

9 Worksheet on Presentation

A HOW DO YOU WANT TO PRESENT YOUR INFORMATION?

The importance of presenting information in front of an audience has been steadily growing over the past decades. One of the reasons may be that the technical possibilities available to the general public have increased immensely, both in quality and quantity – and therefore students and people beginning a career in science or in many other fields are expected to be well-versed in the various methods of presentation. Many people immediately think of the office programme “PowerPoint” in connection with a presentation.

There are, however, some more options, and just to remind you, here are the most important ones, starting with the non-electronic ones:

- **Flip chart:** This is like a huge paper notepad on a stand. You write on its pages with thick felt-tip pens, using different colours to make key words stand out – sometimes while you are presenting, but you can also bring along one or more flip chart pages that you have prepared at home. The advantage of a flip chart is that you don’t need any electricity; there are no programmes that might freeze or be incompatible with the version of a file that you have on a USB stick. It can also capture your audience’s attention how you write and draw before their eyes - but only if you write legibly and in large enough letters, and don’t draw if you have serious doubts people will find out what it is supposed to be.
- **Pin board:** Pin boards can be quite useful for either presenting information on a small number of coloured cardboard pieces (strong paper will also do), or for collecting feedback from your audience – give everybody a square (or circle) of colourful cardboard and have them write down their idea for the problem at hand, pin all of them on the board and then, with the help of your audience, put them into a logical order. Advantage: As with a flip chart, your audience can see you doing something for them. If you let them pin their own contributions on the wall, they will feel they have had an active part.
- **Overhead projector:** OHPs have been the classic presentation tool in classrooms for the past 30 years, and they are still useful for simple presentation tasks. If you make your letters big enough (at least 14 pt font size if you use a computer printout) and if you use enough blank space between lines and especially between paragraphs, your audience will be able to follow you.



- Do not put every word you say on your transparencies! The information that you project on the wall or screen ought to be a reduced summary of your talk, ideally supporting its logical structure.
- **Computer Slide Presentation** (Powerpoint, alternatively the presentation module of OpenOffice, LibreOffice or other office suites): If a computer and a data projector are available, then this can be a very elegant way to present your information. You must resist the temptation to use everything these programmes offer, though. Be careful about choosing a template, for example; it should not be too colourful, because you want your audience's eyes on your information, not on the border design. Don't use many different animation effects between slides – they can also be distracting. And finally, make sure that the slideshow you produced at home is compatible with the programme version at school, and if you embed a video or audio clip, it must be on your USB stick as well, of course.

Apart from that, much of what was said on OHP transparencies applies to computer slides as well: Don't cram too much text on one slide. Sometimes it is better not to have any text but a picture instead (photograph, cartoon). Your presentation is there to reinforce what you say and make it memorable.

You are the center of your presentation – not the slides.

- **Prezi:** This is a more recent programme which is available online and free of charge. You put your presentation together online at prezi.com – so a good internet connection is a must. The main difference between Powerpoint and Prezi is that with Prezi you do not have a series of slides to show, but you arrange your information on one and the same canvas, and you can move from one point to another and zoom in and out according to a path you define, or as you point and click with your mouse. This can be helpful for making relations between various parts of your presentation visible, and it suggests that both you and your audience always (can) have an eye on the whole information stream.



If you are new to Prezi, have a look at some of their demo presentations first before you sign up; you will find them at the start page of their web site.

B TASK

Text: The Sierra Club, "Driving up the Heat: SUVs and Global Warming" from: Peter Freese, *The American Dream*, Viewfinder Topics (München: Langenscheidt, 2011), pp. 57f.

Prepare a short presentation on the first half of the text "Driving up the Heat: SUVs and Global Warming" (introduction, up to "than cars do" – just the text, ignore the cartoons).

(Peter Ringeisen)