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01

UNIT

Learning About the Audience

► With the subject of your presentation in mind, you should begin by learning all you can about your audience.

- 1 Politics, culture, and language
- 2 Professional backgrounds
- 3 Technical knowledge
- 4 Opinions and values
- 5 Methods of background information research

1 Politics, culture, and language

Your ultimate goal is to deliver a clear message about the subject; however, to do that successfully, you must establish a good relationship with the audience. You can create good rapport with the audience members if you research information beforehand about their politics, culture, and language.

- 1 Are there any cultural or political topics that you want to highlight or stay away from?
- 2 Will engaging the audience with questions be offensive or inappropriate?
- 3 Is humor appropriate or not? And if so, what kind?
- 4 Are there other non-native speakers in the audience? Will you have to simplify your language?

2 Professional backgrounds

Detailed information about your audience's professional background can also be extremely valuable. Knowing the professional roles, titles, and responsibilities of the audience members can help you decide what you want to say to them and how you want to say it.

- 1 Does the audience include salespeople, technicians, managers, or entry-level staff?
- 2 Have any audience members been employed by other major companies?
- 3 Are there any mutual relationships with previous employers?

3 Technical knowledge

Another bit of helpful information about audience members is their level of knowledge about the subject matter of your presentation. Knowing what your audience knows can help you present the material at the appropriate level—especially if the information is technical.

- 1 How familiar is your audience with the technical parts of your presentation?
- 2 What is the audience's area of expertise/level of education?
- 3 How many years of experience in the field does the audience have?

4 Opinions and values



In 380 B.C., Aristotle said, "The fool persuades me with his reasons; the wise man persuades me with my own."

Certainly, this idea remains true today. Here are some in-depth questions to consider about your audience's opinions and values:

- 1 **What is the audience's position regarding the subject matter?**
→ Is your audience already for or against what you are going to say?
- 2 **How does the audience feel about you as the presenter?**
→ Are there people in the audience who know you?
- 3 **Will audience members be skeptical or supportive?**
→ What are the audience's expectations?
- 4 **What kind of presentation is the audience used to?**
→ What is the audience's standard of excellence?
- 5 **Are audience members attending because they want to be here?**
→ Do they actually care about what you have to say?
- 6 **How will audience members benefit from the presentation?**
→ Can you give them valuable information?
- 7 **What kind of information will be valuable to this particular audience?**
→ What motivates the audience?
→ How can audience members be inspired to act or buy?

5 Methods of background information research

There are a number of ways to find out detailed background information:

- 1 Speak to individual audience members by telephone or email a few days or weeks before the presentation.
- 2 Send a questionnaire or survey to all audience members.
- 3 Talk with people's coworkers or managers.
- 4 Research current data on the industry and company.
- 5 Talk with audience members directly right before the presentation begins.
- 6 Ask questions during the presentation.
- 7 Talk to the audience after the presentation to confirm that people got your message and their needs were met.
- 8 Ask audience members to complete an evaluation form after your presentation.

► Read the situation and audience descriptions below.



The situation

Imagine that you are a sales representative from an American car dealership that specializes in hybrid vehicles. You have been asked to give a presentation to a group of city council members who are considering purchasing hybrid vehicles for the city's Public Works Department. The city is rapidly growing and has about 82,000 people, with a modest downtown core, many parks, clean air, and a number of booming commercial and residential areas.



The audience

The audience is a group of mostly liberal city council members who want to know the general benefits of hybrid cars and the specific benefits of employing the vehicles in this situation.



Analyze the general benefits of hybrid cars listed below and then imagine how the benefits could be altered slightly to appeal specifically to the situation and audience described above. Rewrite each benefit to fit this audience.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Cheaper operating costs | It costs almost \$940 less per year to run a hybrid car (assuming 15,000 miles of driving per year). |
| 2 Audience-specific benefit | The cheaper operating costs of hybrid cars will save money for the city's taxpayers. |
| 3 Better mileage | In ideal conditions, a hybrid car is capable of 45.83 miles per gallon. |
| 4 Less air pollution | Hybrid cars can reduce air pollution by 90 percent. |
| 5 Less global warming | Increased fuel efficiency also results in lower production of carbon dioxide, a major factor in global warming. |

EXERCISES

Answer the summary questions below.

- 1** What has to be established in order to successfully deliver a message?
.....
- 2** What are three things to consider for improving your rapport with the audience?
.....
- 3** In addition to culture, politics, and language, what are four other kinds of valuable information about the audience members?
.....
- 4** What did Aristotle say about persuading an audience?
.....
- 5** List five methods for obtaining information about an audience that would be most suitable for your work environment.
.....
- 6** Compare and discuss the answers to question 5.
.....

