

# Five Presentation Tips



for ESL Students

Giving presentations is a great way to practice your English, whether the presentations are in class and just for practice or in the real world. But to give a great presentation, you need a little more than just good English. Here are five important presentation tips for you.

**Tip 1      Why do people get nervous when they give a presentation?**

Lots of books and articles give advice on what to do if you get nervous during your presentation. However, not many books explain why people get nervous. What is it about presentations that makes us nervous? If we can understand this, maybe it can help us to deal with our nerves more effectively.

Let's look at the problem like this... When we talk to a single other person, we rely heavily on *non-verbal communication* to understand whether our message is transmitted properly. Non-verbal communication basically means the body language of the speaker and listener as well as the tone of voice. For example, if we are explaining a complex math problem, we read the listener's face for signs that he or she understands.

Now, let's imagine that you are trying to explain the same complex math problem to a group of fifty people. Naturally, we try to analyze all the non-verbal feedback that we are getting. However, in this case, the feedback is overwhelming and contradictory, too – some people are concentrating hard, some not, some do not appear to understand while others do. It is this overwhelming wave of information that makes many people feel nervous when presenting.

So what can we do about it? While delivering your talk, if you can focus on only those people who are reacting positively – nodding, smiling and listening intently – you will feel much more comfortable. Ignore any member of the audience who does not look happy. In this way, you can ensure that you only receive positive feedback and this has a positive motivational effect. Another tip is to mingle with the audience before a talk and make friends with some of them. During your speech, these people will react more positively.

**Tip 2      Use your voice as a tool**

In the same way that you have to work on your body to keep fit, you have to work on your voice for it to be an effective tool.

Take a few sentences that you may use in your presentation, and play around with them. Say them out loud a few times, changing the tone of voice and the speed in which you say them. Say them out a few more times, pausing at

different places and changing up the rhythm. Try using a different volume until you are comfortable.

Play around with the language that you use. As a language learner, you are constantly trying to get your English correct. It is easy to forget that there are many correct ways to express yourself.

If you are too 'shy' to say your speech out loud, then at least practice it in your head. You will find this can help a lot.

Observe good speakers that you see live or on TV. How do they play with their voices? How do they use their voice as a tool?

<b>Tip 3</b>	<b>Make it look good</b>
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Now it is time to make your presentation look good. As a presenter, your job is to impart information, but to do this, you need to keep your audience focused. Have you ever been to a presentation where most of the audience were squirming in their seats and constantly checking their watches? This is what you want to avoid.

If you just speak, without slides to back yourself up, the audience will find it difficult to follow you. If you have slides full of text and read the text directly off each slide, the audience will get irritated. They will wonder why they can't just go home and read the text for themselves. If you have silly cartoon graphics and text that pops up letter by letter, you will not look professional. (Unfortunately, the effects built into Powerpoint can easily lead to a terrible slideshow.)

Make sure your slides are stylish and have plenty of graphics – photos, not cartoon pictures. Put just a little text on each slide, so that the audience can follow your topics, but concentrate on you. Handouts, too, should be designed with this in mind.

Finally, what about the way you present yourself? For an extra lift, wear your best clothes and make-up. If you look good, your presentation will look good.

<b>Tip 4</b>	<b>Make it interesting</b>
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A lot of students are so focused on just getting through the presentation that they forget to make it interesting. Or they believe that they are not capable of giving an interesting talk. *Everybody* is capable of engaging an audience. And it might be easier than you think. Good presenters know these few tips:

- ✓ Involve the audience in the talk by asking lots of questions
- ✓ Move about comfortably; don't stand rooted to the spot
- ✓ Talk about your personal experiences and share anecdotes. People will be able to relate to you better
- ✓ Link your talk to recent hot topics in the media
- ✓ Use humor in wise amounts
- ✓ Use interesting facts and start off by saying 'Did you know...?'
- ✓ Use positive, engaging language instead of being too formal.
- ✓ Constantly remind the audience how your talk will benefit them.  
*"Remember that this is the way to ace your job interview..."*
- ✓ If you project confidence and vary your tone of voice, the audience will listen to every word you say.



<b>Tip 5</b>	<b>Enjoy it!</b>
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You don't think you could enjoy giving a presentation? After you finish, you are sure to get a tremendous amount of satisfaction from a job well done. Even during the delivery of your presentation, it is a great feeling to sustain the interest and attention of a group of people who look to you for knowledge. And let's face it, it's one of the few times these days when you can get that much attention.