

MAKING A PRESENTATION: THE INTRODUCTION

The first couple of minutes of your presentation are very important. In those few moments, you will get your audience's attention and interest. You will tell them what they are going to hear about and make them feel that it is important for them to listen carefully. They will also get a sense of how your presentation will unfold - its structure - which will make it easier for them to follow.

The elements of an effective introduction

An introduction usually contains the following elements:

- A greeting
- A very brief statement of the topic
- An attention getter
- A preview of the speech structure and content
- Your policy on interruptions and question asking

The greeting

This is very short. In fact, it often consists of only two words.

- "Good morning."
- "Good morning, everyone."
- "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen."

A very brief statement of the topic

Again this should be extremely brief, often simply referring to the title of the presentation.

- "Today, I am going to talk to you about..."
- "In my presentation today, I will be discussing..."

The attention-getter (Hook)

This is the part of the presentation, obviously, that will require the most thought and creativity. Here you are going to do or say something, which will make the audience sit up and pay attention. It should be entertaining, original and cleverly relate to the topic that you are going to deliver.

Effective introductions often contain one or more of the following:

- A story
- A question
- An action
- A joke
- A surprising or thought provoking fact

The preview

Once you have told your story, asked your questions, related your unusual story or facts, you should repeat the topic of your presentation and tell the audience about the different elements that they can expect to hear about.

"So today, I will be talking about...."

"First, I will describe..."

"Then I will argue why..."

"And finally I will suggest..."

Your policy on interruptions and questions

At this point, you might want to tell your audience when they can ask questions. In a professional presentation at a conference, you will probably want the questions to come at the end. In a business or a classroom presentation, you might want to have questions at any time.

"If there are any questions, I will be happy to answer them at the end of my presentation."

"If there's anything you don't understand or if you have any questions, please feel free to interrupt me at any time."

What should not be in a presentation

There is one thing you should not do in your introduction. Don't apologize. You may get the sympathy of your audience this way, but you will not get their respect. The audience may immediately start to think that they are wasting their time listening to you.

The following introduction is not recommended.

"Good morning, everyone. First, I would like to apologize for my poor English. I am really very nervous, since I have never given a speech in English before. Also, I'm afraid I'm not really ready to talk on this subject today, but I will try to do my best."

ANALYSIS OF A SPEECH INTRODUCTION

Read this introduction to a speech and identify the following parts:

- a) The greeting
- b) A brief topic statement
- c) The attention getter
- d) Restatement of the topic
- e) A preview of the speech
- f) Policy on questions

Good morning, everyone. Today, I am going to talk to you about ways of dealing with stress. Modern life is very stressful. There is a great deal to worry about. Students worry about taking exams and getting good grades. Working people worry about getting a good job and keeping their jobs. And we all worry about money. We struggle through heavy traffic and we look over our shoulder as we worry about crime on the streets. It is not surprising that so many of us feel so stressed. So, in my presentation today, I want to describe to you some ways that can help you deal with or relieve that stress. First, I will describe some research that shows that just talking about your problems can help. Then, I will argue the importance of having a hobby or interest and finally I will teach you some useful relaxation exercises. And when I am finished I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.