

I PRESENTATION PREPARATION

DETERMINING THE CONTENT

When you think about how to give your presentation, you are concerned with delivery. When you think about what information to include in your presentation, you are concerned with content.

A. Selecting and Limiting Your Topic

In a professional situation the topic of your presentation is usually determined by the needs of your listeners. You may be asked to provide certain information because of your specialized knowledge or your experience in a particular area. For example, you might have to demonstrate how something works, describe a technical process, compare two pieces of equipment made by different companies, or give on-the-job instructions.

A classroom situation differs from a professional situation in that you often have more freedom to choose your own topic for a class presentation. Of course, you should choose a topic that you already know something about, one that interests you, and one that is of potential interest to your listeners. You can choose a subject related to your work, your studies, your research projects, or your personal interests. Current events or social issues can also make good subjects for class presentations. Once you have chosen a general subject area, then you have to limit your topic so you can cover it adequately within the time available for your presentation. It is usually more effective to give a detailed explanation of a specific, limited topic than to try to cover too much material in a short time. When selecting your own topic for a class presentation, you should consider the following points:

1. Do you know enough about this topic?
2. If some research is needed, do you have the time and resources to find the information?
3. Have you limited the topic enough so that you can cover it adequately in the time available?
4. Is this topic of potential interest to your listeners?
5. Is the topic too difficult or too technical for this audience?
6. Is the topic too easy or too well-known to this audience?

B. Determining Your General Purpose

In giving a presentation, a speaker usually has one of three general purposes; to inform, to persuade, or to entertain the listeners. Most of the oral presentations that you need to give at work are reports to inform your listeners — to give them information that they want or need to know. Your goal in giving any type of informative presentation is to communicate useful information in a clear way.

C. Analyzing the Audience

Whenever you give a presentation, you should always find out as much as possible about your listeners' background and knowledge. This gives you the advantage of being able to adapt your presentation to suit the special needs and interests of the particular people you are speaking to. The type of people in your audience will affect the vocabulary you use, the kinds of examples you select, and the amount of background and technical information you include. In analyzing a particular group of listeners, you should try to answer the following questions:

Who Are Your Listeners?

By finding common areas of interest that your listeners share, you can choose details or examples that relate to these interests. You might consider the following characteristics:

- *Occupation.* Are most of your listeners in the same or related occupations? Do they work for the same company?
- *Position in organization.* Do most of your listeners have administrative or technical backgrounds? Are they managers, management trainees, new employees, technicians, or clerical staff?
- *Level of education.* What is the highest level of education of most of your listeners: high school diploma? bachelor's degree? master's degree? Ph.D.?
- *Area of specialization.* If your listeners all work in one general field, what are their areas of specialization?
- *Special interests.* Do your listeners belong to the same professional organization, special interest group, or social club?
- *Age, sex, income level, nationality.* Are the listeners mainly young or old, male or female, of the same income level, or of one nationality? Are any of these factors significant in finding common areas of interest among your listeners?

What Is the General Level of English of the Listeners?

In order to make your message clear, you need to use language that the audience can understand. If most of your listeners are not native speakers of English, then you must be especially careful to use vocabulary that most of them will know. It will not be effective to use new or difficult vocabulary if your listeners cannot understand them. If you think that many people may not know the meaning of a few technical or specialized words you consider essential, then you might write these words on the board before you begin your presentation. Of course, you can always explain a few unfamiliar words as you go along; however, keep in mind that interrupting your presentation to define or explain many new words may make it difficult for your listeners to follow the flow of your ideas.

How Much Technical Background Do the Listeners Have?

By knowing how much technical information your listeners can understand, you can appropriately adjust the technical content of your presentation.

- If most of your listeners are experts with specialized training similar to your own, they will understand and expect highly technical data.
- Listeners with a technical background may be familiar with your general subject area but may not be experts in your particular field. These people

know many basic technical terms but will need explanations of specialized concepts.

- With listeners who have no technical background, you will have to use simple, non-technical language with explanations of any technical concepts that you include in your presentation.
- When your listeners have mixed technical backgrounds, you should identify the lowest level of technical understanding and address yourself to this level.
- If you have no idea of the technical background of your audience, you should speak to them as a general audience.

