonder if...


Phrases to use when you are certain of your opinion:

I'm certain that...
I'm sure that
It's my opinion that...
I'm convinced that...
I honestly believe that...
I strongly believe that...
Without a doubt...
I'm positive...
I'm absolutely certain that...

Phrases to use when you want to emphasise that what you are going to say is your own opinion:

In my opinion,...
I personally believe...
I personally think...
I personally feel...
Not everyone will agree with me, but...
In my opinion,...
From my point of view,...
Well, personally,...
In my case...

Reflection questions

 Think of two classes that you currently attend where participation is encouraged, and you would like to be more engaged.

What do you think is the tone for each of the classes? For example, is it formal or informal?

Depending on the tone, think about two phrases from the table above that you could use for each class.

Attempt the phrases in each of the classes.

How did you go? Think about what you could do differently, improve on or even continue to do if it went well.

Listen to how your classmates share their ideas in class. How did others respond? To what extent did they contribute new ideas to the class discussion? What could you learn from them?

Presenting

It is vital to structure your presentation in a logical way so that the audience can follow your argument. Just as any written assessment requires several drafts and editing, writing an oral presentation requires you to draft, redraft, and edit your work.

There are several ways to structure a talk but an easy and simple way is by dividing the presentation into the introduction, body, and conclusion, just as you would an essay.

Introduction

In the introduction of the presentation, you introduce the topic and preview what you will say.

It's important to give a preview so that the audience knows what to expect – otherwise they might be confused and lose the thread of your argument. Some people also like to start a speech with a joke or a quotation to get the audience thinking.



Example introduction

topic of talk → My talk today is about the government's policies on mass unemployment — in particular about the Green and White Papers on unemployment and how effective these policies are. I'm going to begin by giving a brief summary of their main policy recommendations, and then I'm going to focus on just three of their recommendations and talk about each one in terms of how practical it is, and how effective it is likely to be in dealing with the problems of mass unemployment. At the end I'll make a few suggestions for other alternatives that the government did not think of.

outline of talk ↗ ↘

From Inglis (2007), p. 340.

Body

Present your main ideas in a logical sequence, following the outline you gave in the introduction. Speak slowly, and leave pauses between each main idea so that the audience has time to take it in. Use transitional language as you move between ideas, e.g. 'Now that I've explained the third policy recommendation, I'm going to discuss how practical and effective it is.'

Refer back to the [Study Smart website](#) for more information on structuring your ideas. Use [visual aids](#) (PDF, 124 kB) to support your ideas and keep the audience interested.

Conclusion

Summarise what you've said and end with a strong closing statement or recommendation, just as you would in a written essay.

If required, invite the audience to ask questions or give comments – or you could even end by inviting the audience to answer a question of your own.

Should you thank the audience for listening?

There are two schools of thought on this issue. One is that yes, it's always polite to thank your audience; the other is that the audience should in fact be thanking the speaker for presenting. So it's really up to you.

You might like to thank your audience at the beginning of your talk instead, and say something like 'Thank you for being here today'. However, if you're not sure how to end your talk, or how to show the audience that you've finished speaking, saying 'Thank you for your attention' sends a clear signal that your talk is over.

See for example this TED talk: [Arthur Benjamin, 'Teach statistics before calculus!'](#) (Online video, 2:58)

References

Ruthven-Stuart, P. (2001). *Phrases for the Second Year Seminar*. Retrieved from http://www.nsknet.or.jp/~peterr-s/zemi/kiso_seminar_phrases.html



Teamwork

Why teamwork?

In most workplaces, as at university, you can expect to do at least some of your work in a group or team.

You may be thinking, “Ugh, teamwork! I’d rather have my leg cut off!” You are not alone. Many people have had an experience of group- or team-work that turned into a nightmare.

The bad news is that when you get to the workplace, working in a team may be unavoidable. The good news is that you and your team members can learn skills and processes to make teamwork more enjoyable and more productive.

