Section 10
Seminar Presentations

Introduction

Presentations are something that you will all be asked to do at some point during your university careers. Being able to give a good presentation is a transferable skill that can be applied when you graduate from university and enter the workplace. Public speaking on any level can be a very daunting prospect and most of us get anxious at the thought of it. There are skills that you can learn, and which will be discussed in this section, to enhance your presentation delivery. However, one of the key things essential to delivering a good presentation is to have a positive attitude. This means to have confidence in yourself, and practice will improve your self-confidence, which, in turn, will improve your presentations! This section focuses on seminar presentations, but most of the information given here is transferable and can be applied to all forms of public speaking.

This section is going to address a number of issues which are all relevant to preparing and giving presentations and these include: preparing and reading background material; preparing your presentation; leading the discussion; preparing necessary handouts or visual aids; preparing relevant questions; and where appropriate, submitting a written assignment based on the presentation topic. Each of these issues will be addressed in turn, but before we do this there are a number of preparatory issues which have to be considered before you start preparing your presentation. It should also be remembered that a seminar presentation is an **oral presentation** and is NOT a written essay that is simply read out from paper.

Preparatory Issues

1. Make sure that you are familiar with the topic that you are presenting.

2. If you are unsure of the purpose of the presentation i.e. is it an overview of the area or is it a critical analysis of a specific theory/writer; or, has it to be split up so that one person presents the 'for arguments' and another the 'arguments against' for a specific topic, then discuss the format with your seminar tutor.

3. Make sure that if you are working collaboratively that you allocate the work load equally and that you all have contact numbers for each other. And if possible, that you all have a copy of the work that you are doing.

4. If you have to submit a report on the presentation then you will have to change the style in which it was written. It will have to be written in prose and not bullet pointed as your presentation will be, and of course, fully referenced!

Objectives

The context and purpose of your presentation will influence how it is delivered. Think carefully about, and be aware of, the objectives of your presentation.

Consider Your Objectives

1. The form of your presentation depends on what you are trying to achieve and what information and impressions you want the audience to take away with them.
2. What is the purpose of the presentation? (To inform, to show progress, to show results, to persuade, to sell, to teach, to entertain…)
3. Do you have a brief to follow concerning the timing and contents (from assessors, from seminar tutors etc.).

Your Audience

In addition to the objectives of your presentation, you will also have to think about the audience to whom you are presenting:

Consider Your Audience

1. The content needs to be appropriate to the audience.
2. Who are they? (Colleagues, assessors, students, general public...)
3. Is age or gender relevant?
4. Is it a small group or large audience?
5. Do they want to be there?
6. What is their knowledge of the subject? (Are they experts or not - do they know the jargon?)
7. Do they want to hear what you are going to say?
8. How can you link new material to things they already understand.

Presentation

The material of your presentation should be concise, to the point and interesting. In addition to the obvious things like content and visual aids, the following are just as important as the audience will be subconsciously taking them in:

- Your voice - *how* you say it is as important as *what* you say
- Body language - your body movements express what your attitudes and thoughts really are.
- Appearance - first impressions influence the audience's attitudes to you. Dress appropriately for the occasion, although this is probably more relevant for when you are addressing an audience whom you do not know.

Preparation

Just as you would thoughtfully and carefully prepare your material for a written assignment you must also do the same for a presentation. Therefore the presentation needs as much structure as a written essay does. Thus, think about the objectives of the talk and the main points you want to make.

It is advisable to write out the presentation in a rough draft and then review this draft. You will almost certainly find things that are irrelevant or superfluous, in which case, delete them. Check that the presentation is consistent and flows smoothly. If there are things you cannot easily express, possibly because of doubt about your understanding or because of pronunciation, then leave them out. Try not to read from a script as it more difficult to locate your next sentence if you are reading verbatim from typed A4 paper. You should prepare cue cards which have key words and phrases on them, and use this to 'guide' you through your presentation. If you are using this method, always remember to mark on the cards the visual aids that go with them, so that the right overhead or handout is shown at the right time. Also, you should always try and rehearse your presentation - to yourself at first and then in front of an audience. This initial rehearsal will help you see how the words and the sequence of visual aids go together. Therefore, when you are preparing your presentation always keep the following points in mind.