How Much Do the Listeners Already Know about the Subject?

By knowing the background of your listeners, you can build your presentation on what they already know. Clearly, you do not want to waste your listeners' time by repeating information they already know. Also, you should know how much and what kind of background information to supply in order for them to understand your presentation.

What Do the Listeners Expect from Your Presentation?

When someone asks you to give a presentation, you need to know exactly what that person expects from you. For example, are you supposed to explain the principles of how a machine works or actually teach your listeners how to operate the machine? In order to be successful, your presentation has to meet the wants or needs of the audience. Before planning your presentation, make sure you know the answers to these questions:

- What do the listeners want or need to know?
- When is the presentation due?
- How long should the presentation be?
- Are there any special guidelines you should follow?

What Other Details of the Speaking Situation Might Affect Your Presentation?

You can make your presentation more effective by knowing as much as possible about the speaking situation in advance. Some of the following factors may influence the way you plan your presentation:

- How many people will you be speaking to?
- How will your listeners be seated — in rows, a circle, around a conference table, or another way?
- Will you be expected to stand in front of your listeners, sit at a desk in front of them, or sit with them around a large table?
- Will the situation be formal or informal?
- Where will your presentation be given? Will you be in your office, a classroom, or a lecture hall?
- What facilities (such as lectern, blackboard, slide projector, overhead projector, screen, video recorder) will be available?

ORGANIZING THE INFORMATION

A. Determining the Central Idea

When planning an informative presentation, you need to develop a clear statement of your central idea. This central idea is the main

point you are trying to make in your presentation. It explains exactly what aspect of your topic you intend to cover. For example, you might want to choose robots as your subject. The topic of robots can be developed in a variety of ways. Your central idea might be (a) to explain the five types of arm robots, (b) to discuss the problems of using robots in a factory, (c) to analyze the advantages of using robots in a factory, (d) to describe the electric motor that drives a robot, (e) to explain how a robot recognizes things, or (f) to compare assembly lines using humans and those using robots. As you can see, the central idea states exactly what you intend to present in your presentation. Thus, it controls what you include in your presentation and also helps determine the arrangement of the main points.

B. Arranging the Main Points

Once you have a clear statement of your central idea, you can start developing the body, or main section, of your presentation. The body consists of main points that develop your central idea in detail. These main points need to be arranged in a way that is clear both to you and to your audience. The organization of your presentation should make it easy for the audience to understand and to remember the information you present. You need to select a pattern of organization that will work best with your particular topic. Here are some of the most commonly used patterns of organization along with skeleton outlines of sample topics:

Topical order. This common pattern divides the topic into smaller subtopics. Your central idea often determines the natural subtopics of your subject: benefits, disadvantages, uses, types, categories, ways, or reasons. Other topics may fall into standardized subtopics or classifications such as the division of animals into vertebrates and invertebrates or matter into organic and inorganic. At other times you have to choose the logical divisions of a topic. For example, pollution is often divided into different types: air, water, noise. In addition, you might discuss the resources needed for a project by categorizing them into areas of personnel, equipment, and facilities. These subtopics are then presented in a logical order:

- from the least important to the most important
- from the most important to the least important
- from the simple to the complex
- from the general to the specific
- from the specific to the general
- from the known to the unknown

A. Central idea: to classify something into categories

Body:

I. First category

II. Second category

III. Third category

IV. Fourth category

B. Central idea: to explain the reasons for a certain decision

Body:

I. Most important reason

- II. Next most important reason
- III. Least important reason

Chronological order. This organization pattern arranges points as they occur in time. You put events in the order that they occur. This pattern is commonly used in explaining processes or giving instructions.

A. Central idea: to discuss the progress of a project

Body:

- I. Past
- II. Present
- III. Future

B. Central idea: to explain the steps of a procedure

Body:

- I. First step
- II. Second step
- III. Third step
- IV. Fourth step
- V. Fifth step

Spatial order. In this pattern the points are arranged according to some logical arrangement in space, such as from east to west, from far to near, from left to right, from top to bottom, or from inside to outside. This pattern is often used in physical descriptions of objects and places.

