

Masterclass Speaker Training: Presentation Skills Top Tips

General Presentation

- Show your enthusiasm
- Think about your body language
- Use appropriate language
- Use clear explanations – don't assume knowledge, always explain new things
- Get the students involved – but use them appropriately, make sure what they are doing is relevant and you are not leaving them waiting around.

Body Language

- Think about your posture and gestures
- Make eye contact with students – look all around the room, don't just focus on one person (often known as "lighthouseing")
- Positioning:
 - Use the space (but don't move around too quickly/too much)
 - Do you have your back to the audience?
 - Are you blocking with your body?
 - Can your AV help you? For example, is there a visualiser you can use to demonstrate things while facing the audience, or a clicker and pointer you can use to avoid being tied to a computer?

Verbal Communication

- Speak up – project to the back of the room (also repeat answers and questions from students so that all can hear – you might have heard someone fine, but it's likely that their voice did not project to all of the other students)
- Speak clearly, it's harder to hear you if you mumble or face away from the students
- Pause for thought if you need to, allow time for students to digest things
- Vary your tone & speed, speak slower than you think you need to (maybe record yourself speaking so you can get an idea of your usual speed/tone – you will probably speed up in front of an audience)
- Avoid just reading from notes or having a script. If you want something to help you remember what to say, make some brief notes/bullet points and talk around them. Don't hold them up by your face, put them on a desk and take opportunities to look at them in-between points/slides/activities. Even better, use your AV to help you (e.g. "presenter mode" on a presentation – you can find out how to do this online if needed).
- Use (appropriate) humour
- Don't swear!

Nerves

- Don't worry about being nervous – these things get better with practice
- If you are nervous, don't try to do too much all at once. Pick 2-3 things to focus on – e.g. facing the audience, speaking loudly and clearly – and you can build in more of the 'top tips' as your confidence grows with practice
- Try having a practice with friends, family or colleagues (or students, if possible)
- Remember that the students are on your side – they are there because they want to be, because they are interested in your topic and what you have to say

Demos

- Is it safe? Do you need a risk assessment?
- Can everyone see it? Use your AV to help you – is there a visualiser or camera of some sort?
- Is it relevant to your point?
- Have you tested it? What will you do if it doesn't work?

- How much time will it take? Does it need setup/clear-up time? What will the students do while you do this?
- Can you include everyone? For example, a countdown? Could a volunteer help? What will the rest of the students be doing during the demo?

Questioning

- Why are you asking the questions? This will affect how you ask the questions.
- Are you including different students from across the audience?
 - Give discussion time
 - Who are you choosing? What techniques can you use to include a variety of students? (e.g. give thinking time and wait before just selecting the quickest ones)
- How are you soliciting answers? Think about ways to include everyone – not just the really keen ones
 - Will you get them to put hands up/Shout out/something else? Make it clear so they know what to expect
 - Could you incorporate something to gather answers from everyone – personal whiteboards/Plickers/Surveys (if asking the students to use their own mobile devices, have an alternative for those who do not have one with them - make this an option for everyone, don't single anyone out)
 - Will you choose volunteers to answer, get ideas from everyone/each small group/pair, or have assigned roles within set group work group so that there is a designated 'spokesperson' to share the ideas from that group?
- How are you responding to answers?
 - Make sure students know that it's OK to be 'wrong'
 - Offer encouragement

Question types

Make sure your questions prompt discussion and enable students to explore the ideas, for example:

- Use mostly open questions where possible – not a yes or no, no right answer (closed questions are useful in some situations)
- Ask for lots of ideas of how to approach the problem
- Ask questions to get them thinking more deeply (great for extension activities) – e.g. "Why?", "Can you prove it?", "What would happen if you tried...?", etc.
- Ask questions to bring in the wider contexts of the problem, e.g. "What's the environmental/societal impact?"

We will share everyone's ideas on pros, cons and useful time to use each question type.

Classroom Management

- As you grow in confidence classroom management will get easier
- Actively engage with students, move around the room
- Don't compete with other noise, stop and wait for quiet
- Establish expectations early
- Ensure all can hear you, repeat questions/answers
- Momentarily raising or quietening your voice can draw students' attention
- Try to recognise disengagement - how will you deal with this?
- Are there any special educational needs? What do you need to do to accommodate them? Use the expertise in the room to help you/ask us in advance for support

Classroom Management: Primary

- Students can be more excitable
- Using their names is powerful
- Use techniques for getting attention – e.g. clapping rhythms, hands up. Ensure you've made these things clear beforehand!
- If someone is disengaged, give them a job
- Shorter attention spans: break up your instructions and ensure all are paying attention
- Less dexterity – might need more help with practical tasks

Classroom Management: Helpers

- Introduce yourself & give an overview of the class
- Provide them with notes/answers
- Make your expectations clear:
 - When they need to get involved
 - What you want them to do
 - How you want them to approach things
- Ensure they are engaged
- Pay attention to teachers' advice on working with particular students

Activities to help practice your presentation skills

Introductions

- Your name
- What you do

Why we did this: It's important to introduce yourself at the beginning of a Masterclass – share who you are, why you love the topic, your job and interests – you're not just there giving a workshop, you're also an interesting role model.

Not quite just a minute

- In groups, take it in turns to be in the "hot seat"
- Take a word from the envelope
- You have 1 minute to talk on that topic: no repetition, hesitation or deviation
- Others in the group have to make a note if you break the rules – you lose a point for each rule-break

Why we did this: As well as being good presentation practice, this is helpful for those times when you need to present on something and you've not had a chance to prepare – e.g. answering unexpected questions. Standing compared to sitting will change your style.

Extra activity: Mystery Objects

- Find a "mystery object" – something unusual which you know the purpose of, but others in your group don't
- Your challenge is to get the rest of the group to guess what the object is using questions
- Praise and repeat key ideas from the group that point in the right direction

Why you might do this: Good questioning techniques are essential in a Masterclass – you need to be able to prompt the students to explore a topic and support them when they are struggling without giving away answers or telling them how to do everything.

Extra activity: Aliens

- Choose an everyday object
- You need to explain what the object is and how to use it to the rest of the group – who have never seen or heard of this object before (just like an alien)
- Think about how you will explain it – what are its key features? Why is it made in the way that it is? How is it most often used? What else can you do to it?
- Everyone else – what questions can you ask about the object to aid your understanding?

Why you might do this: You will be familiar with all of the content in your Masterclass, but to some of the students it might be completely new. Think about how you could explain things without assuming prior knowledge.

Extra Suggestion: The card game "snake oil" is useful for practicing improvisation and tailoring a 'pitch' to a particular audience (and is good fun!)