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# Prezentační dovednosti 2

Distanční studijní text

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FAKULTA V OPAVĚ

**Obor:** 0231 Osvojování si jazyka

**Klíčová slova:** presentation, presentation skills, communication

**Anotace:** Kurz Prezentační dovednosti 2 je koncipován tak, aby studentům umožnil další rozvoj znalostí a dovedností získaných absolvováním předmětu Prezentační dovednosti 1, tentokrát s konkrétním zaměřením na přípravu a tvorbu prezentací v anglickém jazyce. Představeny budou základní teoretické přístupy, vysvětlíme zásady efektivní přípravy prezentací, zaměříme se na strukturu prezentace a na funkci jejích jednotlivých částí, to vše s důrazem na užitečné postupy, techniky a jazykové prostředky.

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## ÚVODEM

Tato studijní opora je určena studentům bakalářského programu Angličtina pro odbornou praxi jako podpůrný materiál ke kurzu Prezentační dovednosti 2.

Studijní opora obsahuje:

- teoretický základ probíraného tématu s konkrétními příklady,
- definice probíraných pojmů,
- kontrolní otázky a samostatné úkoly,
- seznam použité literatury,
- odkaz na online LMS kurz.

Student nastuduje dané téma, zodpoví kontrolní otázky a vypracuje případné samostatné úkoly.

## **RYCHLÝ NÁHLED STUDIJNÍ OPORY**

Kurz se zaměří na upevnění a další rozvoj znalostí a dovedností získaných absolvováním předmětu Prezentační dovednosti 1, tentokrát s konkrétním zaměřením na přípravu a tvorbu prezentací v anglickém jazyce. První kapitola nastíní základní teoretické přístupy. Uvede prezentaci jako specifickou formu přenosu informací a vysvětlí, jak lze využít teorie komunikace k lepšímu pochopení procesů, jež v průběhu prezentace probíhají, a faktorů, které tyto procesy ovlivňují. Ve druhé kapitole vyjdeme z komunikačního modelu Harolda D. Lasswella a využijeme jej jako rámeček, návod či šablonu pro důkladnější přípravu prezentací; jednotlivé komponenty Lasswellova modelu budou vztaženy ke konkrétním aspektům ovlivňujícím průběh a výsledek prezentace. Ve třetí kapitole je pozornost věnována jednotlivým částem struktury prezentace (úvod, informační jádro, závěr), se zaměřením na užitečné postupy, techniky a jazykové prostředky (výrazy, fráze, vazby a obraty).

Po absolvování předmětu bude student schopen vytvářet logicky strukturované a informačně hodnotné prezentace v anglickém jazyce.

# 1 INTRODUCTION TO PRESENTATION THEORY

## QUICK OVERVIEW



The first chapter provides some necessary theoretical background; above all, it introduces presentations as instances of public communication. In order to explain how presentations work, communication theory is used, and three different communication models are presented to describe the individual components and factors that come into play when we communicate.

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## AIMS



In this chapter you will learn:

- that presentations are acts of communication;
  - how communication theory can help us understand the inner workings of presentations;
  - about communication models and their main components;
  - about factors influencing the course and quality of communication.
- 

## KEYWORDS



presentation, presentation theory, rhetoric, communication, communication model, sender, receiver, channel

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## REQUIRED TIME



90 minutes

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## 1.1 What is a presentation?

A **presentation** is a piece of purposeful public communication – usually delivered in spoken form – that is intended to transfer particular information or selected data to an audience.

The keywords we need to highlight in this definition are:

- **purposeful**: giving a presentation follows a particular purpose;
- **public**: a presentation is typically delivered in public settings;
- **transfer**: a presentation is based on the transmission of information;
- **selected**: a presentation works with a carefully selected set of data;
- **audience**: a presentation requires an audience to be delivered to.

Apart from providing information, a presentation also aims at **persuading** the audience that the presented information or data is correct, relevant, meaningful and useful. This requires quite some skill and experience, but do not lose heart:



### REMEMBER

“All the great speakers were bad speakers at first.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life* (1860)

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## 1.2 The earliest theory of presentation

What constitutes perhaps the oldest theory of presentation are the views on public speaking formulated by the philosopher **Aristotle** in Ancient Greece. In his treatise referred to as *Rhetoric* (written in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), Aristotle discussed the art of making public speeches and how **rhetorical skills** can be employed to persuade or influence others. Being an effective, convincing speaker was seen as an important prerequisite back then, as public speaking played a vital role in Ancient Greek politics, judicial system, philosophy, and education.

We begin with Aristotle in this study material because public speeches and presentations obviously have a lot in common: they are both examples of spoken communication, they revolve around a particular topic, they tend to be delivered in a public place, they require an audience, and they aim at making an impression on the listeners.

Aristotle believed that a good public speech is defined by three qualitative aspects:

- It demonstrates the speaker's credibility and good character (Aristotle calls this aspect *ethos*).
- It present facts and reasons (*logos*).
- It appeals to the audience's emotions (*pathos*).

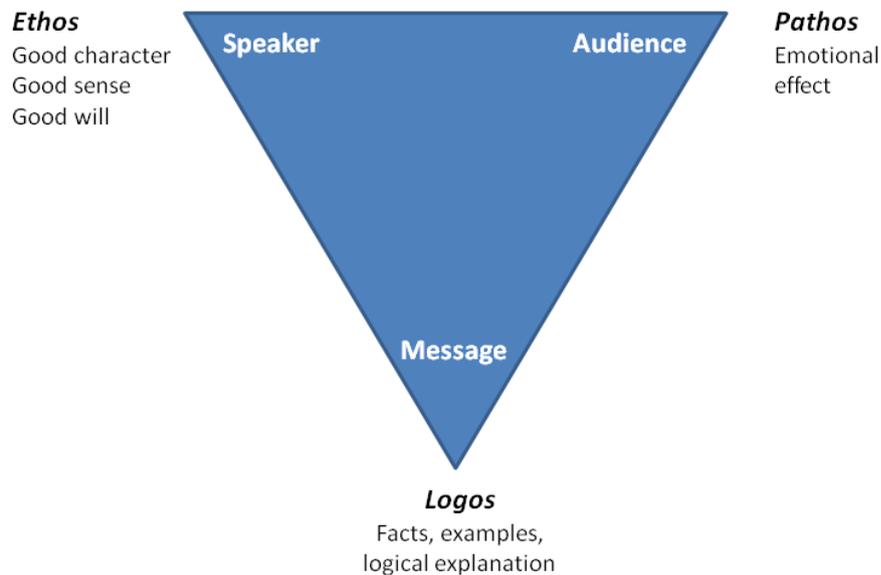


Fig. 1 – Three qualitative aspects of a public speech (according to Aristotle).