A. Central idea: to describe a building

Body:

- I. First floor
- II. Second floor
- III. Third floor
- IV. Fourth floor

A. Central idea: to give a physical description of an object

Body:

- I. Top
- II. Middle
- III. Bottom

Problem-solution. You may follow several patterns in a problem-solution organization. First, you might analyze the problem in detail and then offer one or two possible solutions in the conclusion. Second, you can briefly state the problem and then give a detailed explanation of the solution(s). Third, you can explain the problem and then recommend the best solution.

A. Central idea: to explain a certain problem in detail

Body:

- I. Definition of the problem
- II. Background of the problem
- III. Causes of the problem
- IV. Effects of the problem
- V. Solutions to the problem

B. Central idea: to discuss several possible solutions to a problem

Body:

- I. Definition of the problem (causes and effects)
- II. Solution 1
- III. Solution 2
- IV. Solution 3
- V. Solution 4

C. Central idea: to recommend a specific solution to a problem

Body:

- I. Definition of the problem (causes and effects)
- II. Explanation of the recommended solution
- III. Reasons that this is the best solution

Cause and effect. This pattern can be organized in two ways. In one pattern you give a detailed explanation of the causes of an event mentioning the effects only briefly. In the other plan you emphasize the effects or results of the event.

A. Central idea: to explain the main causes of a situation

Body:

- I. Explanation of the situation (and its effects)
- II. First cause
- III. Second cause
- IV. Third cause
- V. Fourth cause

B. Central idea: to explain the main effects of a situation

Body:

- I. Explanation of the situation (and its causes)
- II. First effect
- III. Second effect
- IV. Third effect

Reasons for and against. In this pattern you present both sides of an issue, first discussing all of the details on one side of the question and then all of the details on the other side.

Central idea: to explain reasons both for and against a position

Body:

- I. Reasons against
- II. Reasons for

Comparison/contrast. There are two basic patterns to follow when you compare or contrast two things: one-other and point-by-point. In the one-other pattern you use the things to be compared as the basis of organization. You first discuss one of the things to be compared in detail and then you discuss the other thing in detail. To make the comparison clear using this pattern, you need to discuss the same details in the same order. While the one-other pattern gives a general picture of the comparison, the point-by-point pattern emphasizes specific details. In the point-by-point pattern you use the points of

comparison (or criteria) as the basis of organization. You then compare the two things point by point.

A. Central idea: to compare two solutions to a problem

Body (one-other pattern):

I. Solution 1

- A. Cost
- B. Practicality
- C. Side effects
- D. Disadvantages
- E. Advantages

II. Solution 2

- A. Cost
- B. Practicality
- C. Side effects
- D. Disadvantages
- E. Advantages

B. Central idea: to compare two solutions to a problem

Body (point-by-point pattern):

I. Cost

- A. Solution 1
- B. Solution 2

II. Practicality

- A. Solution 1
- B. Solution 2

III. Side effects

- A. Solution 1
- B. Solution 2

IV. Disadvantages

- A. Solution 1
- B. Solution 2

V. Advantages

- A. Solution 1
- B. Solution 2

DEVELOPING A STYLE OF DELIVERY

Delivery refers to the way you use your eyes, voice, and body to communicate your message. Of course, what you say is important, but the way you say it also has a strong effect on your listeners.

A. Styles of Delivery

When you speak to a group of people, you should choose the most appropriate style of delivery for your message, your listeners, and your speaking situation. A presentation may be extemporaneous, impromptu, memorized, or read from a manuscript.

An *extemporaneous* delivery is carefully prepared and practiced in advance. Since this is the most effective way of speaking to a group, it is the style of delivery that you will practice in this course. When preparing an

extemporaneous presentation, you have the time to gather the information, outline your ideas, plan the introduction and conclusion, prepare notes, and practice the presentation before you give it. You can use note cards with an outline of the main ideas to help remind you of the order of the ideas that you want to present. With this style of delivery, your ideas are thought out in advance, but you do not memorize the exact wording of your presentation. You speak in a natural, conversational style with only quick glances at your notes when necessary.