What’s the difference between a group and a team? A group may be a collection of people working independently. For example, a group of modelling club members may meet regularly but each independently build their own model car. A team works together to achieve a common objective. For example, if the modelling club members worked together to produce a single large-scale model car for an exhibition (a shared goal), they would be working as a team.

The **Western Sydney Solar Team** is a good example of a team of WSU students who work together to build a solar car and race it.

Teamwork has both challenges and benefits. Two main benefits are:

The total range of skills and experience in a team is usually greater than for the average individual. This can mean the team can achieve better outcomes than an individual could achieve working alone.

Working in a well-functioning team can be enjoyable, and build the skills and experience of team members. You may even make long-term friends.

What’s needed for successful teamwork?

Research into teams demonstrates that successful teamwork needs both **people skills** and **project management skills**.

To help manage your team and achieve your team’s objective, complete the team charter at the end of this document.

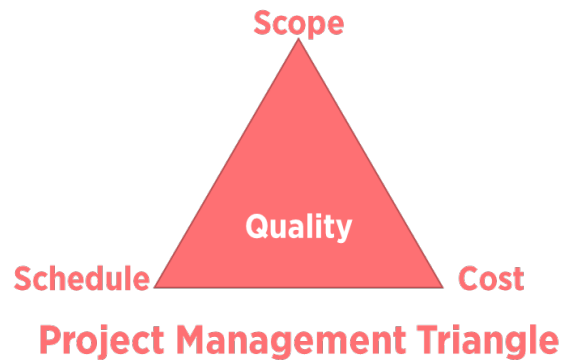
People skills

Teams work well when team members:
share goals
trust, respect, and support each other
feel safe to communicate their ideas
pay attention to people skills like reading how people
feel through nonverbal signs

Teams work poorly when team members:
put themselves above the team
are disrespectful or untrustworthy
complain or criticise
believe that “teams always fail” and don’t commit to
working towards team success

It’s normal for team members to disagree at times, especially when the team is in the early stages of formation. If you manage your disagreements and debates well and in a respectful way, it can lead to a wider range of ideas and better decisions. However, conflict can harm the team’s functioning and productiveness, so you do need to make an effort to prevent or manage it.

Some ways to prevent and manage conflict include communicating clearly and assertively (but not aggressively), trying to understand the other’s perspective, and looking for a solution that benefits everyone. Creating a team charter where team members agree on team goals and behaviours can help prevent conflicts and provides agreed-on strategies to deal with them if they arise.



Project management skills

Successful teams define the project (project scope) and manage the project tasks effectively.

What is ‘scope’? Scope is essentially what is included, and what is not included, in the project. To define scope, you need to decide the deliverables required for the project, and their features.

Examples of deliverables and features at university could include a presentation of 15 minutes with visual aids, a report of 2000 words with tables and figures, or an essay of 1500 words with scholarly references.

If your project is a team assignment, the assignment information will tell you what the deliverables and features are.

You must also decide what features are not in project scope. That is, what you won’t include as part of the project.

Actions

- Define the project’s scope, and how you will know your team has achieved the project objectives.
- Break the project into small, manageable tasks.
- Estimate how long each task will take.
- Plan the order in which to do the tasks. (Some tasks cannot be started until another one is completed, while some tasks can be done at the same time.)
- Allocate tasks.

- Track progress of tasks.
- Adjust project plan if tasks are running behind schedule.

Projects have due dates, budgets and other constraints. Three inter-related project constraints are **scope**, **schedule**, and **cost**, often called the 'Project Management Triangle'. Cost includes not only money but also amount of work (hours x people) and other costs.

Together, scope, schedule and cost determine the quality of your project deliverables.



Use existing skills and develop new skills

Get to know the skills and experience that team members have, and how you can use them in your team project. You can learn from each other to develop new skills.

Pay attention to areas in which skills are needed, where team members don't have experience. One or more team members may need to develop skills in that area. You will also want to track these areas to ensure that they don't become a problem.

For example, your team may need to schedule project tasks, but nobody in the team has done it before. To develop skills, one or more team members might learn how to schedule tasks. Also, team members could be assigned to track task schedules by paying extra attention to whether tasks are running to time.

