



Parts of a Presentation

All types of presentations consist of three basic parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. In general, the introduction should be about 10-15% of your speaking time, the body around 75%, and the conclusion only 10%. The old adage is that in the introduction you tell them what you will tell them; in the body you tell them; and in the conclusion you tell them what you told them. Let's look at each part more in depth.

The Introduction

The introduction is the most important part of your presentation as it sets the tone for the entire presentation. Its primary purpose is to capture the attention of the audience, usually within the first 15 seconds. Make those first few words count!

There are many styles you can use to get the audience's attention. Here are just a few:

- Ask a question. (This is probably the easiest but least creative choice.)
- Share a fascinating fact or startling statistic.
- Quote someone.
- Share a personal story. (This is often good for speeches.)
- Show a completed product.
- Show an unusual object.
- State a problem.
- Wear a mask or costume.
- Sing, dance, or do a skit. (Be sure it doesn't last too long and don't be silly.)
- Enter in an unusual way such as popping up from behind the table.
- Demonstrate an action without speaking.

The best introductions are those that are creative and original, so use your imagination!

After this attention-getter, you need to introduce yourself, usually just with your name, your club, and your year in 4-H. If you are giving a team presentation, you may introduce each other or each of you can each introduce yourself. Sometimes, it may even work for one person to introduce both of you.

Finally, you need to state what your presentation will be about including the major points you will cover. In some cases you might want to include why you selected this topic or what you hope the audience will learn. And it's always nice if something in your introduction relates to your title.

It should be noted that these guidelines are suggestions only. You may speak in situations where someone else introduces you or your topic may lend itself to a different order. In such cases, adapt your introduction to fit the circumstance.

The introduction has to accomplish a lot, but it needs to be brief so that there is plenty of time for the main part of the presentation. An introduction over a minute or two is probably too long.

When your introduction is finished, you need to make a smooth transition into the body of your talk.

The Body

The body is the main part of your presentation. This is where you explain your topic and where all your information is presented. The organization of the body is critical because the audience needs to be able to follow what you are saying and/or doing.

A demonstration is the easiest to organize because you can simply go through the steps in order. The audience must know **what** is being done, **how** it's being done, and **why** it's being done.

Illustrated talks or speeches are usually organized by arranging major points and discussing them. You should limit these major points to three to five. If you have more than five, the audience can get lost or confused. If you have fewer than three, you probably don't have enough information or your topic is too simple or narrow.

Arrange your points in a logical order and then give information to support each point. Examples of ways to organize points are to number them (1, 2, 3....); put them in a time frame (past, present, future); use narration (tell a story from beginning to end); or present them as a problem-effect-solution (state a problem, describe its effect, then suggest ways to solve the problem).

No matter how you organize the body of your presentation, you must have clear transitions from point to point or step to step. There are many ways you can help the audience identify these transitions. Count on your fingers, step 1, step 2, etc. Use transition words such as then, next, finally, or one reason, another reason, or first, second, third. Pauses are a good

way to emphasize transitions. Movement can also indicate a transition. Try changing your position in front of the audience or switching posters.

All information you present in the body of your presentation must be accurate and understandable. You need to offer enough information to cover your topic thoroughly while eliminating any unnecessary information.

The Conclusion

Your conclusion should be short and concise. It should summarize or highlight the main points you made or emphasize what the audience should have learned. Do not restate everything you said in the body and never introduce new information at this time.

A good conclusion ties together all the parts of your presentation. Try to include some sort of link to your introduction. Avoid false or multiple endings. End with a catchy phrase and leave the audience with a good impression.

After your conclusion, you need to state your sources of information. These could include books, magazine articles, or interviews with people. If you've used material from the Internet, don't state entire websites. Just give key search words.

Last, you need to ask for questions. Be sure that you repeat each question before you give an answer. Not only does this ensure everyone hears the question, but it gives you the chance to make sure you understood the question. If you get a question you can't answer, simply say you don't know. Never make up an answer or bluff. If possible, provide a resource where the answer could be found. It isn't practical to offer to look it up and get back to the person.

When there are no more questions, a simple "thank you" to finish is enough. Don't thank the judge for listening or various people for giving you help. If it's appropriate, you can invite the audience to sample or inspect your final product or items you used. You could also pass out copies of recipes, a list of websites, or other handouts.

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