1. A seminar presentation is a short informal talk about a topic on the course. You are sharing your ideas or discoveries in a way that gives seminar participants an opportunity for discussion. These presentations form a normal part of the teaching and learning process in university courses.

2. Don't think of the presentation as a test. You will not normally be judged on your performance. The person who will learn most from this exercise is you. The act of investigating sources, digesting information, and summarising other peoples' work will help to clarify these matters in your mind.

3. Seminar presentations help develop your confidence in handling information, making useful notes, and presenting an argument.

4. A seminar presentation should not try to imitate an essay. It is better to offer a presentation on something smaller and more specific, rather than the type of general question posed in a coursework essay.

5. Don't read the presentation verbatim. Instead use bullet points and short notes.

6. If you have the resources, it is helpful to provide other members of the group with a copy of your outline notes.

7. Overhead projection facilities will often be available if you wish to show transparencies. Otherwise, photocopies of any illustrative material will be perfectly acceptable.

Assessment

Depending on the purpose of the presentation, you may be formally assessed on it. If you are being assessed, it is useful to think about the points contained in the box below.

Assessed Presentations

1. You should demonstrate an understanding of the main points of the reading.

2. You should express your own point of view on what opinion/argument/thesis you think the author is trying to put across to the reader.

3. You should have a clear organised structure to the presentation (introduction of topic, summary and conclusion).

4. You should demonstrate an ability to question the material presented in the text.

5. Avoid straight reading of the text. Try to express your ideas in your own words and back them up with direct referenced quotes from the reading.

6. Keep within the allotted time.

7. Invite and engage the audience in a discussion to respond to your interpretation of the subject you are presenting.

Structure

Structuring a presentation is no different from writing an essay or a report; it requires an introduction, body and conclusion. Like an essay, these sections of your presentation need to fit together and be clearly linked. A poorly structured presentation will confuse and frustrate an audience. The boxes below break down what constitutes these three different, but related, elements of your presentation.

Introduction

1. Always greet the audience and introduce yourself.
2. A good introduction will capture the audience's attention and will tell them what direction your presentation will take.
3. Tell the audience what your objective is. Such as "Today I would like to talk to you about . . ."
4. Tell your audience what you are going to talk about. State:
    -   what your topic is, and what your presentation will cover
    -   an outline of the main points
    -   any necessary context or definition of terms.

Body

1. The body of your presentation is where you develop the main points of your talk, and present examples and evidence.
2. The information in the body needs to be well structured.
3. Decide on an organising principle. It could be by chronological order, theme or order of importance. There are three suggested ways of doing this:
    -   The Sandwich Method
        Present one point, illustrate it, and then draw a conclusion. Then present the second point in the same way.
    -   The Pile Method
        Present all your important points one after the other, and then illustrate them, and finally draw a conclusion to that part (different from the final conclusion).
    -   Thesis/Antithesis
        Present one statement and then argue for and against it. Continue likewise for all the statements you want to make. Finally, summarise the main points of this part.
4. Move from one point to the next by using transitional phrases.
5. Offer evidence to support any claims being made.
6. Emphasise important information.

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Conclusion

1.  The conclusion is a summary of the main points made in the
    body of the talk.
2.  Don't introduce any new information in the conclusion.
3.  Work out how you will finish your talk.
4.  Signal your conclusion with the phrase 'In conclusion ….'
5.  Restate the main points.
6.  Re-answer the question.
7.  Or give some questions to the audience.
8.  Thank the audience.
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Finally, when you are structuring your presentation it is important to not be overly ambitious and include too much information. If too many issues are raised it will be more difficult for you to put your points across clearly, and your audience may become confused if you provide too much information.

Presenting with Visual Aids

Most oral presentations involve visual aids of some sort. Presenters may give handouts to the audience. Nowadays presenters can choose to use Over-Heads or Power Point. This section will focus on how to use these two methods. If you want to find out more about Power Point beyond what this section will cover, the university runs classes on how to use it. Before we move on, there are four general principles which apply to all visual aids.