As the diagram above shows, the *ethos* is a quality concerning the speaker: successful and convincing speakers project a good character, sense and will. The *logos* is a quality concerning the message of the speech: good speeches are logical, based on facts, and use examples to illustrate the points made. The *pathos* is a quality that has to do with the effect of the speech on the audience: good speeches tend to leave an emotional impression.

### 1.3 Presentation as communication

A presentation is a piece of **communication** (see the definition in section 1.1 above). Therefore, we can use communication theory to help us understand how presentations work, that is, what is actually happening when we give a presentation.

In order to achieve this understanding we can use **communication models**. A communication model is a conceptual model designed to visualize the process of information exchange in human communication. As such it describes which particular communicative aspects influence the exchange of information and the delivery of the message. Numerous communication models have been devised, varying mainly in the degree of complexity with which they describe the process. For the sake of clarity we will limit our choice to three relatively simple linear models.

### 1.3.1 THE SHANNON-WEAVER MODEL

This model was developed by mathematician Claude Elwood Shannon and scientist Warren Weaver, and was first presented in 1948. According to the model, communication involves the following components: information source (sender), encoder, channel, decoder, receiver, noise source, and feedback:

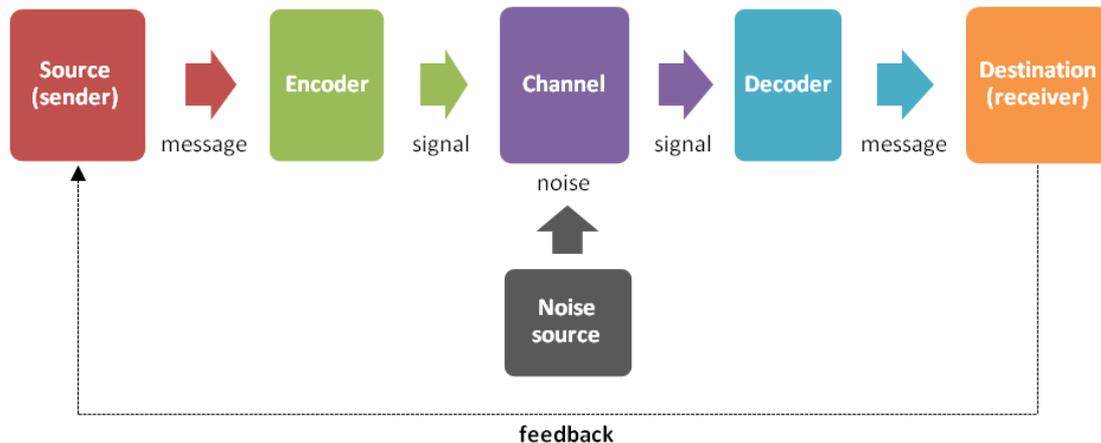


Fig. 2 – The Shannon-Weaver communication model.

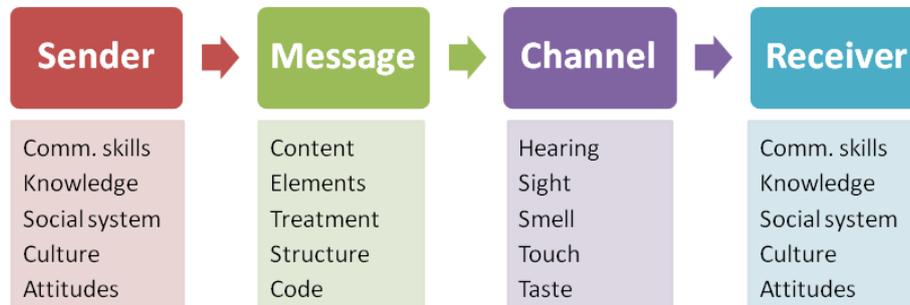
The **sender** is the originator of the message (the information source), who selects the communication channel and sends the message through it. The **encoder** is a transmitter that converts the message into signals; in spoken human communication, the encoder is the speech organs which turn the message into speech sounds, syllables and words. The **channel** is the medium through which the message travels. The channel can be affected by a **noise source**, which introduces noise into the channel that may hamper the transmission of the message. The **decoder** (human ears and brain) turns the encoded signal back into a message, which is then interpreted by the **receiver** (the person to whom the message is sent). The receiver can then provide respective feedback, depending on the message.

In presentation terms, the sender is of course the presenter, the channel is the presentation room, the receiver is the audience, the noise source can be for example traffic or any outside noise, and feedback is the questions or objections raised by the audience in response to the presentation.

### 1.3.2 THE SMCR MODEL

While the Shannon-Weaver model is quite technical (it was originally developed to improve telephone communication), the model introduced in 1960 by David Berlo takes into account the emotional and social aspects of the message. This makes it much more suitable for describing human communication, such as presentations.

Berlo's model uses four components to describe the communication process, namely: sender, message, channel, and receiver. Each of the components is affected by several factors. The model is frequently referred to as the SMCR model, based on the initial letters of the individual components:



**Fig. 3 – The SMCR communication model.**

Although the general structure is evidently simpler compared to the Shannon-Weaver model, the concept of factors influencing the communication components in the SMCR model is very apt for presentation theory. It is the factors that actually influence the success of the communication; understanding the role of the factors helps us understand what makes a presentation successful or unsuccessful.

The performance of both the **sender** (the presenter) and the **receiver** (the audience) is influenced by the same factors:

- **communication skills**  
If the presenter has good communication skills (i.e. ability to speak, read, write, listen etc.), the message will be communicated better. On the part of the audience, if they are unable to grasp the message due to poor skills, then the communication will not be effective and the presentation will fall flat.
- **knowledge**  
Familiarity with the subject of the message is an important prerequisite of a successful presentation. A presenter who has a poor understanding of what he/she is presenting will soon become perceived as untrustworthy by a knowledgeable audience. Similarly, an audience who knows too little about the subject matter may become confused or bored.
- **social system**  
Our way of communication is greatly influenced by values, beliefs, laws, rules, religion and many other social factors. They all create difference in the generation and interpretation of the message. The situation in which the communication takes place also belongs here.

- **culture**

Cultural differences make messages different. A person from one culture may find offensive something that is perfectly acceptable in another culture.

The **message** forms the backbone of every communication. Factors affecting the quality of the message are the following:

- **content**

The content is the actual matter of the conversation; the ideas and concepts put into words. Delivering content is one of the main goals of a presentation.

- **elements**

Elements are the non-verbal signals accompanying the delivery of the content, such as posture, gestures, facial expressions, body movements etc. Elements represent a significant part of human communication because the things we don't say still convey a lot of information.

- **treatment**

Treatment is the way in which the message is conveyed to the receiver. It tends to affect the feedback: in a presentation, poor treatment usually provokes negative reactions on the part of the audience.