Steps and tools for teamwork success

Team charter

A tool that teams can use to prepare themselves for working together successfully is a "Team Charter" or "Teamwork Agreement". To complete a team charter, all team members discuss and agree on aspects such as team goals and behaviours.

Developing and agreeing on important aspects of working in a team, as when preparing a Team Charter, can help you to avoid major problems with your team and get your team goals achieved.

Try using this guide to develop your own Team Charter. You can update later it if you want to. For example, the situation or project could change, you may get new information, or you may learn better ways of working together.

Team charter guide

Use the example team charter below to see how to fill one out. You can download a blank team charter for yourself by clicking on [this link](#).

TEAM CHARTER			
Team name: TZVS Report Team			
Date: 10 th August			
Charter Version: Version 2 <i>(If you have updated the charter, the version might be 2 or more.)</i>			
Team members	Relevant skills and experience <i>This information can help when allocating tasks. Consider team/people skills as well as project/outcome skills. Skills gaps can indicate areas to pay attention to.</i>		
Toni Collette	Is good at academic writing. Good negotiator.		
Zhao Wei	Did project management unit, is good at planning and scheduling. Good at keeping people on track.		
Vidya Balan	Research skills. Calm under pressure.		
Saba Mubarak	Good with details – good at editing etc. Good at giving and receiving feedback.		
Meeting roles and responsibilities <i>E.g., convener (organises meetings and agenda), note-taker/recorder (takes and distributes meeting notes), monitor (keeps meetings on track and on time), etc.</i> <i>Consider rotating roles between team members – that way everyone builds experience in all roles.</i>			
	August	September	October
Convener	Saba	Zhao	Vidya
Note-taker	Toni	Saba	Zhao
Monitor	Vidya	Toni	Saba
Snack organiser	Zhao	Vidya	Toni
Team purpose <i>Why has the team been formed? What are the key objectives? (these may be the high level or best-case goals, such as “get mark of 80% or above”)</i>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To research and report on youth homelessness in the Western Suburbs of Sydney 2. Submit by due date of 1st November 3. Obtain a mark of 75% or above 			
Conditions of satisfaction <i>What is a ‘good enough’ outcome – the minimum achievement that team members are comfortable with? For example, an objective may be to get 80% or more on an assignment, but a ‘good enough’ outcome might be a pass.</i>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit on time 2. Obtain a mark of 60% or more 3. All team members have time to complete other assignments 			
Commitments <i>What commitments are you making to each other? For example, be respectful, complete tasks on time.</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend meetings on time 			

- Be prepared for meetings
- Be respectful of each other
- Complete all work tasks on time
- If work is running behind, let other team members know as soon as possible

Making decisions

How will you make decisions? For example, does the team make decisions by consensus after whole-team discussion? Under what conditions might your team accept decisions made by fewer than the whole team (for example, if someone has particular expertise)?

Decisions made by consensus of whole team

Where all team members cannot agree, decide by majority vote

Managing conflict

Some conflict is likely: how will you manage it so it doesn't become a problem? For example, seek to understand the perspective of the other person/people; try for a solution where everyone benefits; seek a mediator if necessary

Seek to understand the perspective of the other person

Try for a solution where everyone benefits

Seek a mediator if necessary

Refer to the team charter conduct guidelines that everyone has agreed on

Preferred contact information and methods for team members

Email address, etc.

Toni 13900001@student.westernsydney.edu.au

Zhao 13900123@student.westernsydney.edu.au

Vidya 13900321@student.westernsydney.edu.au

Saba 13904441@student.westernsydney.edu.au

ALSO create a WhatsApp group for messaging

Communication guidelines

Agree on how often to communicate, how quickly to respond, what methods you will use, and what boundaries to set. For example, a daily activity summary email unless something is urgent? Respond to email within two days? Will you use instant messaging? Avoid messaging after a certain time of day?

