



# STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

## How do you give a good presentation?

If you study at the university, you will quickly come into contact with the so-called 'core business' of the university: conducting research. How to do that will be dealt with extensively in the 'Academic Skills' course, that will no doubt be in your curriculum. But you are not (yet) finished after conducting the research: it is also the intention that you publish a report of your research results. That can occur in two ways: in writing (in a paper) and orally (via a presentation). This article is about the latter.

### What is a presentation?

Giving a presentation is a form of communicating, in which there is an oral transfer of information between two or more people. You could compare the person who gives the presentation with someone who sends a message; the audience is the receiver. The message consists of 2 components.

First of all, there is the substantive part: what are you actually saying? Which words are you using? We refer to that as the verbal component.

In addition, the way in which you convey your message is important: how do you say it? That is, therefore, no longer about your choice of words, but especially about your body language, appearance and how you use your voice. That is the non-verbal and the so-called paralingual component. When is a presentation **engaging**? How do you ensure that you grasp and keep the attention of your audience?

**A presentation consists of a verbal (what you say) and non-verbal (how you say it) component.**

To answer this question, you can simply reflect on the question: when is a presentation engaging for me? Which conditions does a presentation need to fulfil in order to captivate the audience? There are also some guidelines that can, of course, be given in this case.

### What are the most important principles?

*Before you give the presentation:*

- Immerse yourself in your audience, and try to connect with the world as perceived by your target group.
- Put yourself in their position (for example: what would you like to know about this subject?).
- Reflect on the structure of your presentation.
- Ensure there is adequate visual support.

*During your presentation:*

- Maintain good contact with your audience: look at them in the eyes.
- Check, now and again, if your message is (still) coming across well.

### How do you prepare a presentation?

All the above-mentioned aspects play a role in the preparation. Above all, consider the assignment first: the lecturer has undoubtedly specified all kinds of information about what is expected of you and what the intention is in your reader or in Blackboard. If you have a clear picture of that, you can work on your assignment.

#### Content

Make a good plan beforehand with regard to what you want to tell (just as you would with a written piece of work). An oral presentation is something very different than reading out a written report. You should, therefore, come up with an adequate structure, an

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mind mapping classes

FOCUS perseverance

LECTURES AMBITION

TIME MANAGEMENT peer coaching

self-knowledge CHALLENGE

# STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

self-discipline persistence context

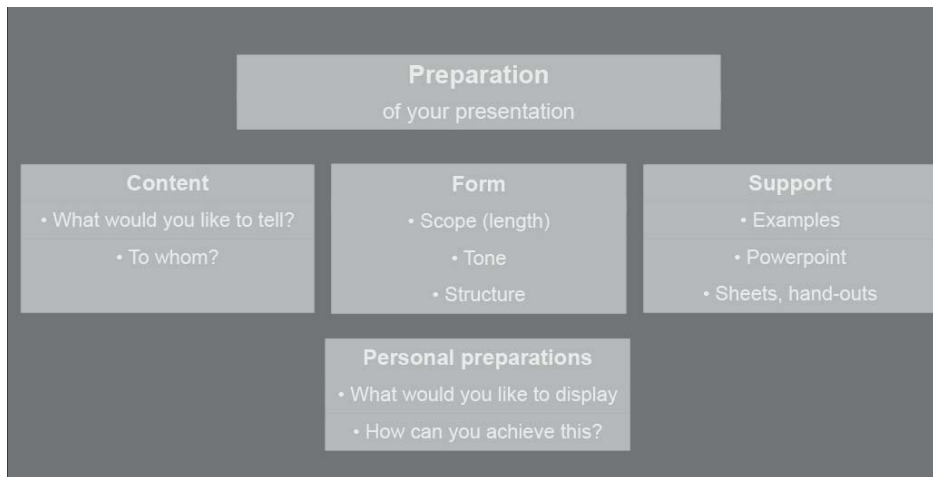
remembering INDEPENDENCE CRITICAL THINKING

flexible thinking EFFECTIVENESS

learning styles repetitions

making connections exams

This could be presented in a diagram as follows:



## Tension

Many people find it quite scary or exciting to have to speak for an audience. All eyes are focused on you and this can lead to you being overwhelmed by all kinds of thoughts ('I will go blank later', 'as long as I don't blush', 'they probably think that my story is not interesting enough'...). Your audience does not notice any of this mostly, and these worries only hinder you.

introduction, a key message and a conclusion. In addition, it is therefore very useful if you make a proper distinction between main issues and side issues. You should also ask yourself if the order in which the information is given is completely logical and easy to follow.

Always keep your audience in the back of your mind: what do they know about this subject? What is their level? This is important, not only for this substantive aspect, but also for the following.

## Form

You have probably found guidelines for the scope (length) of your presentation, but the connection with your audience mainly lies in your manner of presenting and the underpinning of your argument. The gist of the story is mostly easier to follow if there is some variation between visual and auditory elements. A catchy beginning, such as a stimulating proposition or starting with an example, ensures that you get the people's attention for what is coming next. However, keep the aim of the presentation in mind; a report of your research results requires a different tone than a speech on the occasion of an anniversary of a colleague or family member.

A good (and timely) preparation can be a great help in this regard. A 'cheat sheet' can definitely prevent you from losing your train of thought, but a Power-Point also offers the necessary security. Above all: showing any of this takes away the attention from you personally. When your presentation is finished, do a 'dry run' first in front of a fellow student or housemate. You will then have already heard yourself read out the text, and you can then also test how long the presentation lasts in reality.

## Most important points

- A presentation is a form of communicating. This includes both a verbal and a non-verbal component.
- Prepare adequately: make a clear structure beforehand.
- Practise properly and knowing what you want to say makes it much less scary to give a presentation!

## Further reading

Consten, J. (2006), *Ik kwam, sprak en overwon. Presenteren met stijl, flair en passie*. ('I came, spoke and conquered. Presenting with style, flair and passion', in Dutch) [revised] 2010].

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