GOVERNMENT ARTS COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS),
COIMBATORE – 18
POSTGRADUATE AND RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SKILL BASED ELECTIVE–II –ENGLISH FOR WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION
SEMESTER – IV

UNIT – V: PRESENTATION SKILLS

5.1. PREPARING FOR PRESENTATION

Presenting information clearly and effectively is a key skill in getting your message across. Today, presentation skills are required in almost every field, and most of us are required to give presentations on occasions. While some people take this in their stride, others find it much more challenging. It is, however, possible to improve your presentation skills with a bit of work.

Many people feel terrified when asked to talk in public, especially to bigger groups. However, these fears can be reduced by good preparation, which will also lay the groundwork for making an effective presentation. These can all be considered presentations.

They do not, however, all require the same approach. You would not, for example, use PowerPoint to thank a colleague who was leaving. It would be unusual (though it has been done) to use it in a speech at a wedding. However, a conference audience would be somewhat surprised NOT to see slides projected onto a screen.

It follows, therefore, that there is no single set of rules that apply to all presentations. There are, however, some things that every presentation opportunity has in common. These include:

- **You will present better if you have prepared effectively**. This does NOT necessarily mean that you have written out your speech verbatim and rehearsed it until you know it off by heart—although that might work for some people. It does, however, mean that you have to be confident that you are saying the right thing, in the right way, to the right people.

- **You need to be clear about your audience and your message**. Every presentation will be better if you have clearly considered the message that you want or need to convey, and how best to convey it to your audience. These two pieces of information drive your style, structure, content, and use of visual aids.

- **You must never overrun your allocated time**. In other words, don't outstay your welcome. Almost every speech or presentation is better if it is shorter. Nobody minds going for coffee early or finishing before they expected to do so. Everybody minds being held up.

- **Generally speaking, your audience starts on your side.** As a rule, your audience is there (more or less) voluntarily. They have chosen to listen to you, and they want to enjoy your presentation. The occasion is yours to lose.

When you present, you are in charge of the room. The audience has effectively handed you control and is sitting back waiting for you to do something. You may have prepared a specific talk, but if you see that isn't working, you can always change it. You are, after all, the expert.

You can, for example:

- Skip through some slides to a section that they may find more interesting;
- Ask your audience whether there is particular information that they were expecting that you are not providing;
- Suggest that everyone looks a bit sleepy, and maybe it would be better to start questions early, or have a discussion; or
- Ask the audience at the start of the presentation what they are expecting and what they want you to cover. That way, you can tailor the presentation to fit their expectations.

Just as when you are facilitating, you want to help your audience get the most out of your presentation. The best way to do that is to accept feedback—which may include smiles, nods of interest, or people getting their phones out.

Preparing for Your Presentation

A presentation is a means of communication that can be adapted to various speaking situations, such as talking to a group, addressing a meeting or briefing a team. Effective presentations usually require careful thought and preparation—although this preparation need not take very long.

Preparation is the most important part of making a successful presentation.

A Presentation explains what information you need before you can really start to plan your presentation and decide what you are going to say. The most important aspects include the objective of the presentation, the subject, and the audience.

Irrespective of whether the occasion is formal or informal, you should always aim to give a clear, well-structured delivery. To do so, you need to **organise your presentation material**. You can either do this in your head, or use a technique like mind-mapping to help you identify links and good flow.

By the time you come **to write your presentation**, you should know exactly what you want to say and the order in which you want to say it. You may want to use one of the standard presentation structures, such as 'What, Why, How?'. You will also find it helpful to consider how to tell your story most effectively, and to use stories in your presentation to illustrate points. There is more about this in our page on **writing your presentation**.

You also need to decide on your presentation method. Presentations range from the formal to the informal. Your choice of presentation method will depend on many factors, including the audience, the venue, the facilities, and your own preferences.

Visual aids can add another dimension to your presentation, helping to hold your audience's attention, and also act as a reminder of what you wanted to say. However, they need handling with care. **Only use visual aids if they are necessary to maintain interest and assist comprehension**. If visual aids are not used well, they can ruin a presentation.

A particular case of visual aids is the use of data in a presentation.

There are times when using data in a presentation can really help you to tell the story better. It is, however, important not to blind your audience with statistics. You also need to

remember that many people find numbers difficult to understand. Our page on **Presenting Data** gives some hints and tips about using data effectively in a presentation situation.