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Visual Aid Guidelines

1.  Any visual materials you use should support and add
    impact to your presentation.
2.  Any messages on visual aids should be concise and simple.
3.  The impact of each visual message can be varied by the
    imaginative but balanced use of colour.
4.  Lettering should be clearly printed in bold colours and
    properly spaced.
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Presenting with Overheads

Visual aids are great in your presentation if they are used properly. One reason they are useful is because they help to keep your audience's attention! However, they are also very good because they can complement your presentation; reinforce what you are saying; give additional information; clarify complex material; and be used as cues to what you will say next. Therefore, if you are using Overheads as visual aids always pay attention to the following points when preparing them:

Preparing Overheads

1. Limit the amount of information on each slide - less than 36 words.
2. Use large writing and plain font- e.g. For Overheads use Times New Roman 20point +
3. Write in the centre of the slide.
4. Use bullet points, asterisks or numbers to highlight each point.
5. Number your slides in case you drop them
6. Write the slide numbers in the corresponding places on your notes.
7. If you have to use a table - just pick out the most salient results.
8. Practice.
9. Separate used Overheads from those still to be used.
10. Explain what you are showing - the audience may not perceive the material the same way that you do.
11. Give the audience time to absorb what you are showing.
12. Don't stand between the audience and the screen.
13. Continue to talk to the audience not to the screen.
14. Choose whether to reveal points one at a time or show all.
15. Turn off the projector to regain the audience's attention.
16. Too many visual aids can be distracting.

Visual aids can significantly improve the interest of a presentation, however, they must be relevant to what you want to say. A careless design or use of a slide can simply get in the way of the presentation.

| Hints for Making OHs	
Do Not:	Do:
Use small lettering or untidy handwriting. Your audience won't be able to read it.	Always print (and don't write OHs).
Cram too much information on one OH. Just list the main points in bullet form.	Do choose a font that is easy to read.
Use faded or pale colours. Print in strong dark colours.	Use a large font (at least 20 point). Use Bold type.
Squeeze lines or cramp letters together. The text on your OH should be readable from the back of the room.	Use 1 message per OH (15-20 words). Work in the center of the OH.
Write too far toward the edge of the OH or you will lose words under the edge of the frame.	Check spelling and grammar.
(Ref: http://www.lc.unsw.edu.ac)	

Presenting with Power Point

Using Power Point to present is easy and straightforward, before we venture into the basic technicalities of using Power Point you just have to bear the following points in mind:

When giving Power Point presentations…

1. Be conscious of how much time you have for presenting your Power Point slides and also allow time for a discussion after that.
2. Keep Power Point slides simple and concise.
3. Don't over-crowd your slides with information. Stick to not more than 3 to 4 points per slide. Use the points as key reminders that allow you to expand what you want to explain about that specific point.
4. Be careful about using coloured backgrounds or coloured font. Use bold colours for your font, and visually comfortable colours for your background. Remember it is an electronic projection of what you see on your monitor screen that your audience is looking at. If your eyes find the colour too glaring your audience will too.
5. It is advisable to stay away from using too many Power Point gimmicks like having sounds to accompany the entrance of your text, or having text to disappear or appear.
6. It is helpful to have hard-copy handouts for your audience so they can make notes about your presentation and for discussion.
7. Make sure that the venue you are giving your Power Point presentation is set up with the right equipment. This includes a computer or laptop, a projector, and a white screen or white background that the image can be projected on. Sometimes the equipment you need may not be available as they may already be in use by other classes. Inform your class tutor beforehand (at least two weeks beforehand if possible) and he/she will make the necessary arrangements or give you time to make alternative methods of presenting if the equipment is not available.
8. Smile at your audience.

