



## Making Presentations

As part of the interview process, you may be asked to prepare and deliver a short presentation. The employer is mainly looking for the following skills:

- The ability to organise your talk into a coherent structure.
- An awareness of how to put information across in an engaging and interesting way.
- An ability to communicate clearly to others and (if you are given limited time to prepare the presentation) to work under pressure.

### Different settings

- You may be asked to prepare your presentation before the day of the interview or you may be given a limited preparation time on the day.
- You may be asked to choose from a list of topics, be given a single topic, or be able to choose your own theme.
- Invariably, you will be given a maximum time for the duration of your talk. The time range is usually between 3 - 15 minutes.
- Your talk may be a solo effort or you could be asked to join others in a group presentation. In the latter case, the topic is often based on a group exercise set as part of a wider assessment day.
- Your audience may be assessors only or assessors and a group of other candidates.
- Audio-visual equipment, such as a flipchart, overhead or laptop projector or whiteboard is likely to be available.

### Hints to improve your performance

- Your talk must have a structure. It will help you on the day when you are likely to be nervous, and also helps your audience. Make sure you have: A **beginning** (where you tell the audience what you intend to cover). A **middle** (where you proceed to tell them). An **end** (where you summarise what you have told them).
- Think about your audience and pitch your talk to the level of their understanding. Don't feel you have to blind them with science.
- Limit the amount of content to essentials and avoid too many details. An audience switches off with too much information. A five minute talk gives only enough time for roughly four big ideas. Too much detail is a particular hazard if you have had a free choice of subject.
- You will probably find it easier if you prepare brief notes to prompt you with your talk. Try writing key points on small index cards (if you use paper it can be noisy when you turn over the pages). Use large writing and highlight the parts you want to emphasise.

Number them clearly so you can keep to your sequence when you are under pressure. Only glance at the cards occasionally to remind you of the main points.

- Never read direct from a prepared script. You will sound stilted and not be able to look at your audience. Your notes should act as a reminder - helping you to keep on the correct path.
- It is essential to keep to time – you will be judged on your ability to make your points clearly and concisely.
- Allow a short time at the end and invite questions. Try to predict the questions you are likely to be asked and to prepare a few answers. If you need time to think of a reply, repeat the question before answering.

### Examples of topics set by employers

- Tell us about yourself and what you can offer this organisation (5 minutes)
- Explain what you understand by marketing (10 minutes, for marketing traineeship)
- Tell us about a particularly difficult situation you have been faced with and what you did about it (10 minutes).
- What are the main challenges that you would face in your first 6 months in this organisation? (10 minutes)

### How to make a good impression

- What you say and how you say it is important but equally important is your body language.
- Do not begin until you and your audience are ready. Take your time. Make sure that all the audience can see and hear you. Pause and scan the audience before you begin.
- Stand still with your weight equally on each foot and maintain good posture.
- When you move, move for a purpose. Avoid nervous repetitive movements, such as pacing up and down. This will distract the audience.
- Talk to your audience not at them. Speak clearly. Pause between sections of your talk. Try to avoid mumbling and speaking in a monotone. Often when you are nervous, you speak faster, so force yourself to slow down.
- Use humour - but carefully. Your audience may not have the same sense of humour as you.
- Be interested and enthusiastic about your topic. Try to have a relaxed and confident posture. Smile.
- Make brief eye contact with all members of the audience. They will then feel more involved.
- Try not to fidget e.g. playing with your pen. Keep your hands away from your face and your pockets. Otherwise, gesture as you normally do.

## Using visual aids

- These are to help the audience understand the main points you are making, and to remember them better.
- Keep your flipcharts/OHP transparencies/powerpoint slides short and simple. Use bullet points not sentences. Make them attractive, using large print, possibly different colours. If relevant, use diagrams, charts and graphs to illustrate your points.
- Check what you have prepared for grammar and spelling mistakes.
- Limit the number of slides you use - don't use them for the sake of it. Stick to a maximum of 7 points per slide. The points should only clarify what you are saying and prompt you to add detail. Do not just read out the slides.
- Avoid standing between the audience and your visual aids. Always remove the OHP slide or flip chart page when you move on to the next point in your talk otherwise the audience will become confused.
- If you are using equipment, check how to work it before you begin your talk.

## Practice!

Presentations are often a major cause of anxiety for many candidates. Reduce this anxiety by trying out your presentation in front of a group of friends or family. If this is not possible, practise in front of a mirror. You can always get help from the Career and Skills Development Service by requesting an interview with a careers consultant and/or a practice presentation in front of a careers consultant. This will not be about advice on the technical content of your presentation but we will be happy to give you feedback about your presentation structure and technique. Come along to our Mock Assessment Centre, where you can practice your presentation skills with an audience, see our website for details; [www.city.ac.uk/careers/](http://www.city.ac.uk/careers/).

## Resources available at the Career and Skills Development Service:

### Reference

*Reference file "APPLICATION PROCESS"*

### AGCAS video

*At The Assessment Centre, available at [www.city.ac.uk/careers](http://www.city.ac.uk/careers)*

[http://www.prospects.ac.uk/interview\\_presentations.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/interview_presentations.htm)

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