An *impromptu* presentation is made with little or no advance planning. For example, you might have to make an impromptu presentation at work if you are asked without warning to explain to several people how your department functions, how a particular machine works, or why a certain project has been delayed. Clearly, it is difficult to be well-organized and effective without advance preparation. However, the experience you gain in organizing and presenting your ideas in extemporaneous presentations can help you improve your effectiveness in impromptu speaking situations.

A *memorized* presentation is one that you write out completely in advance and then learn word for word. Although a memorized presentation allows you to look at the listeners as you are speaking, you often have to concentrate more on remembering the report than on communicating the information. You may find it difficult to sound natural when you are trying to recite from memory. Also, you are always faced with the possibility of forgetting what comes next. For these reasons, you should not try to memorize your presentations.

A *manuscript* presentation is written out in full and then read aloud to the listeners. This type of presentation may be given in a very formal situation, such as at an academic or professional conference, when the message is extremely complex or technical. Although you may feel more secure reading a report, you will discover how difficult it is to keep your audience's attention, to sound natural, and to adapt your presentation to suit the listeners' reactions when you are reading aloud. Because of the many disadvantages of reading a report aloud, you will not practice this type of delivery in this course.

B. Effective Delivery

By showing enthusiasm for your subject, you can make your listeners more interested in what you have to say. You can make your presentation more effective by considering how you use your eyes, voice, and body when you are speaking to a group of people.

Eye contact is essential in keeping your listeners' interest. Of course, you can glance at your notes occasionally, but people are more likely to pay attention if you look at their faces directly as you are speaking. By moving your eyes from person to person, you can give listeners the feeling that you are talking to them as individuals. You can also see whether or not people are following your message by watching their faces.

Your *voice* also plays an important role in keeping your listeners'

attention. Obviously, it is impossible to keep people's interest if they cannot hear what you are saying. Furthermore, you must pronounce your words clearly and distinctly, speaking at a normal rate of speed, so that people can easily understand you. By speaking in a natural, conversational manner, you will help people in a group feel that you are talking to them as individuals rather than giving a prepared speech.

Finally, the way you use your *body* conveys a message to your listeners. You can show people that you are confident by standing or sitting up straight and not leaning against a table or a desk. Hand or arm gestures can be effective if you feel natural and comfortable using them. In general, though, you do not want to distract listeners from your message by playing with a pencil, shifting from one foot to the other, or doing anything else to draw attention to yourself.

USING VISUAL AIDS

A. Types of Visual Aids

In preparing your presentation, you should consider using visual aids to clarify complex ideas or to emphasize important points. Visual aids help people understand and remember the information you are presenting because they involve the listeners' sense of sight as well as sound. Visual aids also increase the listeners' interest in your subject and help keep their attention focused on your ideas. When you select visual materials for your presentation, you have to decide which of the following types are best for your purpose, your listeners, and the physical setting.

Boards, such as blackboards (chalkboards) or whiteboards, are commonly used as visual aids. They are extremely useful for writing down simple information such as names, dates, or technical words. Also, you can draw your own diagrams or pictures as you need them.

Flip charts are inexpensive pads of oversized paper. You use a flip chart in the same way as you use the blackboard, except that you flip pages over instead of erasing the material. Since flip charts are rather small, you can use them effectively only in a very small room.

Charts are used to represent information in a graphic way. Charts are usually made of large pieces of very stiff paper or cardboard so they are easy to handle and display. Charts may display diagrams, flow charts, organizational charts, line graphs, bar graphs, and pie graphs. These are especially useful in conveying technical or statistical data in an accurate and understandable manner.

Objects can make good visual aids if they are large enough for everyone in the audience to see and small enough for you to be able to carry around.

Models are representations of actual objects. They are especially useful in describing or explaining parts of the body or engines, bridges, and other structures.

Photographs and pictures are not usually effective visual aids since they are often too small to be seen by everyone in the audience.

Overhead projectors can be used both for small and large groups. The major advantage of this type of projector is that you can face the audience while you are using it and you do not have to darken the room to get a clear image. Although this type of projector requires you to transfer material onto transparencies, these are quite easy to make. Nowadays *data projectors* can be used instead.