- Student email for important messages
- WhatsApp team group for instant messaging
- Respond to messages within a day except for weekends
- Weekly update on what team members have been doing until end of September
- From October to submission, daily updates

More resources

Teamwork and project management

You can learn more about working in a team and project management with LinkedIn Learning Courses. As a Western student, you have free access to all LinkedIn courses. See [this page](#) to learn how to log in, or if you already have an account, go straight to [LinkedIn Learning](#) and search for courses about teamwork and project management. The Team Charter in this document is from the one-hour course [Communication within Teams](#). The course “[Project Management Simplified](#)” takes about an hour to complete and you can apply it to the context that you are in. For example, the project requirements are the assessment guidelines.



Communication and Conflicts

Communication is the key to quality teamwork. Remember that you need to keep in touch not just at organised meetings but by email or text at regular times, or whatever works for you and your group. At all times be polite and speak clearly but respectfully.

Express your opinion, but don't put down others or aim to offend. Give praise where praise is due, and be constructive in your criticism – that means that you talk about both positives and negatives. If you only focus on the negatives you and your teammates will start to resent each other.

Asserting yourself

Try to communicate in an assertive manner at all times. Eunson (2012, p. 293) defines assertiveness as 'getting what you want from others without infringing on their rights'.

Communication styles can be broadly divided into assertive, aggressive, passive, or manipulative styles. The features of these styles are summarised in the matrix below:

	Overt (open)	Covert (secret)
Considers others	Assertive	Passive
Does not consider others	Aggressive	Manipulative

Each style also corresponds to an approach to conflict, in which a person sees things in terms of winning and losing:

	I win	I lose
You win	Assertive	Passive
You lose	Aggressive, manipulative	

The assertive communicator considers others and communicates openly. The outcome of the assertive style is 'I win and you win', and that's what group work is all about.

If you or other members of your team are aggressive, passive, manipulative, or even passive-aggressive, then the team as a whole is going to lose.

So how can you communicate assertively? Here are some tips:

- Express your feelings, even negative ones, in appropriate ways
- Make requests directly (don't 'beat around the bush'), but politely
- Practise making small talk – this is practice for discussing more important matters
- Stand up for yourself
- Say no when appropriate, and give reasons
- Express your thoughts, even when you disagree with someone

If others in the group communicate in passive, aggressive, or manipulative ways, responding assertively can help the group get back on track and working towards that common goal.

Assertive communication skills

Keep these skills in your personal toolkit for when you encounter conflict, miscommunication, and disagreement.

Say no

It sounds simple, because it is. If you do not have the time or ability to do something, then say no. Don't feel compelled to apologise, but you can give reasons if you wish.

Example:

'Sorry, Jessica, I can't do the bar graph tonight. I already spent last night working on the pie chart and tonight I have to work on a different assignment.'

Dismiss and redirect

This is for situations when another person is making excuses or discussing things not relevant to the topic at hand. You dismiss the comment and redirect the conversation back to the original topic.

Example:

'What's on TV tonight isn't relevant, Andrew. We have to finish this draft, so which part would you like to work on?'

Questioning

Sometimes people don't actually realise their behaviours. Questioning is a way to try to get a person to become aware of what they are doing.

Example:

'Niha, have you noticed that every time someone mentions the reference list, you change the subject? Are you having trouble putting it together?'

Fogging

When emotions are involved, some people make personal attacks. When people do this, they want a reaction: they want you to be upset. 'Fogging' means that you let the insults go right through you, like a cloud. When the person doesn't get the reaction they wanted, the dynamics change.

Example:

Insult: 'You're an idiot. How did you even get into uni?'

Response: 'Well, never mind, I'm here now. What's the next step for our assignment?'

Forcing a choice

When there's a lot going on, sometimes people get stressed and find it difficult to make decisions, or they might start demanding more of your time. If you give someone a choice between two options they will usually pick one and won't try to introduce a third.

Example:

'Joseph, do you want to write the introduction to the report or the conclusion?'

Broken record

Sometimes you just have to repeat yourself calmly until your message is heard.

Example:

'Andrew, like I said, we have to finish this draft tonight. Which section do you want to proofread?'