02

Assembling the Outline

UNIT

► Once you have a clear understanding of your audience, you should think about the subject in terms of what you want to accomplish. Once you know your goals, you can decide on the structure of your presentation. The following section presents sample outlines for four common types of presentations.

- 1 Introducing a new product
- 2 Recommending a new policy
- 3 Reporting on research
- 4 Reporting on feasibility

1 Introducing a new product

The objective for this type of presentation is to **convince a buyer to purchase the product**, and the method of accomplishing that objective is to **explain the product's features and benefits**.

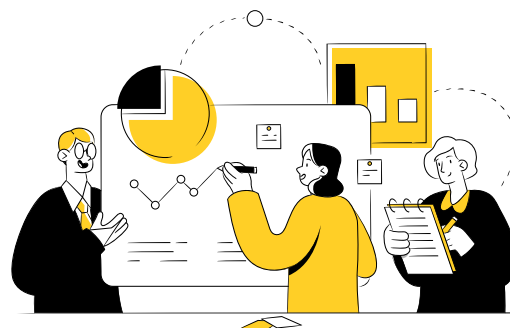
Relevant material that provides background information about the market can also be included. However, note that the structure of the presentation relates primarily to the method: explaining the features and benefits of the product.

1 Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Self-introduction2 Hook, thesis, and overview
2 Value Proposition	The most essential points that make this product valuable to the consumer
3 Market Background	The current state of the product market
4 Product Positioning	Unique selling points that make the product stand out
5 Features and Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Performance specifications2 Usability features related to consumer experiences3 Special relevance to specific consumers4 Descriptions of how the product enhances the consumer's life5 Backward compatibility with legacy products6 Scalability for the future7 Style of the product8 Optional accessories
6 Conclusion	Restate your thesis

2 Recommending a new policy

With this type of presentation, the objective is usually to **tell the audience members why they should do something**. The method is to **explain from the known to the unknown**.

Note that in this structure, the material flows from what the audience knows (the background and the problem) to what they don't know (your solution).



1 Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Self-introduction 2 Hook, thesis, and overview
2 Background	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Explain the situation/problem 2 Describe how the problem was created 3 Show why the problem is important 4 Explain the theory behind the problem 5 Define basic terms as you introduce them
3 Problem	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Define the problem that you will solve 2 Thesis / Main point (restated from the introduction)
4 Solution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Explain how you will solve the problem 2 Explain the specific steps you will take to meet your objectives 3 Predict positive results or negative consequences of your solution 4 Describe the proposed project outcome
5 Time Schedule	Show when you plan to complete each method
6 Conclusion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Based on the discussion, what do the results mean? 2 Restate your thesis
7 Recommendations	Based on the conclusion, what should the audience do?

3 Reporting on research

Perhaps the most common type of presentation used in commercial, technical, and scientific fields is the research report. The objective is **to educate**, and the method is **to present conclusions from the research**.

A highly technical research report based on an original or cited study is usually presented using this conventional structure:



1 Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Self-introduction2 Hook, thesis, and overview
2 Background	Review of the literature
3 Methods and Materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Experimental design (theory behind methods if not already explained in background section)2 Materials3 Test procedures
4 Results	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Test 12 Test 23 Test 3
5 Discussion of Results	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Interpret the importance of the results of each test2 Highlight the importance of the test results to the particular audience
6 Conclusion	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 On the basis of the discussion, what are the implications for the audience?2 Restate your thesis
7 Recommendations	Based on the conclusion, what should the audience do?

4 Reporting on feasibility

Feasibility reports are also generated in a variety of work environments, often as part of a business plan. For this presentation type, the objective is **to determine the potential for success of a proposed venture**. The method is **to investigate ways of organizing the venture and recommending the best way for doing this**.

1 Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Self-introduction2 Hook, thesis, and overview
2 Reasons for conducting the study	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Who is it for?2 What do they need/want?3 Why do they need it?
3 Background	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Provide the history of the situation2 Explain the current system3 Describe the proposed system4 List the basic theoretical principles involved
4 Problem	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Criteria2 What basic criteria must be met for the problem to be solved?3 What basic criteria must be met for the solutions to be feasible (cost, design considerations, etc.)?4 Scope5 Topics the study covers6 Limitations of the study7 Basic assumptions
5 Discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 <u>Solution A</u> Explain the solution Evaluate/analyze2 <u>Solution B</u> Explain the solution Evaluate/analyze
6 Conclusion	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Based on the evaluation/analysis, which solution is best?2 Will there be any drawbacks?3 Is the solution feasible (based on cost and other criteria)?4 Restate your thesis
7 Recommendations	Based on the conclusion, what should the audience do?