- **structure**

A message can rarely be expressed in one go: it has to be properly structured in order to convey the message in the most suitable form.

- **code**

Code is the actual form in which the message is delivered: spoken language, written text, pictures, video etc.

In most communication models, the **channel** is a component representing the medium through which the message flows from the sender to the receiver. The SMCR model takes a more general approach: humans communicate through the use of their sensory organs, so these are seen as the channel. Therefore, the factors influencing the quality of the channel are the individual senses: hearing, sight, smell, touch, and taste.

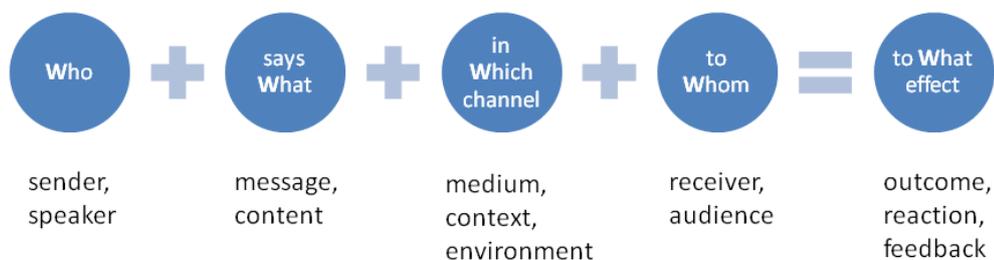
### 1.3.3 LASSWELL'S MODEL

An influential model of communication was developed in 1948 by theorist Harold Dwight Lasswell. He thought that a convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions:

1. Who formulates the message?
2. What is he/she saying?
3. Through which medium is the message being communicated?

4. For whom is the message intended?
5. What is the outcome of the message?

The structure of Lasswell's communication model is based on these five questions, which means that the model consists of five components. We can visualize them as follows:



**Fig. 4 – Lasswell's communication model.**

As the keywords describing each component begin with the letter W (see the diagram above), Lasswell's model is sometimes referred to as “**the five W model.**”

In the following chapter we will use this model as a convenient template or blueprint to help us prepare the presentation.

## DEFINITIONS



**Presentation** – A piece of purposeful public communication (usually delivered in spoken form) that is intended to transfer particular information or selected data to an audience.

**Rhetoric** – The art of effective and persuasive speaking; the skill of using speech in a special way that influences people.

**Communication model** – A conceptual model designed to visualize the process of information exchange in human communication.

**Sender** – The originator of the message; the source of the information that is being communicated.

**Receiver** – The person or people for whom the message is intended.

**Channel** – The medium through which the message is sent.



### COMPREHENSION CHECK

1. In what way is the ancient art of *rhetoric* still relevant for presentation theory?
  2. What can communication theory and communication models tell us about presentations?
  3. Why is Lasswell's communication model referred to as *the five W model*?
- 



### SUMMARY

In this chapter we aimed at providing the necessary theoretical background. We introduced presentations as instances of public communication, and linked them to the art of rhetoric practised as early as in Ancient Greece. In order to explain the inner workings of presentations, we made use of communication theory and presented three different communication models to describe the individual components and factors that come into play when we communicate.

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## 2 PREPARING THE PRESENTATION

### QUICK OVERVIEW



In this chapter we focus on how to improve the preparation of presentations. Using Harold D. Lasswell's communication model as a general blueprint or template, we introduce six steps to take in order to ensure a thorough preparation. The individual steps reflect six main factors influencing the course and success of a presentation.

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### AIMS



In this chapter you will learn:

- about the relevance of Lasswell's communication model for preparing presentations;
  - how the model can serve as a handy "preparation blueprint";
  - which main factors influence the course and success of public speaking;
  - which particular aspects we should take into account when getting ready for our presentations.
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### KEYWORDS



Lasswell's communication model, preparation, speaker, audience, content, context, effect, time

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### REQUIRED TIME



180 minutes

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## 2.1 Getting started

Chances are that at some point in your life – during your university studies, or later in your working career – you will be asked to give a presentation. If you have never done such a thing before, you may feel uneasy and not entirely certain about how to tackle the task. Inexperienced presenters often ask: “How do I go about preparing it? Where should I start? What am I expected to do exactly?”

It is true that giving great presentations is an art of sorts, and mastering it requires time, skills, practice and experience. However, getting started with presentations is easier than one might think if you learn about the necessary steps to take. Once you get the knack of it you can focus on further improvement.

## 2.2 Preparation blueprint: the six Ws

In the following text we will introduce a handy “blueprint” in the form of six steps you should go through when preparing your presentations. The individual steps are related to key aspects or factors that influence the course and outcome of a presentation. We will take inspiration from Harold D. Lasswell’s “five W” model (refer to section 1.3.3 above). Each of the five Ws in the model will represent a necessary preparation step in our blueprint; furthermore, we will add a sixth W to ensure even better preparation.

### 2.2.1 WHO (THE SPEAKER)

The first W (the “who” in Lasswell’s model) refers to the person delivering the presentation: *you*, the speaker. Therefore, the first step to take is to ask yourself a few questions concerning your personality:

- **“Who am I?”**

Make a realistic assessment of your knowledge, experience, strengths and weaknesses. Have you ever given a presentation before, or have you spoken in public on various occasions (such as meetings, weddings, class reunions)? The awareness of previous experience should give you some confidence and ground under your feet.

If you know that you are not the world’s greatest speaker, you will probably have to rely on the presented material rather than on your natural gift of the gab. That means you will need to spend more time preparing and carefully selecting the content (see 2.2.2 below).

- **“How do I want to present myself?”**

Think of the image you want or need to project: what kind of person you want the audience to see in you? An expert from the ivory tower? A knowledgeable colleague? A modest achiever? An entertainer? At any rate, remember Aristotle’s *ethos*: a good

speaker presents himself/herself as a good person, that is, somebody that can be trusted.

Also remember that there may be certain expectations on the part of the audience. For example, if you hold a managerial post and have ten years of experience behind you, all modesty should go aside and you ought to speak like a manager with ten years of experience: the audience will expect no less.

- **“What shall I say about myself?”**

Prepare a credible, professional introduction that will fit the particular occasion and audience. Leave out trivial information but make sure you don't look like a bore. An interesting bit from your personal life (an unusual hobby, for example) can work as an effective ice-breaker.

Presenting your qualifications and work experience will add to your credibility, but too much of it can be intimidating or may sound that you are boasting. An effective way is to project an introductory slide behind you with a brief list of your qualifications; rather than going through it all you mention a few important bits and leave the rest for the audience to read.

- **“What should I wear?”**

Is there a presentation dress code? Yes, and no. It is true that what you wear shapes other people's opinions of you, so inappropriate attire may easily disqualify you in the eyes of the audience. On the other hand, there are no hard-and-fast rules to follow.