Opaque projectors do not require any modification of the material to be projected onto the screen. You can use pictures from books or magazines. The major disadvantage of this type of projector is that you can only get a clear image by darkening the room. This often takes the focus off the speaker.

Films and slides can be very effective in presenting a message, although they tend to replace a presentation rather than supplement it. Because films and slides take attention away from the speaker, they are not usually considered to be effective visual aids.

Handouts are written supplements that you can give to people in the audience. Handouts have many purposes: to provide additional material that you do not have time to cover, to outline or summarize your main points, to present statistics, or to serve as worksheets. People in the audience often like handouts since they give them something to look at and also to take home for later reference. Although handouts may be popular with members of your audience, you should be aware that they can distract listeners from your presentation. While you are talking, people may be reading their handouts or looking around to see how they are being distributed.

B. Preparing Visual Aids

In order to choose or prepare effective visual aids, you should follow these guidelines:

1. Keep visual aids simple and clear. Obviously, people in the audience do not have much time to examine each visual aid in great detail.
2. Each visual aid should focus on only one idea. It is better to show several simple visual aids rather than to crowd too much information on one.
3. Consider the number of people in the audience and the size of the room in choosing or preparing visual aids. Make sure that the visual aid is large enough for everyone to see easily.
4. Visual aids need to be organized so that the audience can understand them quickly and easily. The audience will be confused by an overly detailed or technical visual aid. Be sure that your visual aids are aimed at the appropriate technical level of your listeners.
5. Visual aids should be neatly prepared with as few words as possible. It is essential for the lettering to be large and easy to read. Colors should be bright and in sharp contrast to the background.

C. General Guidelines for Using Visual Aids

Once you have prepared or obtained your visual aids, you need to consider how you will actually use them in your presentation. Here are some general guidelines:

1. Stand to the side when you present visual aids so that everyone in the audience can see them. You can use a pointer to refer to details so that your body does not block someone's view.
2. When you show your visual aid, be sure to continue facing the listeners. You should be familiar enough with the visual aid that you do not have to keep looking at it in order to be able to explain it.
3. Limit the number of visual aids that you use. Since visual aids should emphasize important points, the use of too many will reduce their impact. Keep in mind that the purpose of your presentation is not to explain the visual aids.
4. Do not stop talking while you are showing the visual aid. You should explain and interpret the visual aid as you are showing it to the listeners.
5. Show each visual aid only when you are discussing it. Bring it out when you want people to look at it and then remove it when you move on to another point. People tend to look at visuals as long as they are in sight, and you want to keep the audience's attention focused on each point as it is presented.
6. Before your presentation make sure that the room has the necessary electrical outlets in the right place. Also, be sure that there is a blackboard (and chalk) if you plan to use a board.

D. Guidelines for Using Specific Visual Aids

In addition to the general guidelines presented for using visual aids, there are special considerations in using a few specific types of visual aids:

1. Boards

- Use the board only for writing simple information. Write at the board for a few seconds at a time.
- Plan in advance any information that you want to put on the board. Practice drawing any diagrams and be sure that you know the correct spelling of any words that you might write on the board.
- Do not cover the board with too much information.
- Keep your writing neat and straight. Make sure that everyone in the room can read what you have written. If you are not used to writing on the board, practice before you give your presentation.
- Keep your face toward the audience as much as possible when you are writing at the board. Do not talk to the board.
- Instead of planning to write much of your information on the board, you can consider using other types of visual aids to present this material. Visuals prepared in advance are generally clearer and better organized than something you write on the board while you are giving the presentation.

2. Flip Charts

- You can prepare some pages in advance.
- Do not put too much material on one page.

- Give the people in the audience enough time to look over the information on each page.
- Use bright colored markers.
- If you prepare some pages in advance, be sure that they are in the right order in the pad.

3. *Overhead Projector*

- Before you begin your presentation, make sure that you have the overhead projector in the right place for the size of image that you want to project. Check to see if everyone will be able to read what is written on the transparency.
- Plan your transparencies in advance. Make sure that you have them ready to use in the order that you want to present them.

