

## Giving an Oral Presentation

It is now common to give an oral presentation as part of your coursework, and if you move into a scientific career you'll almost certainly present the results of your research at national and international conferences. It's good to have a few nerves before you present, but the more practice you gain the less nervous you'll be.

### Planning

- **Think about the objective of your presentation.** Are you trying to inform the audience about a particular topic or present the results of your research?
- **Think about your audience and their background knowledge about the topic.** Who are your audience? Are they likely to have a thorough background knowledge of your topic? How can you engage and enthuse you audience?
- **Research material for your presentation.** Having background knowledge on the subject can help you feel more confident.
- **Make sure you stay within your time limit.** This becomes particularly important when the presentation is assessed as part of your degree or is a component in a job application.

### Preparation

- **Summarize your material into major points.** Prepare your visual aids well in advance. Try to avoid putting whole sentences on your visual aids – use bullet points.
- **Have a clear, organized structure.** Include an introduction, body, and conclusion, and think about how these sections will be linked smoothly in your talk.
- **Rehearse your presentation many times until you get it right.** The more you rehearse the more confident and less nervous you'll become. Try to practice at least once in the room you're presenting in, so you can gauge how loud you should talk. Ideally, practice in front of a friend and get them to note down any questions they've thought about so you can prepare a few answers.

### Delivering

- **Talk to your audience, don't read to them.** Avoid reading word for word from notes, but talk around the bullet points on your visual aids, or use cards as an aide memoir
- **Speak clearly but with enthusiasm.** If you want your audience to be interested in your topic, you must show interest yourself.
- **Make eye contact with your audience.** Be aware of how they are reacting, and check if they are still with you. Avoid staring at one person for the entirety of your presentation though – it can be unnerving!
- **Be prepared to answer questions from your audience.** Repeat back any questions that you are asked to make sure you have understood and that others in the audience have heard. Don't be drawn into an argument with your audience
- **If you find that your mind has gone blank because of nervousness.** Ask for a moment to gather your thoughts and take a drink of water. You won't be the first person this has happened to and you certainly won't be the last.