



Structuring your presentation

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
outline of talk ↗ 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.

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

Inglis, M. (2007). *Unistep. Academic skills guide*. (4th ed.). Sydney, Australia.