
Presentation Skills
PREPARATION BLUEPRINT: THE SIX Ws

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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.

Preparation blueprint: the six Ws

- In the following slides 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.
 - Each of the five Ws in the model will represent a necessary preparation step in our blue print.
 - Furthermore, we will add a sixth W to ensure even better preparation.
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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?”

Have you ever given a presentation before, or have you spoken in public on various occasions (such as meetings, weddings, class reunions)?

Make a realistic assessment of your knowledge, experience, strengths and weaknesses.

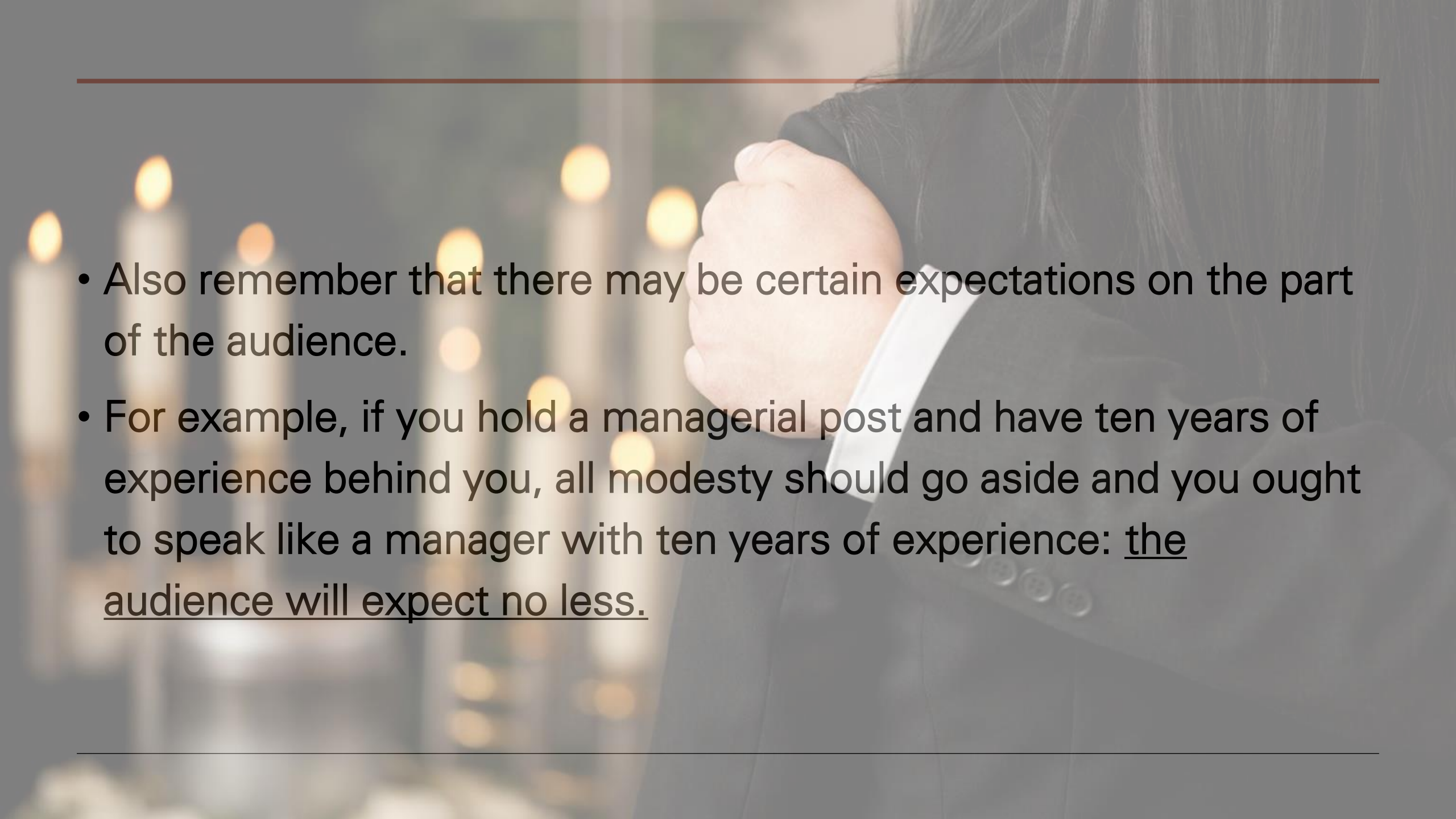
The awareness of previous experience should give you some confidence and ground under your feet.