Dress for the occasion: wear something that fits in with your audience and the venue. Presenting to a group of top managers in a company's headquarters is not the same as holding a presentation in a classroom full of teenagers. At any rate, prefer wearing something that boosts your confidence and makes you feel comfortable.

#### READING TIP



If you want to read up on the effect of clothing on a person's success in business and personal life, refer to *New Dress For Success* and/or *New Woman's Dress For Success* by John T. Molloy. The books are true classics.

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### 2.2.2 WHAT (THE CONTENT)

The content represents the core of the presentation: we give presentations primarily to deliver particular content to a particular audience. But what is content *exactly*? Can we provide a more specific definition?

Presentation content is a set of carefully selected and logically arranged data that is supposed to be presented to an audience. Depending on your experience, it may take considerable time and effort to prepare quality content. The following questions will help you tackle the task:

- **“What am I expected to present?”**

What is your assignment? What instructions have you been given with regard to your presentation? Try to specify your task as closely as possible! Sometimes the instructions you get are very general: assignments such as “Present your department’s business results for the past six months” are too broad and vague, you need to break them into tangible sub-tasks. If you are not sure, ask the person who asked you to give the presentation (i.e. your boss or teacher).

- **“What information or data will I need?”**

Make sure that you actually *have* the data you are expected to present. It makes a world of difference if you don’t, because obtaining it may require some research, data collection and/or processing. This can greatly extend the time needed to prepare your presentation.

Once you have the data, separate the wheat from the chaff. Good content is about the quality rather than the quantity of data. Inexperienced presenters sometimes think that “more is better” and prepare a lot of data “just to be on the safe side”. As a result, their audience feels overwhelmed with information. Instead, focus on crucial points, key facts, and most characteristic results.

- **“In what form shall I present the information?”**

Although there are situations in which the presenter can speak without any props, a widely adopted standard is giving presentations with the help of visuals. Slide-based presentations designed in computer programs such as POWERPOINT, IMPRESS or KEYNOTE have become a staple feature in public speaking. As the human ear is not trained to fully concentrate on acoustic information for longer than a few minutes, visual props such as presentation slides make it easier for the audience to keep track of what you are saying without getting lost or turning off.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Use visual elements such as photos, drawings, diagrams, charts etc. where you need to illustrate a point or give a clear example.

### **2.2.3 IN WHICH CHANNEL (THE CONTEXT)**

You will remember from Lasswell’s model that the third element involved in the process of communication is the channel (see the diagram in section 1.3.3 above). As the third step in our preparation we will, therefore, have a look at the context in which the

presentation is supposed to take place. Again, answering a few questions in advance will help us to get on the right track:

- **“What is the venue?”**

For a number of reasons, the place in which you will deliver the presentation is quite important. Is it a formal or an informal venue? This may influence your choice of clothing, presentation style, the particular language register you will use, and many other things.

If you have never been to the place, you will need to plan your journey and set out well in advance: arriving late always looks unprofessional, and “heavy traffic” is a feeble excuse. Make sure that you have a contact person to call in case you run into problems.

- **“Will the room accommodate my needs?”**

Have a clear idea of which props and equipment you will need for your presentation. If you have never been at the place, call the organiser or somebody in charge to find out what you need to know: the size and orientation of the room, the seating organisation (can it be rearranged if need be?), desk arrangement (will the audience be able to take written notes?), the video and audio equipment installed in the room (are the connectors and wiring compatible with your own equipment?), the board type (is there a whiteboard or a flip chart?), etc.

- **“What about the equipment?”**

Do not rely on everything being there, even if the organiser tells you that you needn't worry. Always bring small presentation props with you such as coloured markers, pens and pencils, a pair of scissors, sellotape, blank sheets of paper, Blu Tack, etc. You never know.

If you are planning to project a slide-based presentation, bring your own laptop or tablet, do not rely on the in-house equipment. The software they have installed may not be fully compatible with yours.

## 2.2.4 TO WHOM (THE AUDIENCE)

The course and the ultimate success of a presentation also depend on several aspects related to the audience. These are the key questions you should ask as part of your preparation:

- **“What is my audience going to be?”**

You must get your target audience described as closely as possible. If the presentation assignment/invitation does not specify the target group well enough, call the organiser or somebody in charge and ask. How many people are there going to be? Among other things, you need to know this to prepare the right number of handouts.

How old are they? Age is an important factor influencing knowledge, experience, understanding, moods, attitudes and attention span, so you must have an idea what you can expect from your listeners. Talking to a class of teenagers is not the same as giving a presentation to a U3A class.

Are they men or women? This can help determine the general presentation content: for example, a presentation based on *facts* (“static content”) may be plausible for a predominantly male target group, whereas focusing on *processes* and the *relations* between facts (“dynamic content”) could be the right way to win the interest of a predominantly female audience. Gender stereotypes aside, men and women do think and work with information differently.

- **“Will the audience interact?”**

It makes a whole world of difference if you are going to give a lecture-type (speaker-centred) presentation with limited or no audience feedback, or a workshop-type presentation in which the target group will frequently interact with what you are saying. In the latter case you need to be prepared that your presentation may take an unexpected course due to audience participation.

Regardless of the type, you must be ready to answer questions and deal with potential objections (some of which can be quite tricky to handle). Many presentation occasions assume a questions-and-answers (Q&A) session at the end; ask the organiser to make sure about that and be prepared.

- **“Will I be the only speaker?”**

Imagine that you are going to do your presentation following a really experienced presenter who gives a fantastic performance. Whether you want it or not, your own presentation will then be judged by the audience through the lens of the previous performance: if you are comparably worse, rest assured that the audience will notice. So if you are not going to be the only speaker at the event, you will probably want to spend more time on preparing and fine-tuning your presentation.

## 2.2.5 TO WHAT EFFECT (THE OUTCOME)

We do not give presentations merely for the sake of presenting some data or facts. We also want to make an impression and leave our audience with the feeling that the presentation was worth listening to: in other words, that they have not wasted their precious time, and that they have learnt something new and useful. Asking the following questions will help you:

- **“What exactly do I want to achieve?”**

Specify the main aim(s) of your presentation. Do you primarily want to *inform* or *describe* something? Fine but remember that too many facts and numbers can make your

presentation feel laboured and static; you will have to prepare well-timed “chasers” for your audience to wash down something they may find quite boring. Is it your plan to *explain* a problem or trend? Prepare supporting materials and/or handouts to visualise the various aspects, processes, interactions etc. that come into play. Is the aim to *persuade*, *motivate* or *inspire*? Then it is necessary to present clear, positive examples that can easily be followed, as well as make an effective use of language (argumentation, persuasion techniques, “salesman talk”).