13

Explaining Trends

UNIT

► Presenting your visuals often involves talking about trends observed in the facts and figures. In this section, general phrases for describing trends are highlighted:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Upward and downward | 5 Approximations |
| 2 Fluctuation and stability | 6 Reasons |
| 3 Size, speed, and quality | 7 Bull and bear |
| 4 Rate of change | |

1 Upward and downward



Two types of grammatical phrases are used to describe upward and downward trends: noun phrases and verb phrases.

1 Noun Phrase

- 1 As this graph shows, there was **an increase in orders** after March.
- 2 As this graph shows, there was **a decrease in orders** after March.

2 Verb Phrase

- 3 As this graph shows, **orders increased** after March.
- 4 As this graph shows, **orders decreased** after March.

Either type of phrase is acceptable, and using both is a good idea because it adds variety to your speaking style. Also, you can keep your speech fresh by mixing the many nouns and verbs used to describe upward and downward trends. Some examples are listed on the next page.

upward**Nouns**

- 1 (an) increase
- 2 (a) rise
- 3 (an) improvement
- 4 (an) expansion
- 5 (a) pickup
- 6 (a) takeoff
- 7 (a) climb

Verbs

- 1 (to) increase
- 2 (to) rise
- 3 (to) reach
- 4 (to) go up
- 5 (to) shoot up
- 6 (to) pick up
- 7 (to) grow
- 8 (to) climb
- 9 (to) improve
- 10 (to) expand
- 11 (to) go higher
- 12 (to) take off
- 13 (to) edge up

downward**Nouns**

- 1 (a) decrease
- 2 (a) reduction
- 3 (a) downturn
- 4 (a) fall
- 5 (a) dive
- 6 (a) drop
- 7 (a) decline
- 8 (a) plunge

Verbs

- 1 (to) decrease
- 2 (to) fall
- 3 (to) go down
- 4 (to) lower
- 5 (to) lessen
- 6 (to) shrink
- 7 (to) cut
- 8 (to) plunge

3 from ... to ...

The "from ... to ..." construction is another common phrasal pattern for describing the time frame and figures in upward and downward trends.

5 From 2022 to 2023, there was an increase in expenditures of \$10,000. **Noun phrase**

6 Total expenditures increased by \$10,000 from 2022 to 2023. **Verb phrase**

7 From 2022 to 2023, there was a drop in foreign investment of about \$2 million. **Noun phrase**

8 Foreign investment dropped by about \$2 million from 2022 to 2023. **Verb phrase**

A variation on the "from . . . to . . ." construction puts the emphasis on the figure:

- 9 This graph shows a **slide** in revenue **from** \$6 **to** \$4 million in January. Noun phrase
- 10 Revenue **slid from** \$6 **to** \$4 million in January, as you can see on the graph. Verb phrase

When you are using the "from . . . to . . ." construction to emphasize a figure and also want to emphasize the time period, you can use "during" and "between" to avoid repetition:

- 11 **During** March **and** April, there was a **drop** in the number of accounts **from** 45 **to** 37. Noun phrase
- 12 **Between** March **and** April, the number of accounts **dropped from** 45 **to** 37. Verb phrase

A final variation involves reversing the order of the "from . . . to . . ." construction. This only works for verb phrases:

- 13 There was a **1 percent fall** in revenue **from** \$602.9 million a year ago **to** \$596.4 million in the first quarter of this year. Noun phrase
- 14 The stock price **rose to** 73 cents **from** 70 cents a year ago. Verb phrase

4 "of" and "by"

Note that the noun phrase uses "of" before the figure and the verb phrase uses "by." Also note that the auxiliary verb is past tense (there was an increase) in the noun phrase, whereas the main verb is past tense in the verb phrase (increased).

- 15 From 2022 to 2023, there was **an increase** in expenditures **of** \$10,000. Noun phrase
Total expenditures **increased by** \$10,000 from 2022 to 2023. Verb phrase
From 2022 to 2023, there was a **rise** in debt **of** almost \$10,000. Noun phrase
From 2022 to 2023, debt **rose by** almost \$10,000. Verb phrase

EXERCISES

13-1

1 Change the following sentences by substituting a synonym for the words in blue.

- 1 You can see an **increase** of 24% in total deliveries.

You can see a rise of 24% in total deliveries.

- 2 We **decreased** dependence on oil by investing in wind power.

- 3 The sudden **drop** in exports has had a disastrous effect.

- 4 As this chart illustrates, the rate is **going down**.

- 5 Interest rates are **shooting up** overseas, as you can see.

2 Working in groups, write sentences describing the fuel costs graph below. Be sure that each sentence uses the "from ... to ..." construction. Use the word provided in both a noun phrase and a verb phrase.

