

How to Manage a Group Presentation

*Working as a group sometimes requires very different skills to working on your own. **Teamwork** can be helped by establishing ground rules, deciding your line up and dividing the task so that each group member plays an equal part in the practical aspects of the task. **Consistency and continuity** are also key elements for the presentation to look and sound practised. Sometimes problems occur with individual members that interrupt or negatively affect the overall presentation. This is not uncommon, and some things to look for with regard to **group dynamics** are included on the latter pages.*

ALONGSIDE the usual considerations for an academic presentation, the following matters might need addressing when presenting as a group.

Working as a Group

Teamwork - Use any meeting time(s) to get to know the members of your group. Working as part of a team is an important exercise in communication and problem-solving.

Establishing Ground Rules - It is recommended that during your first meeting all members decide on a set of ground rules (behavioural guidelines). Establishing ground rules will help you work effectively as a team and create a more worthwhile learning experience for each team member.

- **Behavioural guidelines**
Ground rules are behavioural guidelines that group members agree to follow. Areas of common agreement usually form the ground rules for example: how will meetings be organised, will anyone be required to take a leading role, should/could anyone take notes, what behaviour is unacceptable - non-attendance, poor time-keeping, lack of communication - and how might this be dealt with, and so on.
Agreement should be sought and the 'rules' can be typed or written up as a guide.
- **Scheduling**
Determine how often you should meet, how long each meeting will last and what will be discussed at the meetings.
Occasionally, it is impossible to find a time when every group member can attend all of the meetings. Absences can slow or stop work and can make it very difficult to make decisions. Advance warning will help other group members to work effectively during absences.

© 2020 Student Development and Study Skills

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.

Deciding your line up - When looking at your group as a team, it is important to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the group. It may take the first meeting to build a task list and decide who can, or wants to, do what.

Matching members to positions involves an initial decision making process, which can be helped along by considering several factors:

- **Strengths and weaknesses** - some group members will be stronger in some areas than others. Think carefully about this as it might help to determine the speaking order.
- **Styles and confidence** - all groups will have members with differing levels of experience or views on presenting and this can help when deciding who should lead off, who could finish strongly or who might introduce each section.
- **Audience** - you must try to gauge what it is you want your audience to go away with. If you know the audience is going to require technical wizardry to be impressed, you might be fortunate to have a technical expert in your group. This person should be used to his/her fullest extent.
- **Purpose** - what is the purpose of your presentation?
 - If it is to argue or persuade, choose a quick thinker to handle the questions.
 - If you think you will get picked up on technicalities, there is always someone who feels more confident talking about details or facts.
 - If you have to make a good impression, choose your most confident person to open and close your presentation.

Contribution - Unless you are in a very large group, or someone in the group feels very strongly that they cannot present, it is advisable that each member of the group makes a visible contribution to the presentation. This is especially important if you are being assessed; it is easier for the marker to see your contribution.

However, at times it is not possible for all members to present. In this case, it is essential that they make an equal contribution in some other aspect of the presentation process, such as compiling the references, writing the script and/or handouts, to accompany the presentation.

It is always worth checking with the person requesting the presentation how marks are allocated and whether there is a provision for non-contributors. Find out if all areas of the presentation are equally weighted, and in particular if a person does not present, whether they would be severely disadvantaged or 'marked down'.

Dividing the Task - For group presentations to be effective, contact and collaboration are essential. To make the most of contact times, try to connect each stage in the development process to a meeting. In this way, each member will know what the other is doing for that stage.

You might like to consider the following schedule:

1st Meeting

- Set ground rules; share contact details
- Find strengths and weaknesses of group;
- Decide the line-up;
- Designate one person to take and distribute notes;
- Agree presentation objectives; and
- Divide research and the gathering of information.

2nd Meeting

- Organise your info — use large piece of paper;
- Focus group efforts by creating three main elements;
- Order material appropriately
- Choose how best to represent your main aims
- Select suitable visual aids;
- Name presentation/title

3rd Meeting

- View whole presentation
- Rehearse
- Evaluate, proofread and edit written material
- Be constructive and feedback to each other regarding performance elements
- Run through again if time
- Make final arrangements for day of presentation

These meetings can be hours, days or weeks apart. The important point is that you share the load as a group, and use each other for feedback. This will make for a better effort than if you were doing it alone.

Group dynamics

Developing good group dynamics quickly - Working as part of a group for a particular task usually has time limits. Whether you have formed your own group or if groups have been assigned, it is important to build a good working relationship early in the process. Take some time to get to know the members of your group at the first meeting and in some instances create set roles.

Group Conflict - Some tension within groups is not unusual. Most students have spent years working independently in a competitive, rather than collaborative, learning environment and are simply unfamiliar with the unique demands of group

work. The diplomacy, co-operation, and tolerance of different perspectives and approaches required by group work are skills that take time and effort to cultivate.