4 *Data projector*

- Before you begin your presentation, make sure that the equipment is working properly and that the material you have prepared is still the same you want it to be.

5 *Handouts*

- Try to avoid distributing handouts while you are giving your presentation. People will be looking at the handouts instead of paying attention to you.
- Do not hand out too many pages of material or your listeners will not be able to sort out what is useful from what is not.
- Do not read the handout material to the audience.
- If possible, wait until the end of your presentation to distribute handouts.

II PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

INTRODUCING A PRESENTATION

The purpose of an introduction is to attract your listeners' interest and focus their attention on your topic. When you give a presentation at work, your listeners usually have an immediate need for the information you are presenting. Therefore, they have a clear reason to pay attention to your presentation. Still, you should try to increase their natural interest in the subject by emphasizing how useful or how important the information is. Listeners generally pay closer attention to a presentation if they know in advance how they can benefit from the information.

Another important function of the introduction is to identify what your presentation is about and how you plan to present the information. For example, you may tell the listeners that you are first going to explain a particular problem, then briefly mention some of its causes, and finally focus on several possible solutions. This brief preview of the content and organization of your presentation allows the listeners to fit the information you give them into a framework and helps them understand and remember what you present. A final point to mention in the introduction is whether listeners are free to interrupt you with questions or whether they should save their questions for the end of the presentation. If you plan to allow time at the end for a question-and-answer session, you should inform your listeners at the beginning of the presentation.

Because presentations given at work often differ from those given in class, you may find that the introductions are also different. In a classroom situation your listeners do not always have a natural interest in what you want to say to them. Therefore, you may have to work harder to get the attention of your audience. You have to plan a strong introduction in order to make people want to hear the rest of your presentation. The best way to interest your listeners is to relate your topic to their wants and needs. Listeners usually pay close attention to what affects them directly: their work, their interests, their health, their security, their family, their friends, or their community. Furthermore, most listeners have a natural curiosity to learn more about the world. You can try to appeal to this curiosity in your introduction. Certain types of openings are often effective in gaining an audience's attention. You might start with one of the following:

- a surprising or unusual fact
- a personal story
- an interesting example
- a quotation from an authority or expert
- impressive or significant statistics

Of course, any opening that you use should relate directly to your topic, or it will only confuse the listeners. An effective introduction to any type of presentation should be brief and to the point. You want to capture the

interest of your listeners and then lead them into the content of your presentation. You should never use the introduction to apologize to the audience for anything: for being nervous, for not being prepared, for not being an expert on the subject. By taking a positive, confident approach from the beginning of your presentation, you will make the listeners eager to hear what you have to say on the subject.

USING TRANSITIONS

Every presentation you give includes many different pieces of information: main points supported by details, facts, examples, explanations, and reasons. In order for your listeners to understand the presentation, you need to use transitions to show how these pieces of information fit together into a clear, logical pattern. Transitions are the words, phrases, or sentences that connect and show the relationship of your ideas. By linking your ideas, transitions help your listeners follow your progress as you move from one point to another or from one part of your presentation to another. Here are some commonly used transitions and the relationships they show:

- *To connect ideas between sentences and between parts of the presentation*

Addition: in addition, also, furthermore, moreover, and, besides, another

Example: for instance, for example, to illustrate, specifically, such as

Explanation: in other words, that is, to put it another way

Time: now, first, second, third, next, then, later, before, after, finally, at the same time

Result: therefore, thus, consequently, as a result, for this reason, as a consequence

Cause: because, because of, since, is caused by, resulted from, is due to

Space: to the left, to the right, above, below, under, over, inside, outside, nearby, next to, adjacent to

Contrast: even so, nevertheless, although, though, even though, while, despite, despite the fact that, in contrast, on the other hand, however, otherwise

Comparison: in comparison, similarly, in the same way, like, is like, can be compared to

Generalization: in general, in most cases, usually, for the most part

Reference: as I said earlier, as I mentioned before, to repeat what I said earlier

Condition: if, unless

- *To preview the organization of your presentation*

"First, briefly, I'd like to review the causes of _____. Then I will offer three possible solutions to this problem."