- **“What effect do I want to create?”**

Think about how you want your audience to feel after the presentation. Remember Aristotle’s *pathos* (see section 1.2): successful speakers are able to create an emotional effect. A good presentation says it all; a great presentation leaves something to think about.

## 2.2.6 WHEN (THE TIME)

The “when” does not feature as an individual component in Lasswell’s “five W” model because it describes acts of communication taking place in real time. For presentations, however, time represents yet another important factor we need to take into account during our preparation:

- **“When is the presentation due?”**

The answer determines how much time you will have for your preparation. Deadlines can be highly motivational for some people, while others may feel intimidated and get under stress. If you need to prepare your presentation content against a tight deadline, you will need to prioritise and make a realistic assessment of what you are able to manage within the given time-frame.

- **“How long am I expected to speak?”**

There is a gross disproportion between preparation time and presentation time! A 30-minute speech can take days to prepare, depending on the content.

- **“What time of day will it be?”**

We are human beings, and each of us has a personal “body clock” inside that is closely related to our biological functions. This means that we are less alert, active and responsive at certain times of the day. Listening to a presentation first thing in the morning can be very effective for early risers, while others will still be in the process of waking up, waiting for their coffee to kick in. Bodily functions can influence your own performance and/or the attention of the audience: take this into account if you are asked to do an early-morning presentation, or a presentation just after lunch (when the digestive system takes its toll).



**TASK**

Think of a situation that may need a presentation or a speech, such as:

- introducing an author or a book you like to your classmates;
- presenting a project you have been working on;
- giving a wedding speech;
- giving a funeral speech for a person you knew well, etc.

Go through each of the six steps described in this chapter, try to answer all of the questions (see 2.2.1 to 2.2.6) to the best of your knowledge, and take down your answers using the preparation sheet below:

<b>W1</b>	speaker	
<b>W2</b>	content	
<b>W3</b>	context	
<b>W4</b>	audience	
<b>W5</b>	desired outcome	
<b>W6</b>	time	

### COMPREHENSION CHECK



1. In what way is Lasswell's *five W* model of communication useful for preparing presentations?
  2. How can *age* and *gender* of the audience influence your preparation for the presentation?
  3. Why is *time* an important factor that should be taken into account during your preparation?
- 

### SUMMARY



The second chapter focused on how to tackle the preparation of presentations. We introduced a six-step blueprint based on Harold D. Lasswell's communication model, in which the five components of the model correspond to the main factors influencing the course and success of a presentation: the speaker, the audience, the context, the content, and the communication effect. To ensure a thorough preparation we also added a sixth step to reflect time as another important factor.

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### 3 PRESENTATION STRUCTURE



#### **QUICK OVERVIEW**

In this chapter we will discuss how presentations are structured. Dividing the structure into three general parts – the introduction, the body, and the conclusion –, we will take a closer look at each part and describe its function and purpose. We will suggest useful methods, techniques, and language (words, phrases and structures) to employ in each part, with a view to making the presentation more interesting and effective. We will also introduce the concept of transition as a way to support the inner logic and coherence of the presentation.

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#### **AIMS**

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the presentation structure;
  - about the purpose and function of each part;
  - how to introduce presentations effectively;
  - how to employ transition to ensure a smooth flow of the presentation;
  - how to deliver powerful conclusions;
  - how to handle questions from the audience.
- 



#### **KEYWORDS**

structure, introduction, presentation body, transition, conclusion, strategy, Q&A

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#### **REQUIRED TIME**

240 minutes

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### 3.1 The general structure

A presentation is, typically, a piece of spoken communication. Just like any longer *written* text, an oral presentation should follow and demonstrate a certain **structure**. In reality, the structure of a presentation is not very different from that of an essay or a thesis.

On the most general level, the structure should include three stages:

- a welcoming and informative **introduction** (called the “**opener**” in the presenters’ jargon);
- the **body** of the presentation, i.e. a coherent series of **main points** presented in a logical sequence (remember Aristotle’s *logos*);
- a clear and purposeful **conclusion** containing the summary of your speech.

#### 3.1.1 THE HAMBURGER METAPHOR

Metaphorically speaking, a presentation can be likened to a hamburger. Strange as it may sound at first, such a metaphor is actually not far-fetched. Like a hamburger, a presentation is a chunk to be swallowed. Whether it makes a delicious, substantial meal or an off-putting piece of junk food very much depends on the quality of its ingredients. And like a hamburger, a presentation consists of layers:

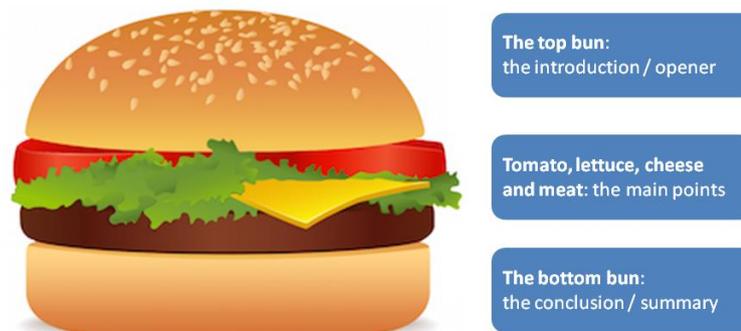


Fig. 5 – The “hamburger” structure of a presentation.

Of course people do not buy hamburgers for the bun, however fresh and crispy it may be. It is the juicy bits – the meat, cheese, vegetables and sauces – that make a hamburger enjoyable. But it is the bun that holds it all together; without the bun there is no hamburger.

Similarly, people come to presentations to learn about the main points, but it is the introduction and the conclusion that wrap it up into a compact whole.

## 3.2 The opener

Quite early on, many things become decided that influence the subsequent course and the ultimate success of your presentation. The following section will give some useful tips to prepare good introductions.

### 3.2.1 TIPS AND CAVEATS

- **Prepare and rehearse** your introduction thoroughly because you will need to deliver it with a lot of confidence. First of all, your speech may follow a very good presentation that sets a high standard; in such a situation your opener must maintain the same dynamics, otherwise the audience may notice a “drop” and prejudge your presentation skills as weaker. Second, you may have to “break the ice” first and win the audience’s attention and trust: sometimes the beginning feels like a car with a cold-start problem. And third, you may suffer from nervousness or stage fright; careful preparation and repeated rehearsal help conceal it.
- Before you begin, **double-check** that everything you need is at hand. Looking for a marker, handout, demonstration material, remote control etc. during the presentation looks unprofessional.
- If you have prepared handouts, leaflets, worksheets or any other materials that will be distributed, lay them out on the desk so that the audience can see them. This will send a tacit signal that you are prepared and that there are tangible things to look forward to.
- Sometimes the presentation room can be quite noisy when it is your time to speak. Wait until the audience is silent before you start speaking. Rather than raising your voice in an attempt to hush them, assume a central position in the room so that the people can clearly see you. Put on a smile and a keen “we are ready to start” face, and wait. The room will quiet down in a few moments. (Caveat: this technique may not work with a teenage audience.)
- Make a **positive start**. Remember that you need to communicate energy and enthusiasm for your topic.
- Introduce yourself and give your credentials (company, institution, experience, in what way you are related to the topic). Keep it brief, leave out unnecessary particulars. Project a slide behind you with a more detailed list of your qualifications, and leave it for the audience to read.
- Assume a **confident voice**: when you introduce yourself, let it sound like a statement, not a question.

