

# Groupwork: Presentations

Many occupations rely upon group presentations to achieve the goals of their organisation. Similarly, students can be asked to give a presentation that involves working closely with others. You may not have input into choosing your group members - your lecturer may assign these. Form a group quickly in case you are dissatisfied with the topic or cannot reach agreement and need to change groups.

## Establish your group

Groups operate more cohesively if members feel that they are pursuing the same goal and contributing. Elect a group leader who allocates roles for each member to ensure the workload is shared and equitable. Random preparation can easily lead to a breathless presentation and a poor mark for everyone.

Groupwork roles are flexible. Members also do their own part of the preparation. Roles could be:

- **Group leader:** allocates tasks, leads meetings, ensures deadlines are met
- **Secretary:** records meeting times; ensures attendance, records action items; keeps a task timeline
- **Researcher:** coordinates initial research; may also coordinate the draft with input from the others
- **Editor:** oversees final editing and proofreading; competent in writing and arranging sources
- **Presenter:** takes lead role (usually not alone) in the final presentation, including discussion among the audience at the end

## Be responsible

Be prepared to take responsibility for your tasks. Individuals who do not fulfil their responsibilities let the whole group down. To address the potential for conflict about unequal contribution, you may be asked to complete a confidential evaluation on the others' contribution to group projects. Non-performing students are generally downgraded.

## Address problems

Team success takes effort, so if problems occur, try to solve them early and as a group. This puts the whole group in a better position. Compliments and encouragement will go a long way.

- Praise others for their efforts – everyone likes to feel recognised
- Don't exclude someone or take over their tasks, talk with them – they may need help
- Speak tactfully and calmly, and consider the other person's perspective
- Consult your lecturer if your efforts to resolve the situation have failed
- Look for solutions rather than to blame

## Planning

Once you have your presentation topic, start planning. The actual tasks involved will depend on the type of presentation or project, but they normally fall into one of four clearly defined stages, which are:

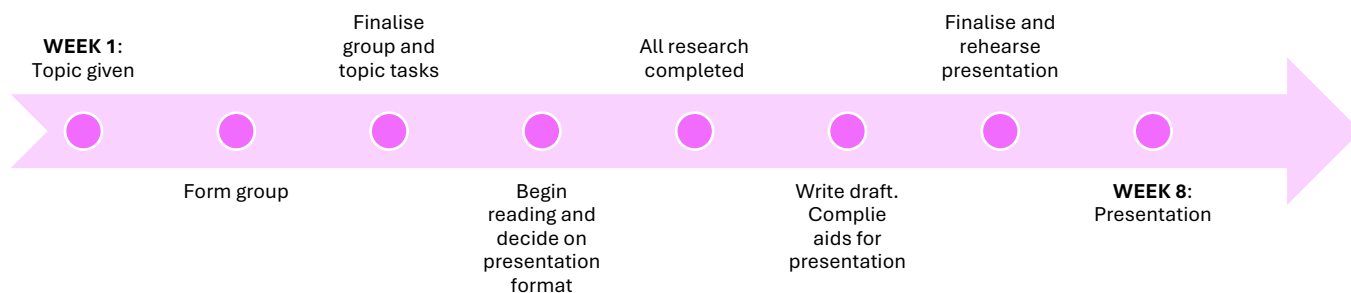
1. Determine a suitable approach
2. Gather information
3. Sort, select and organise the information to be included
4. Assemble the project/presentation materials into a product

## Set deadlines

Set a time frame for each stage with a definite start and completion time. This will help everyone keep the bigger picture in mind. Minimise the risk of quarrels about members not completing their tasks on time by agreeing upon realistic deadlines from the start. Meet regularly to help the group feel connected. Once specific tasks are set, draw up a **timeline** to step you through them. The figure over the page is an example of an eight- week timeline.



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## Consider the details

Refer carefully to the assignment instructions. While your group gathers materials for the presentation, consider these points:

- Who is best suited to undertake particular tasks?
- What format is it to be, e.g., PowerPoint, video, poster, handouts, props?
- What are the main points to cover, and how long will you spend on each?
- How much time is allocated to the presentation?

## Putting it together

Once you have compiled the information, it is time to assemble your presentation. Consider these aspects:

- What do you want your audience to remember?
- How can you make the presentation interesting?
- Which speaker will deliver each part?

## Delivering the goods

Good preparation will help you to feel confident and in control on the day. Consider these tips:

- Know the material thoroughly: rehearse your delivery.
- Organise your notes or use a prompt that contains the points you need to talk about.
- Speak confidently, even if you do not feel confident
- Prepare the room before you start, including seating, video, computer, etc. where necessary
- Use relaxation techniques if you feel nervous, such as deep, slow breathing to focus you
- Give your best during the first few minutes, as this is when the audience is most attentive
- Use the most confident speakers in the group at the beginning and end of the presentation to give a strong first impression and leave a positive memory.

## Warning: PowerPoint

PowerPoint can be both a joy and nightmare for the audience. The phrase 'less is more' is particularly relevant for a PowerPoint presentation. Do *not* read from your PowerPoint. Do not fill every screen with text, rather, present an outline of the material, and 'fill in' the detail verbally. Varying the content format, e.g., including images, or short excerpts of video, can add interest for your listeners.

## Language says it all

Attempt to connect with your audience using eye contact and smiling where appropriate. Hold your head up, speak naturally and with a strong voice. Avoid the "ums'n'ahs" and "ya knows" and speak clearly. This will help to slow down your speech, which in turn will give you an air of confidence. Share your enthusiasm and your audience is more likely to reflect it. Using humour can also create a friendly atmosphere.

## Related helpsheets

- Study Groups & Groupwork
- Groupwork Checklist



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