

Making Oral Presentations in the Writing Programme

Project yourself to the end of the Core Writing Programme. You are standing in front of an audience and are about to present an oral version of Essay 3. You may be nervous, but you still feel confident. Why? Because you have organized, visualized, and rehearsed your talk so that it will be clear and thought-provoking. Your audience will walk away saying, “I can see why his or her thesis makes sense.” However, you are not at that point yet. This handout will help you transform Essay 3 into a vibrant presentation by outlining how to:

- organize Essay 3 into presentation notes
- design effective visual aids and
- rehearse so that you look and sound professional.

Organizing Essay 3 into Presentation Notes

Because your presentation will be largely oral, the audience will have only one chance to process the information that you give them. Of course, they could interrupt you and ask you to repeat something. However, interruption is not an option for many members of an audience. Some will be afraid that other members of the audience will see them as stupid or rude if they interrupt. Others may simply not want to take the trouble to check something that they have not understood. So, assume that you have one chance to make your points clear.

The best way to assure clarity of your points is to script your essay and then turn it into presentation notes from which you can deliver your talk. Rather than giving you long verbal descriptions of each strategy, this handout illustrates them in examples below.

Scripting

Scripting involves changing the written language of your essay to the spoken language of an oral presentation so that your audience feels that you are talking to them by

- engaging them, using an “I – You” orientation, and
- “paragraphing” your talk, using transitions which clearly signal the shifts in your talk.

The table on the next page shows the written version of the opening to a student’s essay in the left-hand column. The right-hand column presents a script that has been developed from the essay’s opening. And, the middle column identifies the functions of both the essay and the script. Note how the author uses an “I – You” orientation in the script’s spoken language which he does not exploit in his essay. What other differences in language choice can you see? Also note the author’s use of clearly-signalled transition sentences and phrases in his script to signal changes in what the

text is doing. These are indicated in SMALL CAPS. What other language choices could the author make to signal changes in functions?

Table
A Comparison of Written and Spoken Language in an Essay and a Script

Essay	Function	Script
<p>[Student's Name] CCWP01 [Tutor's Name] Group [#] Essay [#]</p> <p>Limitations of Traditional Schooling Methods</p>	<p>Introduces self and topic</p>	<p>Good morning. I'm [Student's Name]. Like you I'm taking Inventing the Academy under [Tutor's Name]. As part of my course requirements, I've written an essay on how traditional schooling methods limit learning. And this morning I would like to share my thoughts on this topic.</p>
<p>The Singapore government places a strong emphasis on education because it feels that people are our most valuable resource. Schools equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in life and to become useful members of society. Teachers purvey facts and skills to students. Students receive these facts in a docile and unquestioning manner because they know that they will be examined on how well they have absorbed them. Many students would no doubt remember instances in their education where teachers made them memorize exact answers to particular questions that had been 'spotted' as possible examination questions.</p>	<p>Creates background from shared experience</p>	<p>TO BEGIN, LET'S LOOK AT WHAT SCHOOLS AIM TO DO. Think about the topic of education in Singapore and chances are that the image conjured up in one's mind would be that of a group of exam-driven students with their faces half-buried in their textbooks, cramming their minds full of the facts and figures that teachers say would enable them to score well in their tests and examinations.</p>
<p>While there is nothing immediately wrong with traditional methods of schooling,</p>	<p>Evaluates traditional methods of schooling</p>	<p>It is reasonable to say that a successful product of such schooling methods would probably be a very knowledgeable person who is receptive to ideas and good at following instructions. And it is equally reasonable to say that these are all very positive traits that can help one towards the goal of obtaining success in life.</p>
<p>they are unable to impart a fully integrated set of skills, experience and values that are crucial for success in students' future careers.</p>	<p>States thesis</p>	<p>NEVERTHELESS, I feel that they are inadequate because they are unable to impart a fully integrated set of skills, experience and values that are crucial for success in students' future careers.</p>

Turning Scripts into Presentation Notes

All presenters fear two things as they give a talk: forgetting what they want to say next and saying it “wrongly”. You may be tempted to read your script during your talk in order to avoid these two situations. However, this strategy will put you at a disadvantage. Reading make you lose eye contact with your audience which they are likely to interpret as a lack of interest in them or a fear of them. Either way you make it difficult for your audience to stay focused on your ideas.

So, how do you deal with memory loss, saying it “right” and maintaining eye contact with your audience? USE NOTES. This section of the handout outlines strategies for turning scripts into effective presentation notes. ***Make your verbal content part of you*** on page 5 will explain other strategies for using your notes to deal with memory loss and saying it “right”.

- Analyze your script in terms of its functions. Think of a function as a section of your essay that does a particular job. The table above illustrates an analysis of functions in an opening. Remember that sometimes you can analyze the functions of a script in different ways. Do not be concerned about which analysis is more correct. Go with the analysis that best describes what you want your talk to achieve at a particular point in your presentation.
- Place each function on a 5x8 inch note card. Number each card.
- Write your introduction in full on the first card.
- State the main ideas of the first function, numbering them consecutively.
- State the supporting ideas for each main idea, indenting and lettering each consecutively (as shown in the example below). Express each idea with a key word or phrase.
- State major connectives between functions in full sentences. Do not number or indent them.

Below is an example of a set of presentation notes.

1
Good morning. I'm [Student's Name]. Like you I'm taking Inventing the Academy under [Tutor's Name]. As part of my course requirements, I've written an essay on how traditional schooling methods limit learning. And this morning I would like to share my thoughts on this topic.