On the Day of the Presentation

There are a number of aspects to delivering your presentation on the day.

The practicalities of how you manage your presentation can make a significant difference to its success, and to your nerves! For example, turning up early means that you have will have a chance to see the room, and ensure that you can operate all the necessary equipment. There is more about how to cope, including managing sound systems, audio-visual equipment and lecterns in our page on **Managing the Presentation Event**.

Many people also feel very nervous before and during a presentation. This is entirely normal, and can even be helpful if you can channel it in the right way. There are some tried and tested strategies and techniques to manage your nerves so that you can concentrate on delivering an effective and engaging presentation.

How you present yourself can also affect how your audience responds to your presentation.

You need to fit with your audience's expectations if they are not going to spend quite a large chunk of your presentation dealing with the differences between expectations and reality.

You also need to consider how to **manage your presentation notes**.

Few people are able to give a presentation without notes. You will need to know your own abilities and decide how best to make the presentation. You might manage your talk by using full text, notes on cue cards, keywords on cue cards, or mind maps. There is more about this in our page on **Managing your Presentation Notes**.

After the presentation, you may be faced with a question-and-answer session. For many people, this is the worst part of the event.

Decide in advance how and when you wish to handle questions. Some speakers prefer questions to be raised as they arise during the presentation whilst others prefer to deal with questions at the end. At the start of your presentation, you should make clear your preferences to the audience.

5.2.USING SLIDES & DELIVERING PRESENTATION

The possible uses of PowerPoint are countless. A slide show can help a teacher teach a lesson, illustrate an event in history, easily display statistical information, or be used for training in corporations. A slide show can be a valuable tool for teaching, sharing and learning. Whether presenting at a conference or convincing your parents to get a puppy, PowerPoint presentations are useful no matter what the topic and help communicate ideas to an audience. The invention of PowerPoint by Gaskins has saved presenters hours of painstakingly handcrafting displays, and created a professional and easy way to relay information. The following are steps on how to create a basic PowerPoint presentation, however certain steps may vary slightly depending upon what version of PowerPoint you are using. This tutorial is specifically using PowerPoint 2007.

- Step 1: Launch the PowerPoint Program

- Step 2: Choosing a Design

- Step 3: Create Title Page

- Step 4: Add More Slides

- Step 5: Add Charts, Pictures, Graphs, Etc.

- Step 6: Add Transitions

- Step 7: Changing the Order

- Step 8: Play the Presentation

5.3. WRITING REPORTS

What is a Report?

In academia there is some overlap between reports and essays, and the two words are sometimes used interchangeably, but reports are more likely to be needed for business, scientific and technical subjects, and in the workplace.

Whereas an essay presents arguments and reasoning, a report concentrates on facts.

Essentially, a report is a short, sharp, concise document which is written for a particular purpose and audience. It generally sets outs and analyses a situation or problem, often making recommendations for future action. It is a factual paper, and needs to be clear and well-structured.

Requirements for the precise form and content of a report will vary between organization and departments and in study between courses, from tutor to tutor, as well as between subjects, so it's worth finding out if there are any specific guidelines before you start.

Reports may contain some or all of the following elements:

- A description of a sequence of events or a situation;
- Some interpretation of the significance of these events or situation, whether solely your own analysis or informed by the views of others, always carefully referenced of course (see our page on **Academic Referencing** for more information);
- An evaluation of the facts or the results of your research;
- Discussion of the likely outcomes of future courses of action;
- Your recommendations as to a course of action; and
- Conclusions.

5.4. PROPOSALS

A proposal is an essential marketing document that helps cultivate an initial professional relationship between an organization and a donor over a project to be implemented. The proposal outlines the plan of the implementing organization about the project, giving extensive information about the intention, for implementing it, the ways to manage it and the results to be delivered from it. A proposal is a very important document. In some cases, a concept note precedes a proposal, briefing the basic facts of the project idea. However, the project idea faces a considerable challenge when it has to be presented in a framework. The proposal has a framework that establishes ideas formally for a clear understanding of the project for the donor. Besides, unless the ideas are not documented in writing, they do not exist. Hence, a proposal facilitates appropriate words for the conception of an idea. Proposals have recently become more sophisticated.