Ask for specifics

Someone who is upset can't always articulate *why* they feel the way they do. You may need to ask some questions to work out what is really bothering them.

Compromise

Yep, the c-word. Sometimes there's nothing to do but compromise. This means no one person 'gets their way', but everyone is part of a solution that works for all.

Example:

'Okay, Niha, since you're having trouble with the reference list, how about I take a look at it and you help Joseph with the conclusion?'

Ultimatum

Make an ultimatum only as a last resort, if none of the above techniques have worked, and you are prepared to follow through. In the case of group work at uni, the threat will probably be going to the lecturer to complain about a fellow student. Again, only do this if you absolutely must.

The above advice also applies to communication by email or other methods – remember to write clearly and say what you mean. There are many collaborative tools and applications available such as instant messaging, social media, wikis, Google Drive, Blackboard/vUWS ([vUWS help](#)), and other apps. Work with your team to find the methods that work best for you all.

Dealing with conflicts

Like group work, conflict is a part of life. Conflict is a disagreement or argument, but it doesn't have to be bad: having an argument can really help two people learn from each other's point of view. There can be many sources of potential conflict, including personality clashes and perceptions that certain members of the group are 'taking over' or 'not pulling their weight'. Whatever the cause, if your team can't cope effectively with conflict, then your work is going to suffer.

If you're feeling angry or annoyed, try to voice your complaint in a calm manner. Use 'I' statements, e.g. 'I feel like I am doing most of the work' and avoid accusing others. Suggest changes to remedy the situation, e.g. 'I would appreciate it if Tasia wrote the conclusion and then John proofread everything.' Don't call names or be mean to other people – just focus on the problem and how to solve it. Give your team mates the benefit of the doubt, because they probably didn't set out to deliberately hurt you.

If someone else in the group says they have an issue, listen politely and calmly and try not to take offence. Don't assume you know how they are feeling or what they are thinking.

If members are not contributing or not participating, try to get them on board using the techniques discussed above. Some group assignments include an element of peer assessment where you can make a note of who may have been absent. Try to resolve conflicts within your group together and only go to the lecturer as a very last resort.

And finally, remember that you all want the same thing: to do well in the assignment. Conflict is an obstacle that has to be overcome so that you can perform the task well.

Adapted from Eunson (2012, pp. 293–303).

More information

For information about bullying and what to do if you are bullied: [the Counselling Service page on bullying](#).

References

Eunson, B. (2012). *Communicating in the 21st century*. Milton, Qld: John Wiley & Sons Australia.



Project Management and Meetings

Coordinating a small or large group of people with busy lives and study loads on a single project can be a daunting task. Humanity did manage, however, to make it to the moon and back before the internet and the advent of online creative and collaborative platforms. So, if you're feeling overwhelmed, concentrate on what you *can* do in clear, simple, and basic terms.

Roles

It's important to give everyone in the group a role. The types of roles will vary depending on the size of the group and the task, but some options include chair, note taker, and timekeeper, or alternatively president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Or maybe your group will divide responsibility for different parts of the task so that you have, for example, a writer, an editor, a researcher, a graphics designer, and a presenter.



Activity

Think about each of the responsibilities outlined below for the different roles in a team. Which role do you think you would be best at? Why?

Role	Responsibilities
Chair	Sets the agenda Guides the group through the agenda Summarises discussion and decisions Helps the group decide how much time to allocate to agenda items
Note taker	Keeps a record of decisions, assigned tasks, etc. Makes an outline of notes after each meeting Sends a copy of the notes to each team member
Progress chaser	Makes sure everyone in the group stays on track Identifies potential problems and makes sure any gaps are filled Reports at the beginning of each meeting 'where the team is at'
Time keeper	Keeps the group to an agreed-upon schedule Alerts the group to timeframes, e.g. 'We allocated 15 minutes to this discussion and we have five minutes left to finish.'

You can rotate roles so that everyone gets a go – just make sure it's clear who is responsible for what and when. You might like to think about what you're good at when considering what role to take. Do you like to lead? Be the chair. Do you find yourself going quiet in large groups? Volunteer to take notes so that you're still involved.