Let's have a look at the Power Point programme…

From your p.c. start by opening the Power Point programme, you will see a screen like the following:
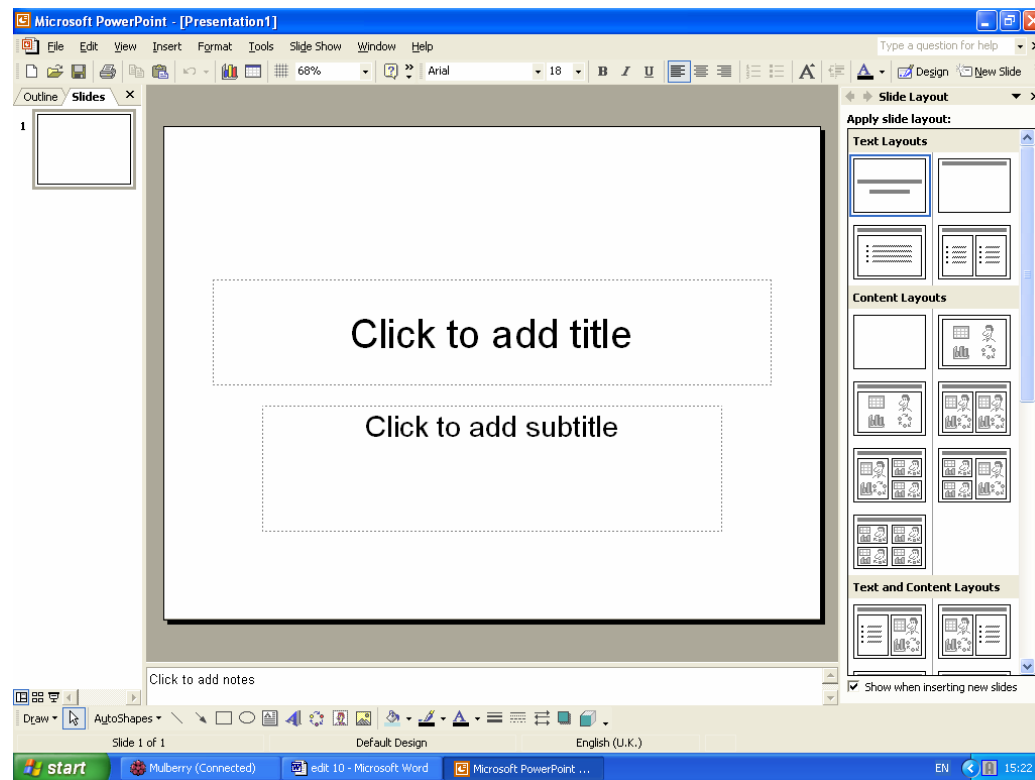
Figure 1

You will see similar menu options as found in Microsoft Word You can see on the right-hand side above you are given a number of options of how you want your slides to look like – text only or with text and pictures and so on. Choose a style or a combination that works for the information you want to present. You start to fill in your text by double-clicking in the boxes on the slide, and it will allow you to add or edit your text. For example, if we choose a title and subtitle style for the first slide, and type in some content, it can look like this:
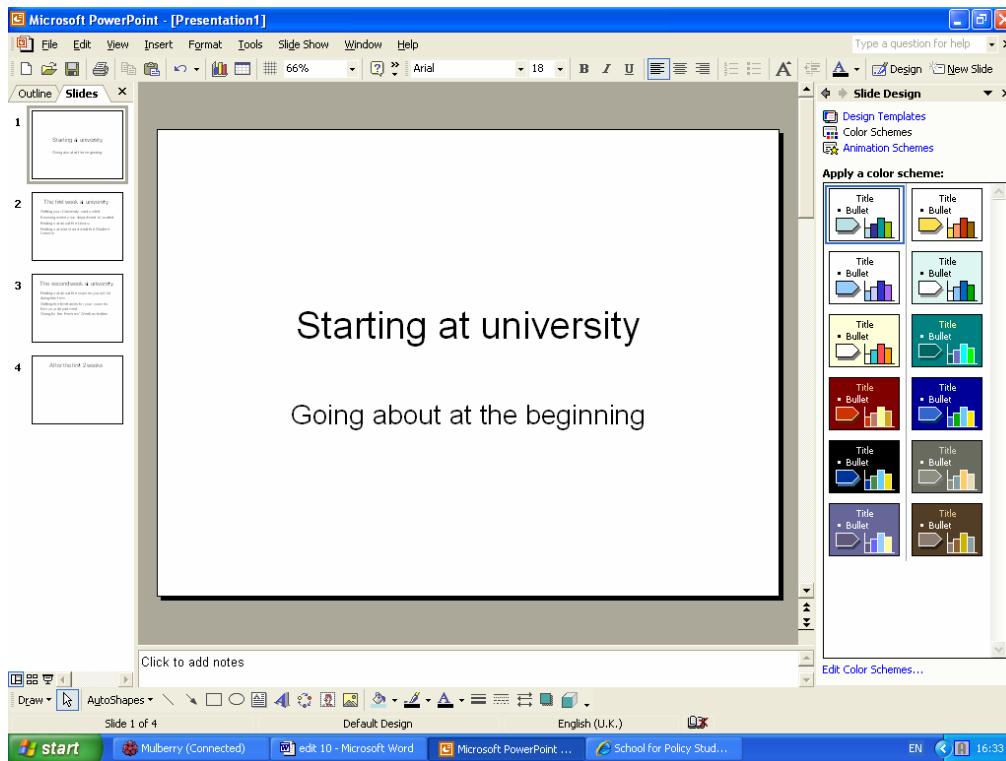
Figure 2