- Say why you are there and how the audience will **benefit** from your presentation. They should understand what is in it for them and why they should listen to you.
- Keep a good posture, and watch your **body language**. Do not be too lively: save dynamics for the main part of the presentation. You will need it to keep your audience interested and focused.
- Make sure the introduction is not too long.

### 3.2.2 EXAMPLES

Here are three ready-made, basic templates you can use to prepare the opener. Once you have practised them (see the following Task section), feel free to tailor them to your particular needs:

#### Template 1

Hello everyone, and welcome to my presentation on \_\_\_\_ (*topic*). I'm \_\_\_\_ (*name*) from \_\_\_\_ (*company/institution*). In the next \_\_\_\_ (*expected length*) I'm going to tell you about \_\_\_\_ (*more details concerning the topic*). I hope you'll find it interesting and useful.

#### Template 2

Hello, I'm glad you could join me today for a presentation on \_\_\_\_ (*topic*). My name is \_\_\_\_ (*name*), I'm from \_\_\_\_ (*company/institution*), and I have \_\_\_\_ (*number*) years of experience in the field. I want to share this experience with you, because I believe you may find it useful in your own job. My presentation will keep you busy for about \_\_\_\_ (*number*) minutes.

#### Template 3

Good morning, I'm \_\_\_\_ (*name*) from \_\_\_\_ (*company/institution*). Welcome to my presentation, which is going to deal with \_\_\_\_ (*topic*). Over the next \_\_\_\_ (*number*) minutes or so, I'm going to focus on three major issues: \_\_\_\_ (*issue 1*), \_\_\_\_ (*issue 2*), and \_\_\_\_ (*issue 3*). That gives us some work to do, so let's get down to business, shall we?



## TASK

Choose a topic based on your interests, professional expertise or preference. Using the ready-made templates above, prepare your presentation opener and learn your introductory words by heart. Then rehearse delivering the opener in front of the mirror.

---

### 3.2.3 OPENER STRATEGIES

Once you have mastered delivering the first few opening lines with confidence, you can focus on improving your presentation introduction by looking at some effective opener strategies. As you gain experience, you will be able to choose a particular strategy to fit the particular occasion and/or audience.

#### 1. Introducing the topic

*“In my presentation I’m going to talk about...”*

*“I’m going to focus on...”*

*“The topic of my presentation is...”*

This is the strategy you will quite likely stick to until you get more practise. The strategy is perfectly fail-safe but, unfortunately, not very inspiring. You will want to go for something else if you don’t want to look like a bore and snore.

#### 2. Outlining the main points

*“First of all I’ll be looking at... Then we’ll discuss..., and finally we will take a close look at...”*

Many presenters make a point of outlining the main points at the very beginning of their presentation. This is a good strategy: the audience has not come for a surprise, and they have a right to know why you want to claim their free time and attention. However, keep the outline brief and general, otherwise you may reveal your cards too soon. Never anticipate the results you want to present.

#### 3. An informal opening

*“A couple of weeks ago my friend Alex and I had a discussion about... This gave me an idea for today’s presentation.”*

This kind of opener may not be very suitable for an international political summit, but in more informal settings it can make a perfect ice-breaker. A decent informal opening will show you as a normal human being, and may help build bridges between you and the audience.

#### 4. Rhetorical question

*“What does ‘perfect service’ look like?”*

*“Why do we do business at all?”*

*“What can we teach our students that technology can’t?”*

A rhetorical question is a question we ask without expecting an answer. Beginning your presentation with such a question can be very effective and draw the necessary attention, especially if the answer is seemingly obvious (*“Do you do your job to earn money?”*), or if the question brings up something the audience normally would not think about (*“What is the cost of free time?”*). In other words, rhetorical questions must be inspiring enough.

#### 5. Quotation

*“He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star.”* ~ William Blake

*“It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation.”* ~ Herman Melville

Quoting a famous author or thinker is a common presentation opening strategy. It is a relatively safe way to show that you are smart and educated. Humorous or paradoxical quotations can also work well as ice-breakers (*“If we don’t succeed, we run the risk of failure.”* ~ President George W. Bush). Try to avoid worn-out, cliché quotations that people keep sharing on social media: the audience might find them cheesy and irritating.

#### READING TIP



There are numerous books containing famous quotations in English. One good example is *The Times Great Quotations: Famous Quotes to Inform, Motivate and Inspire* by James Owen. In the book, quotations are organised according to topic, which makes it easy to find the right words of wisdom for your presentation.

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#### 6. The “national colours trick”

*“Whenever I’m visiting your pretty town I can’t help thinking of...”*

*“It’s my third time here, and I must confess that I’ve grown a soft spot for this place.”*

*“It’s really nice to see you lot again!”*

In this particular kind of opener you say something positive and personal about your host, the location, the presentation venue, or the audience. This strategy, too, has an ice-breaking potential, provided that what you say sounds true, sincere and natural. Otherwise you will very likely come across as ironic, and the strategy will backfire on you.

## 7. Shock

*“I can’t really teach you anything in this presentation.”*

*“Listening to this presentation you’ll lose time and money.”*

The shock strategy is based on saying something that the audience does not expect. A moment is created in which the audience realizes that “something is wrong” with what you have said, and they start being curious about what you actually meant by saying that. Therefore, the shock works well when you want to draw attention and create initial interest.

## 8. Joke / funny story

*“Do you know the one about... ?”*

*“Seeing you all here reminds me of a story I’ve heard some time ago...”*

Another possible way to break the ice at the beginning of your presentation is to tell a joke or a funny story. This, however, requires that the speaker has personal charm and the spirit of an entertainer. Avoid this strategy if you cannot tell jokes: an awkward moment will follow if the joke falls flat, and you will have a hard time regaining credibility. Similarly, do not embark upon telling a story unless you are a natural-born storyteller. Also make sure that the story is short and to the point.

## 3.3 The body

The body of the presentation is a linear sequence of main points presented in a coherent, logical way. But how do you prepare and arrange your main points to arrive at such a sequence?

To begin with, refer back to section 2.2.2, in which we discussed the presentation content. In the section we recommended that during your preparation, you should ask yourself the following content-related questions:

- “What am I expected to present?”
- “What information or data will I need?”
- “In what form shall I present the information?”