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

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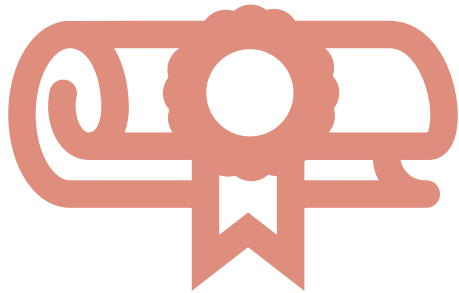
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- Also remember that there may be certain expectations on the part of the audience.
 - For example, if you hold a managerial post and have ten years of experience behind you, all modesty should go aside and you ought to speak like a manager with ten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



“What shall I say about myself?”

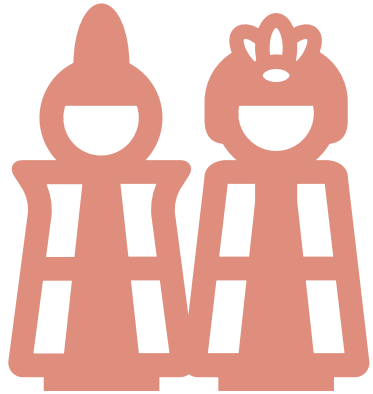


- Presenting your qualifications and work experience will add to your credibility, but too much of it can be intimidating or may sound that you are boasting.
 - An effective way is to project an introductory slide behind you with a brief list of your qualifications
 - Rather than going through it all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

Is there a presentation dress code?

“What should I wear?”



- 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.
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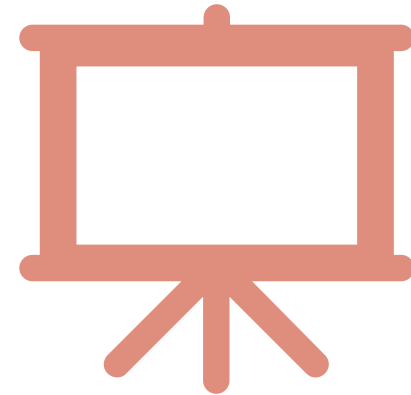
READING TIP

- 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*
 - *New Woman's Dress For Success* by John T. Molloy



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?



WHAT (THE CONTENT)

- 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:
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“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).
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“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.
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- 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.
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“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 KEY NOTE have become a staple feature in public speaking.
 - 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.
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- 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.

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.
 - 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:
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“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

“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 organizer or somebody in charge to find out what you need to know:
 - the size and orientation of the room
 - the seating organization (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.
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“What about the equipment?”



Do not rely on everything being there, even if the organizer tells you that you needn't worry.



Always bring small presentation props with you such as colored markers, pens and pencils, a pair of scissors, sellotape, blank sheets of paper, Blu Tack, etc. if needed → 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.

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 organizer 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 class full of adults.
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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 as they all 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.
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Regardless of the type, you must be ready to:

- answer questions
- 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 organizer and be prepared.
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“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.
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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:
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“What exactly do I want to achieve?”

- Specify the main aim(s) of your presentation.
 - Do you primarily want to inform or describe something?
 - Remember that too many facts and numbers can make your presentation feel labored and static.
 - you will have to prepare well-timed “chasers” for your audience to wash down something they may find quite boring.
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- Is it your plan to explain a problem or trend?
 - Prepare supporting materials and/or handouts to visualize the various aspects, processes, interactions etc. that come into play.
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- 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”).
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“What effect do I want to create?”

- Think about how you want your audience to feel after the presentation.
 - Remember Aristotle's pathos:
 - successful speakers are able to create an emotional effect.
 - A good presentation says it all; a great presentation leaves something to think about.
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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 prioritize and make a realistic assessment of what you are able to manage within the given time-frame.
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“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.

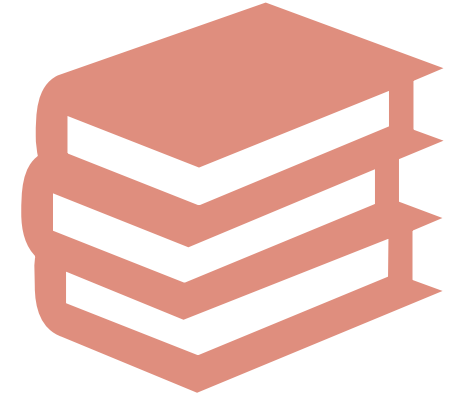


Bodily functions can influence your own performance and/or the attention of the audience:

→ 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).

FURTHER PRACTICE



- 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 PRESENTATION, try to answer all of the questions to the best of your knowledge, and take down your answers using the preparation sheet in the following slide:
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W1	speaker	
W2	content	
W3	context	
W4	audience	
W5	desired outcome	
W6	time	