2

To begin, let's look at what schools do to educate students.

1. Image of school
 - a. Faces in textbooks
 - b. Minds full of facts and figures

3

2. Traditional schooling methods
 - a. Produce knowledgeable persons
 - b. Help one succeed in life

4

3. Nevertheless inadequate
 - a. Unable to impart fully integrated set of skills, experiences and values

This is one way to create effective presentation notes. If you have other ways of making notes which have resulted in successful presentations in the past, use these ways.

Designing Effective Visual Aids

Some content in your presentations will be clearer to your audience if you show it rather than say it. You will typically use text-based charts to outline your presentation and present your main points. Below are some pointers for designing effective text-based visual aids.

Language

- Use single words or short phrases
- Use verbs and nouns with concrete, unambiguous meanings
- Avoid prepositions, adverbs and adjectives when possible
- Use the same verb tense on all items in the chart
- Word the heading so that it effectively summarizes the chart's content

Formatting Content

- Introduce one idea per chart
- Use less than 8 words per point
- Use less than 8 lines per chart
- Use less than 50 words per chart

Formatting Color

- Use 3 or fewer colors
- Be consistent
- Use dark text, light background
- Don't use red/green complements

Formatting Typeface

- Use sans serif fonts like Arial
- Use an easy-to-see font size
- Use the same font on all charts
- Use **bold**, *italic* or underlined versions of the same font to highlight text
- Highlight text sparingly and consistently
- Mark individual points consistently with bullets (•) or dashes (–)
- Avoid serif fonts like Times Roman
- Avoid ornate fonts like *Monotype Corsiva*
- Avoid ALLCAP text

Rehearsing: Looking and Sounding Professional

When you stand in front of your seminar group to present, you may be nervous. But, you will still look good and sound good to your audience because you have rehearsed your presentation. Rehearsal involves doing the following.

Make your verbal content part of you

- Stand in front of a mirror. Visualize the room where you will present. Mentally fill it with your tutor and classmates.
- Start your talk using your 5 x 8-inch cue cards for reference. You will probably find yourself getting stuck. This is normal. You are determining the wording that you DO NOT want to use during the presentation. Simply begin again trying out new wording. Little by little you will discover the wording that makes you sound like you and that makes your ideas sound clear.
- Be sure to practice working in the transition phrases that reveal the time/logic connections between your ideas
- Work on your voice. Practice speaking clearly and naturally. Pace the talk a little slower than relaxed conversation. But, play with changing the pace of your delivery according to what you are saying. For example, pause at key points to emphasize important things.

Practice showing enthusiasm and conviction about your ideas. Some presenters think that they need to be entertaining, flamboyant and larger than life. If you have that kind of personality, fine. Let your sense of fun come through. But, remember if you are a quiet and serious person, you can still show your passion for ideas in a quiet, serious way that will create a sense of respect for you and your ideas in the audience.

- Resist the temptation to read from your script during your presentation. This will cause you to speak in a flat, distanced manner, which will project you as uninvolved in your own presentation. If you sound like your own ideas cannot engage you, don't expect your audience to make the effort to engage them.
- Resist the temptation to memorize your script. Reeling off a memorized script will cause you to lose eye contact with your audience. Sustained loss of eye contact will project you as untrustworthy or uninvolved.

Create nonverbal meanings with your body

So far we have focused on rehearsing aspects of your presentation that you have already planned and scripted. But, there is one aspect of your presentation that you need to generate, select and organize during rehearsal, namely, meanings that you create with your body as you present. Mehrabian* estimates that 93 % of the information generated during face-to-face interactions comes from eye and body movements.

- Rehearse eye contact. People respond more favorably to speakers who look at them. Practice looking at your visualized audience. Look at your audience in a slow rotation that includes everyone from left to right, from front to back. Practice focusing on a particular individual briefly from time to time to break the "lighthouse" effect of scanning your audience.
- Rehearse a relaxed, confident body language. Use the mirror to weed out nervous mannerisms like slouching, standing with a too relaxed/stiff posture, tugging at your hair or clothing, waving a pointer or pen around, stepping back and forth in dance-like fashion, and swaying to and fro.
- Rehearse using the machines (OHPs or computers) that will project your visual aids. Practice operating these machines so that you will not fumble with switches etc. during your presentation. Below are some additional considerations for using OHPs.
 - Practice placing transparencies on a real or imaginary OHP as you talk. Position the OHP so that you have a space on either side of the machine

* Mehrabian, Albert. "Communicating Without Words," *Psychology Today* (September 1968): pp. 53-55.

for your transparencies. This way you can place transparencies to be shown on one side and transparencies already shown on the other side. Doing this also has an added bonus. If you are careful about putting your transparencies in the order that you show them, you will find it easier to locate a needed transparency if someone asks a question about one of them later.

- Practice pointing to information on a transparency that you want to draw your audience's attention to.
You have several options for pointing, but the easiest (and least expensive) is to lay a pencil on top of the transparency with the tip of the pencil indicating the part of transparency that you want your audience to pay attention to.
- Practice re-establishing eye contact with your audience after you have set a transparency on the OHP.
Do not read from the transparency or the screen on which it is projected.
- Practice putting the transparency on the OHP. Set your pointer if necessary. Move away from the OHP. Take your time doing so.
Do not hover over the OHP. You will block the view of some of your audience.
- Practice giving your audience enough time to read information on your transparencies.
Do not remove transparencies too quickly.
Do not read the information for your audience. This only forces their pace of reading and interferes with their efforts to understand content on the transparency.