The questions are quite general of course. We will now take it from there and have a look at how you can specify, in a greater detail, what the body of your presentation should be made of. Two examples (with suggested answers) will be provided, relating to two different presentation situations:

Situation 1 – A business presentation	
Questions	Answers
“What key argument(s) am I going to make?”	That the company has been doing well in foreign trade over the past year.
“What key information (main points) am I going to present to support my argument(s)?”	Selected business results, identifiable positive trends, examples of good practice, people who deserve praise for the results.
“What material will I use/show to support the individual points?”	Data tables, charts and graphs documenting the results and trends.

Situation 2 – A funeral speech	
Questions	Answers
“What key argument(s) am I going to make?”	That the deceased was a good person, and that his/her departure is our loss.
“What key information (main points) am I going to present to support my argument(s)?”	Some particular examples of his/her positive deeds, way of thinking, and personal traits.
“What material will I use/show to support the individual points?”	Personal stories, anecdotes, shared moments, photographs.

## TASK

Imagine that you have decided to run as a candidate in an upcoming election to your university’s Academic Senate. Using the two examples above, sketch out a rough plan of your **election speech** by answering the respective questions.

### 3.3.1 TIPS AND CAVEATS

When you have decided about your key arguments and collected the material to form the body of your presentation, it is time to arrange it into a logical sequence. Here are a few useful tips:

- Depending on what you are going to present, arrange your main points according to an easy-to-follow system. Two very common ordering systems are **chronological** (in which the main points are arranged according to a timeline), and **priority-based** (the main points are arranged according to their significance or priority).

- Transfer the material relating to the individual main points into a **slide-based presentation program** such as POWERPOINT, IMPRESS or KEYNOTE. Slides can quickly be rearranged in such programs, making it easy to try out different versions of the presentation structure.
- If the given presentation situation does not allow using projection, use **presentation cards**. These are, typically, small (A6-size or similar), landscape-oriented cards made of uncoated paperboard, on which you put short notes relating to each respective main point in the sequence. One great advantage presentation cards have over digital presentation slides is that they can be rearranged on the spot, i.e. during the course of your presentation. This allows for some improvisation should the situation require it.
- The slides or cards should serve as mere **prompts** to help you keep track of where you are and what you are going to say next. Look at them discreetly when you need help, **do not read** the information on the slides/cards!
- When projecting a slide presentation for your audience to look at, make sure that what you are saying is not the same as the actual words on the slide. Otherwise the audience would have no reason to listen to you because your commentary would lack added value.
- Ensure clear, smooth and logical **transition** between the individual main points that make up the body of your presentation.

### 3.3.2 TRANSITION

In an oral presentation, you need to make the topic clear to your audience, identify the main points of your talk, and link in your ideas and information so that the presentation feels smooth and coherent. The use of language and/or non-language means that help achieve such a linking, smoothness and coherence are collectively referred to as **transition**.

The primary purpose of using transition in presentations is to lead your listener from one idea to another, to build a bridge between the individual main points, and to show how ideas relate to each other. Transition is a form of signposting (verbal or non-verbal) that creates a guided path through your presentation, and shows your audience how everything fits together. We will now briefly introduce a few common transition techniques.

#### 1. Signalling and bridging words/phrases

Transition can effectively be achieved through the use of language (*verbal transition*). Look at the following words and phrases we can employ to perform various communication goals, with a view to reinforcing the structure and coherence of our talk:

To <b>introduce</b> a main point	<i>The central problem is that...</i> <i>One particular problem was that...</i> <i>A major concern is...</i> <i>A significant issue has been...</i> <i>Fundamentally, ...</i> <i>A basic point was...</i>
To <b>repeat/rephrase</b> a main point	<i>In other words, ...</i> <i>That is to say, ...</i> <i>The point I am making is...</i> <i>Let me put that another way...</i> <i>So now what we have is...</i> <i>As I have been saying, ...</i>
To <b>move on to</b> another main point	<i>Now let's consider...</i> <i>I'd like to move on to / look at...</i> <i>If I could now turn to...</i> <i>My next point is...</i> <i>Now, turning to...</i> <i>Now that we have covered... we can move on to...</i> <i>Let me move on to...</i> <i>Having finished this part, I'd like to turn to the next point.</i>
To <b>compare</b> or <b>contrast</b> two points	<i>On the other hand...</i> <i>Conversely, ...</i> <i>In contrast to what I've just said, ...</i> <i>Comparing this with...</i> <i>As you can see, there is a sharp / remarkable contrast between... and...</i>
To <b>summarize</b> a point	<i>To put it in a nutshell, ...</i> <i>Let me just sum that up before we move on to...</i> <i>To recap(itulate) what we've seen on the last few slides, ...</i>

## 2. Flashback

This transition technique is based on referring to something that has been said previously. We simply link back to a piece of information in order to stress its importance, or as a reminder for the audience:

*“Now, as I said a few minutes ago, ...”*

*“We saw on the previous slide that...”*

*“Remember when I said... ?”*

*“Do you remember the slide with the big photo / pie chart / table full of numbers?”*

### 3. Colour coding

This technique employs *visual transition*. You can associate different colours with different parts of your presentation to make orientation easier. For example, when you have three main points to present, the slides relating to the individual points will have their backgrounds set to a particular colour (see Fig. 6 below):

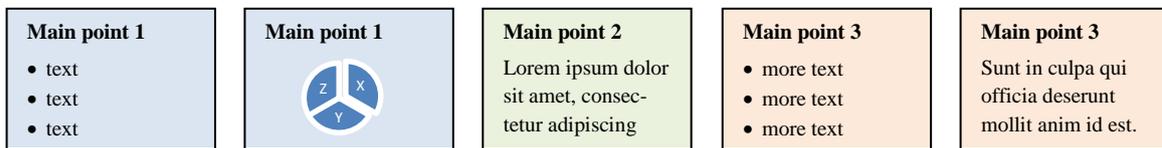


Fig. 6 – Presentation slides using colour coding to establish visual transition.

### 4. Physical movement

The idea behind this *non-verbal transition* technique is that the presenter should associate the individual parts of the presentation with a specific position or movement of his/her body. Possible examples include:

- standing during one part, and sitting on the chair during another;
- standing still during one part, and walking during another;
- standing in the centre when introducing point 1, and moving towards the opposite corners for points 2 and 3, respectively;
- intensifying your use of physical gestures with each new part.

Using physical movement also helps make presentations more dynamic – just make sure that your physical presence in the room does not become too lively. The audience may find this distracting or irritating.

### 5. Pausing

Even a simple pause, when effectively used, can act as a way to establish transition. The pause allows the audience to think about what has just been said, and give them more time to process the information.