Tackling the task

Once you've got your group together and you've allocated roles, keep the good work going by setting some goals or rules. Discuss when, where, and how often you'll meet, and how much notice needs to be given before missing a meeting. You might talk about how you will make decisions or handle conflict.

You and your group should [analyse the task together](#) (PDF, 236 kB) and come up with an action plan. Carefully read the task description, criteria, and expectations. What do you need to do? How will you be assessed? What is the deadline?

Assigning tasks

You then need to break down the task into smaller activities, and assign them to each person. Or your group might decide instead to divide the task between you, so that for example one person researches, another writes, and another person presents.



Activity: Group work, task allocation

As a group, list all the jobs that need to be done, and estimate the time for each job. Make sure you break bigger tasks down into smaller, manageable ones. Then decide who will do which task.

What needs doing?	How long will it take?	Who will do it?

You can download [a full-page PDF of this table](#) (PDF, 24 kB) and use it with your group.

Make sure everyone has something to do and make clear who is responsible for what. Exchange contact info and keep in touch. Also be prepared to negotiate conflicts within the team – see [Communication and conflicts](#) (PDF, 69 kB).

Need a place to meet? You can [book a Library group study room](#) at a campus that suits your group.

Keeping records

Keep copies of your notes, your writing at all stages, and any important emails or messages. Make sure everyone in the group is updated if and when things change, like when someone writes a new draft of the report. If it isn't in writing, then it didn't happen.

Asking questions and seeking help

Simple questions about a unit or single aspects of an assessment can usually be dealt with in an email or two (see [Email communication](#), PDF, 606 kB), or even a phone call. For more complicated issues, however, you might need to request a meeting with a member of staff. Alternatively, a staff member might contact you to set up a meeting to discuss an issue that has arisen.

Setting up a meeting

First, check the unit Subject Outline and vUWS site to see if your lecturer or tutor has advertised their consultation policy. Often academic staff list regular office hours where you can drop in without an appointment to ask your question. If they don't list office hours, or you can't come at the listed time, request a meeting. It's a good idea to suggest a couple of times that you are available, but don't be surprised if the staff member is busy during those times. You may have to be flexible to find a timeslot that works for both of you.

State the purpose of the meeting so both you and the staff member can prepare. 'I want to talk to you about the assignment' is very general. 'I would like your advice on whether my references are appropriate for this type of essay' is better.

Preparing for a meeting

Once you've agreed on a date, time, and place for the meeting, make sure to prepare yourself. Ensure you know where the meeting is and allow enough time to get there five minutes early, just to be polite. If you're late, you may end up missing the meeting altogether.

Prepare mentally, as well. Write down all of your questions, or all of the issues that you want to discuss. Bring copies of relevant documents like the unit Subject Outline, readings you've found, or drafts of your assignment. If the staff member has asked you to bring something specific like a Turnitin Originality Report for your draft, do not forget it. Bring a pen and paper or a digital device so you can take notes during the meeting.

Running a meeting

You will probably want to let the staff member take the lead, but here's where your preparation comes in handy. When they ask how they can help, or what you would like to discuss, refer to your list of questions or points. Go through the list in order, asking questions and taking notes as appropriate.

If the other person called the meeting, they might have an agenda in mind. In this case, you should still come prepared, and ask and answer questions and take notes as you go. If there are multiple attendees at the meeting, or many issues to discuss, using an agenda might be useful.

Reviewing a meeting

It isn't over once you walk out the door. At the very least, if the staff member has helped you, send an email to thank them. You might also send an email to confirm what was discussed or note anything you now need to follow up.

Go over your notes, including those you wrote before the meeting. Was everything addressed? Did you get what you needed? Were your questions answered? Or do you need more help? You might like to [reflect](#) (PDF, 67 kB) at this stage, to help you decide on your next steps.

At all times, be courteous and calm when interacting with others. Remember to use your [assertive communication tactics](#) (PDF, 660 kB) so that you don't offend or put others offside.