Non-contributors -Group work functions best when everyone participates actively. However, it is not unusual for a group to have one or more members who are occasionally or chronically unproductive. Here are some suggestions for encouraging such group members to become more active participants:

- Don't assume it's laziness - Find out why the group member is not participating or producing. The solution will depend on the reason for their withdrawal, so begin by determining the cause.
- Encourage shy individuals to contribute in areas they appear most confident. You may find that an invitation and a positive experience will lead to more involvement in discussions.
- Disinterested learners may need a more defined role so that their lack of motivation does not impact too much on the rest of the group or hinder the completion of the task.
- A group member might be stuck and need some advice and direction in order to move forward.
- Choose someone who is good at checking up on the progress the group is making. Some members do need to be held accountable and reminded to meet deadlines or conform to expectations.

Dominant Group Member(s) - Some learners, who are highly goal orientated and self-confident, prefer to monopolize conversations or direct and delegate the work of the group. Strong leadership skills are excellent to have, but not all leadership skills are conducive to collaborative group work.

Try the following techniques to prevent an individual group member from overpowering the efforts of the larger group:

- Indicate that this is an issue of concern by addressing it in the ground rules for conducting group meetings.
- Deliberately take turns presenting ideas or updates. Limit the amount of time each person has to talk and discourage any interruption during the presentations.
- You could try making humorous, but not critical, comments to the overly talkative or dictatorial group member.
- Designate a willing group member to have a private conversation with the individual who is monopolizing the group's meetings or dictating group direction.

Consistency and continuity

One whole presentation, not a sum of its parts - If you have ever sat through a group presentation, you might already be aware that one of the most common errors is delivering a group presentation made up of parts that do not seem to relate to each other.

This is compounded by having different people deliver the different parts, in different ways. When this happens, it is difficult to ensure the audience remains focused on the aim or objective of the talk, and more often than not the end product is a series of presentations equal to the number of presenters.

It is essential to demonstrate a unified and consistent presentation. To help with this:

Remember your Objective(s) - Start by considering your objective(s). This can be done while assessing the strengths of each member of the group, and should take place in your first meeting.

Your communication objective should involve you addressing the most fundamental part of your task, that is, what you hope to accomplish in the presentation.

Ensuring each member is clear on the aim of the presentation should help to keep members focused. It should be stressed at each meeting that even if delivering an individual section of the presentation, all material and research must be relevant to achieving the overall objective(s).

Focus on three key elements - A good rule is to think of three key elements you want your audience to take away from your talk. These become the core theme and unifying features of your presentation.

By concentrating on this as a general framework, all research can be divided and channeled into the three key elements. The entire group will know what each part will involve and duplication is less likely. It becomes easier to drop any material that does not fit with the themes.

Looking Like a Team

Dress code - All group members should try to dress similarly, do not think of a uniform, but just be aware of the impression you want to create. Hats, bare legs and/or arms, garish or large logos and brands printed on ties, tops or jackets, would not be recommended.

Single presentation style - As well as the look of the individual members, the 'look' of the presentation is very important. For example, use only one style of PowerPoint slide. Maintain continuity by using the same template for each section, irrespective of who is presenting.

Perhaps one person can do the whole show, or simply develop a single template for each member. Each slide should have the same look and feel, such as headings using the same font size, and consistent graphics and writing style throughout.

Bridging elements - Some attention must be paid to transitions between slides (if using PowerPoint), and importantly between speakers. These are the bridging elements that make the presentation more integrated. The purpose of transitions is to guide the listeners into what is coming next, be it a slide or another speaker. These verbal fillers need to be practised, as we are not often expected to verbalise other people's or our own actions.

Next time you are watching television, take note of the way newscasters and presenters use key phrases to lead you to the next story or programme.

Examples

... I've just provided you with an overview of what is going to be discussed today. Now, Suzanne is going to look at the advantages of this to the public.
--

...Well, the internal situation has been addressed in the first part; I am now going to pass over to Karim who will outline the factors affecting the external environment.

Rehearsals - As a group, you are already in a fortunate position - you have a ready-made audience. When team members are not presenting, they can make notes and identify problems such as bad spelling, inconsistent slides, clumsy transitions, and things that don't quite sound right. This will help maintain consistency and continuity. You might like to use the following feedback form to give feedback to each member of your team in order to improve.

References and further reading

Adapted from:

Harris Rollins, D. *Powerpoint made perfect*. Available at:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/profdev/presentation/powerpoint.pdf> (no date)

(Accessed : 15 November 2010).

Harries, H. (2010) Training for staff, 27 May. University of Glamorgan.

Saunders, D. (2004) *Making presentations: a guide for students*. Centre for Lifelong Learning: University of Glamorgan.

Presentation Feedback Form – Provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses

Presentation: _____ Observer: _____

TOPIC: _____

INTRODUCTION	FEEDBACK
Introduced topic, stated objectives, offered preview.	
Gained attention and motivated learning.	
Established climate for learning and for participation.	

BODY OF LECTURE	FEEDBACK
Presented 3 – 5 main points in clear and organized fashion.	
Provided supporting materials, examples, and summaries.	
Used visuals, handouts, demonstrations.	
Appropriate balance of text, visuals, speaking.	

CONCLUSION	FEEDBACK
Summarized major principles, key points without introducing new materials.	
Provided closure or stimulated further thought.	

PERSONAL STYLE	FEEDBACK
Enthusiastic, stimulated interest in content.	
Used appropriate voice, gestures, movement, and eye contact.	
Encouraged engagement, increased interest	

Answered questions effectively