Try to use a different type of transition each time you move on to the next point. When you introduce each new topic or problem, it is a good idea to do this in a different way, to create more variety and excitement.

## 3.4 The conclusion

We mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that every presentation should end with a clear and purposeful conclusion. “Clear” meaning that it should leave no doubt what the presentation was all about, and that the aims set out in the opener have been met; “pur-

poseful” refers to the main function of the conclusion: it should give a brief summary of the main points and recapitulate your talk.

The conclusion is responsible for much of the effect that your presentation makes. The very last moments often leave the strongest impression on the audience, and the final few minutes can decide whether your entire performance will be perceived as successful or not. The old proverb “All’s well that ends well” is very apt here.

Prepare your closing words carefully, and know exactly what you are going to say and do. If you deliver no conclusions, the audience may feel that you have run out of time and that the presentation didn’t actually finish.

### 3.4.1 TIPS AND CAVEATS

- Make an explicit verbal signal to inform the audience that you have reached the end of your presentation, and that you are going to conclude your arguments. An example is given below:

And that brings me to the end of my presentation. Now, let me give you a brief summary of what I’ve been talking about over the past \_\_\_\_ minutes.

- Do not expand upon the things presented in the body. You will only blur your final message and steal focus from it.
- Refer briefly to the aims you have set out in your introduction, and assure your audience that the aims have been met and the presentation has served its purpose (the “mission accomplished” statement). This will give the audience a sense of achievement.
- Be **positive**: even if you have had to give some pretty bad news, leave your audience hopeful.
- Try to **inspire**: leave them with something to think about.
- Be **personal**: restate and underline the value of your speech for the audience:

I’m sure that my presentation has given you some food for thought / inspiration / motivation, and that cool new ideas and exciting projects will repay you for the time you spent with me in this room.

- Make a **call to action**: tell them what they should do after your presentation. Try to create a sense of urgency. (*Now, I hope that when you get back to work tomorrow, the first thing you’ll do is...*)

- Try to be **original**: originality tends to be remembered. An amusing final slide with a cartoon or photo that sums up your message usually works well.
- Do not forget to thank the audience for coming.

### 3.4.2 THE Q&A SESSION

Many presentations end with a questions-and-answers (Q&A) session, in which the presenter encourages the audience to ask any questions they may have in relation to what has been said. In certain contexts – for example, at academic or scientific conferences – the Q&A session is expected to make an inherent part of each presentation, and specific time (usually a few minutes) is allotted for it.

However, contrary to usual practice, there are a number of reasons why you should **not** have the Q&A session at the end of your presentation:

- It is boring and unimaginative because everyone does it.
- It may blur the final message you have delivered in your conclusion, and deprive it of its strength and urgency.
- An awkward moment of silence may follow if nobody wants to ask a question.
- The final minutes of the presentation should be yours, and yours only. The problem with the Q&A session is that it allows in somebody else.
- We have also said above that the last moments of the presentation often leave the strongest impression. “Nosey” questions or negative comments from the audience during Q&A can leave an unwanted stain on your presentation, even if you manage to deflect the criticism in the end.
- Attendees who have no questions may feel bored while others are asking.

On the other hand, not giving your audience an opportunity to ask may come across as arrogant and disregarding. Do not worry: there are a few other ways to cover your audience’s questions.

- **Technique 1:** Say explicitly at the beginning of your presentation that there will be no Q&A session at the end but that your audience should feel encouraged to ask throughout the presentation. For example, give them an opportunity after each part or main point by asking: *“Are there any questions so far?”*
- **Technique 2:** Do allow questions at the end but impose a strict limit: *“OK, we have a minute for one question, so would anybody like to ask about anything I’ve said?”*

- **Technique 3:** Make a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) relating to your topic, and either distribute it as a printed handout for the audience to read after the presentation, or make a dedicated slide from which you read and answer the questions (i.e. without actually asking the audience). Prefer to keep the FAQ list short.
- **Technique 4:** Say that you are sorry there will be no Q&A but promise that you will stay in for a while to answer the questions in person: “*Perhaps we can leave any questions you may have for the coffee break?*” This will give people an opportunity to ask but the questions will be delivered in a more informal atmosphere after the presentation.

## DEFINITIONS



**Opener** – The introductory part of a presentation.

**Ice-breaker** – An activity, game or exercise that is used to welcome and warm up the participants at a presentation event, meeting, training class, team building session or another event.

**Transition** – The use of language and/or non-language means in order to achieve coherence and mutual linking of information in a presentation.

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## COMPREHENSION CHECK



1. Why did we liken the presentation structure to a *hamburger*?
  2. Which *opener strategies* would you use in a situation where the audience appears to be cold, reserved and unwelcoming?
  3. How does *transition* contribute to the overall quality of a presentation? Give examples.
-



## **SUMMARY**

In this chapter we discussed the presentation structure. We took a closer look at each part – the introduction, the body, and the conclusion –, and described its respective function and purpose. We suggested useful methods, techniques and language to employ in each part, with a view to making the presentation more effective and professional. We also introduced the concept of transition as a way to achieve coherent, “smooth” presentations.

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## SHRNUTÍ STUDIJNÍ OPORY

Cílem této studijní opory bylo upevnit a dále rozvíjet znalosti a dovednosti získané absolvováním předmětu Prezentační dovednosti 1. Konkrétní zaměření směřovalo k přípravě a tvorbě prezentací v anglickém jazyce tak, aby byl student po absolvování předmětu schopen vytvářet logicky strukturované a informačně hodnotné prezentace v angličtině.

V první kapitole jsme nastínili základní teoretické přístupy a představili jsme prezentaci jako specifickou formu přenosu informací. Vysvětlili jsme, jak lze využít teorie komunikace k lepšímu pochopení procesů, jež v průběhu prezentace probíhají, a faktorů, které tyto procesy ovlivňují. Ve druhé kapitole jsme na základě komunikačního modelu Harolda D. Lasswella představili obecný návod či šablonu pro důkladnější přípravu prezentací. Ve třetí kapitole jsme věnovali pozornost jednotlivým částem struktury prezentace (úvod, informační jádro, závěr), se zaměřením na užitečné postupy, techniky a jazykové prostředky (výrazy, fráze, vazby a obraty).

## PŘEHLED DOSTUPNÝCH IKON



Čas potřebný ke studiu



Klíčová slova



Průvodce studiem



Rychlý náhled



Tutoriály



K zapamatování



Řešená úloha



Kontrolní otázka



Odpovědi



Samostatný úkol



Pro zájemce



Cíle kapitoly



Nezapomeňte na odpočinek



Průvodce textem



Shrnutí



Definice



Případová studie



Věta



Korespondenční úkol



Otázky



Další zdroje



Úkol k zamyšlení

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