Body Language and Gestures

What you say isn't the only thing that matters when giving a presentation: the audience will also pay attention to *how* you say it. Your presentation starts from the moment you walk in the room, not from the moment you open your mouth. So, here's how to make a lasting impression.

Dress the part

Your first priority is comfort: if you're not comfortable in your clothes, the audience will pick up on your discomfort.

Think of it like an actor putting on a costume: this is your presentation outfit, and when you wear it, you will be awesome.

Check your posture

Stand in a neutral, open stance, with your feet hip-width apart and toes pointing straight ahead. Make sure you're balanced on your feet, and not rolling onto the heel or ball of the foot. Keep your shoulders back and don't slouch. This stance will support your lungs and allow you to take deep breaths, which is essential for good voice control.

Keep your hands by your side

Well, unless you're making a gesture. Alternatively you can use one hand to hold your notes if there isn't a lectern. Some people don't like using a lectern or desk because it places a physical barrier between the speaker and audience that can become a mental barrier. Do what feels best for you.

Before you start, SMILE!

It might sound stupid, but **science has our back on this one**: when you smile, you relax and communicate to your anxious brain that there's nothing to worry about. When your audience sees you smile, they feel like you're happy to be there and they relax too. Amy Cuddy discusses the importance of body language in this TED talk: '[Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are](#)' (Online video, 21:02).

Face the audience at all times

Don't turn your back to the audience while you're speaking, because then your voice will be much more difficult to hear.

If you need to turn away to adjust technical equipment or for another reason, pause your speech. Practising using visual aids or changing PowerPoint slides will stop you from interrupting yourself just to adjust the visual.

However, you don't have to stand in one spot, either. Move around the room if it feels right to you, although take care not to pace unnecessarily and distract the audience.

Make eye contact with the audience

Firstly, if you are looking your audience in the eyes, then your head is raised and your voice will be audible. When a shy speaker stares at the floor, their voice goes to the floor, too.

Secondly, looking individual audience members in the eye makes them feel like you're really speaking to them. It makes them feel included and interested. Don't hold eye contact too long, though.

If you have difficulty looking people in the eye try looking at the forehead between their eyes instead – it has almost the same result.

Use gestures appropriately

Gestures can be used to make a point, explain a concept, or emphasise a word or idea. Let your gestures come naturally, rather than forcing them. Practising your presentation will really help you here.

Use your face

Lastly, don't forget about your facial expressions, because they help you tell the story. Practise looking at yourself in a mirror while talking if you're not sure what you might look like. Ask for feedback from a trusted friend on how you can improve.

It's OK to be nervous

First, remind yourself that it's OK to be nervous. One sure-fire way to reduce anxiety is to make sure you're really prepared – so practise, practise, and practise again.

Focus on your breath

Try some deep breathing exercises. Any time you slow down and focus on your breath you will calm both body and mind, but it's also excellent practice for public speaking because you need to breathe deeply to speak effectively. Take a big breath just before you begin your presentation, also.

Stay positive

Don't give in to negative self-talk. Instead of telling yourself, 'I'm so nervous about this speech,' reframe your thoughts in positive language. Tell yourself instead: 'This speech is a big challenge for me, but I'm

ready.' Visualise yourself giving the speech and getting the result you want (thunderous applause, a good grade, or even just the relief that it's over).

Strike a (power) pose

If you can, find time before the speech to practise a high-power pose. Research by Dr Amy Cuddy suggests that two minutes in a power pose raises your testosterone levels and reduces your cortisol levels, making you less stressed and more confident for the task ahead (see her Ted Talk: '[Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are](#)', Online video, 21:02).

Just before you start...

Just before you speak, take a deep breath and smile. If you're still feeling anxious, channel that nervous energy into enthusiasm instead. If you're excited, your audience will be too!

It's OK to pause

During your speech, use pauses effectively. Don't be afraid to stop speaking at the end of a sentence to take a breath, smile at the audience, or sip some water. There's nothing wrong with a moment of silence.

Fake it until you make it

And last but not least, fake it until you make it! Put on your costume, act confident, and tell yourself that you're not nervous. No one will know the difference.

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