"I will first describe the parts of the machine, and then I can explain how they work."

"Let me first explain what we've done on the project so far, and then I can tell you what our future plans are."

- *To start with the first main point*

"The first advantage (reason, step) is _____."

"Let's start first with the major cause of the problem."

- *To add other main points*

"The second (third, fourth) main effect is _____."

"That, then, is the first advantage of _____. Let's take a look at another important advantage."

"Let's move on to another main _____."

- *To move from one part of the presentation to another*

"I now want to go on to _____"

"Now that we've considered _____, let's turn to _____."

"What are the advantages (disadvantages, results) of this plan?"

- *To end the presentation*

"In conclusion (closing, summary), _____."

"To conclude (summarize, sum up), _____."

CONCLUDING A PRESENTATION

The conclusion of your presentation is important because you want to leave a strong impression on your listeners. You should be brief and to the point in concluding your presentation. This is definitely not the time to introduce any new points. You want to remind listeners of what you have presented. To conclude a presentation you can:

- summarize or review the main points you have presented
- remind listeners of the importance of what you have said
- emphasize your major conclusions
- recommend further study of the subject
- ask the listeners to take appropriate action

You should not surprise people by suddenly announcing, "That's all," or "I guess I'm finished." That kind of ending shows that you have not organized your ideas very well. You should plan a conclusion to prepare the listeners for the end of your presentation. Here are some different ways to signal your listeners that you are concluding:

In conclusion,

In closing,

To conclude,

To sum up,

Before I end, let me quickly review the main points (advantages, reasons, effects, causes, types) of _____ .

Briefly, then, I'd like to summarize the major points I've presented.

Before I open this up for your questions, I'd like to emphasize how important it is for you to remember _____ .

You can end your presentation by asking listeners whether they have any questions. This allows people to ask for explanations or to get further information on a particular point.

HANDLING QUESTIONS

Question-and-answer sessions are valuable because they give listeners a chance to become involved in your presentation. They are also useful in providing you with feedback on how well you communicated your information. Since it is important to make your listeners feel that you know your topic well, it is essential to be prepared to answer their questions. If you prepare carefully for your presentation, you should be able to answer most of the questions that people ask. Of course, you might be nervous about difficult questions that people could bring up. One way to deal with this is to think about these points as you are planning your presentation. You can then include the answers to these questions in the presentation, if possible. Here are some general guidelines to help you handle the question-and-answer session effectively:

1. Let your listeners know in advance when you want them to ask questions — as you go along or at the end of the presentation. In an impromptu situation, with only a few listeners, you should probably encourage people to ask questions as you go along. However, in giving an extemporaneous presentation you may find that questions disrupt your flow of thought and make it difficult for you to give an organized presentation. In this case, you can say, "I'll save some time at the end of my presentation for your questions. I'd appreciate it if you could save your questions and comments until then."
2. As you begin the question-and-answer session, set a definite time limit. This will help move things along and keep you from getting involved in long debates.
3. Make sure that you clearly understand the question that was asked. You might want to restate the question in your own words to clarify it for yourself and for the other listeners. You can say, "As I understand your question, you are asking _____."
4. Answer each question as fully as you can. At the same time, you should be brief and to the point. The question-and-answer period does not usually last long, and you want to give as many people as possible a chance to ask their questions.
5. If you do not know the answer to a question, say, "I'm afraid I don't have the answer to that question" or "I'm afraid I can't answer that." You are not expected to have the answer to every possible question, so don't worry. However, you might offer to find the answer for the listener. Show the listener that you are sincere by following up on your offer.
6. Be polite under all circumstances even if the questioner is rude or tries to put you in a difficult position. You cannot control what the questioner says, but you can control your reaction to it. Your first concern should be to keep the respect of the people who are listening to you.
7. Prepare your audience for the end of the question-and-answer session. You can signal the end of the session by saying, "I think we have time for one more question before bringing this to a close."

During the question-and-answer session people may ask you to clarify points you made or to give further information about something you brought up in your presentation. These kinds of questions should generally be easy for you to answer. However, some types of questions may give you some difficulty.