You will see the top task-bar which offers you various functions like creating a new presentation which looks like a blank sheet of paper, saving the file which shows a picture of a floppy disk, and so on. Further on, you can see that you are also able to manipulate the type of font and the size of the font you use. It is advisable to stick to font sizes 44 for headings and 32 for subtitles, as they are the most comfortable for viewers or the audience to focus on. Once you have finished with adding stuff to your first slide, you will move on to adding your next slide. You can do this by clicking on 'New Slide' in the top right-hand corner of the Power Point document window. You will see a screen like below:
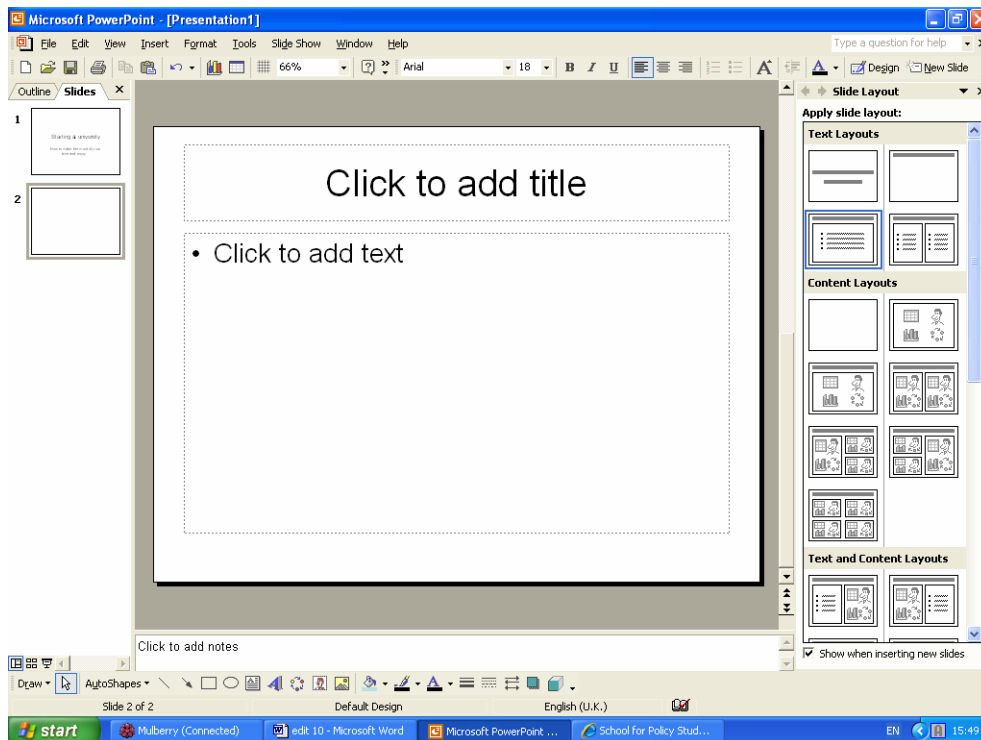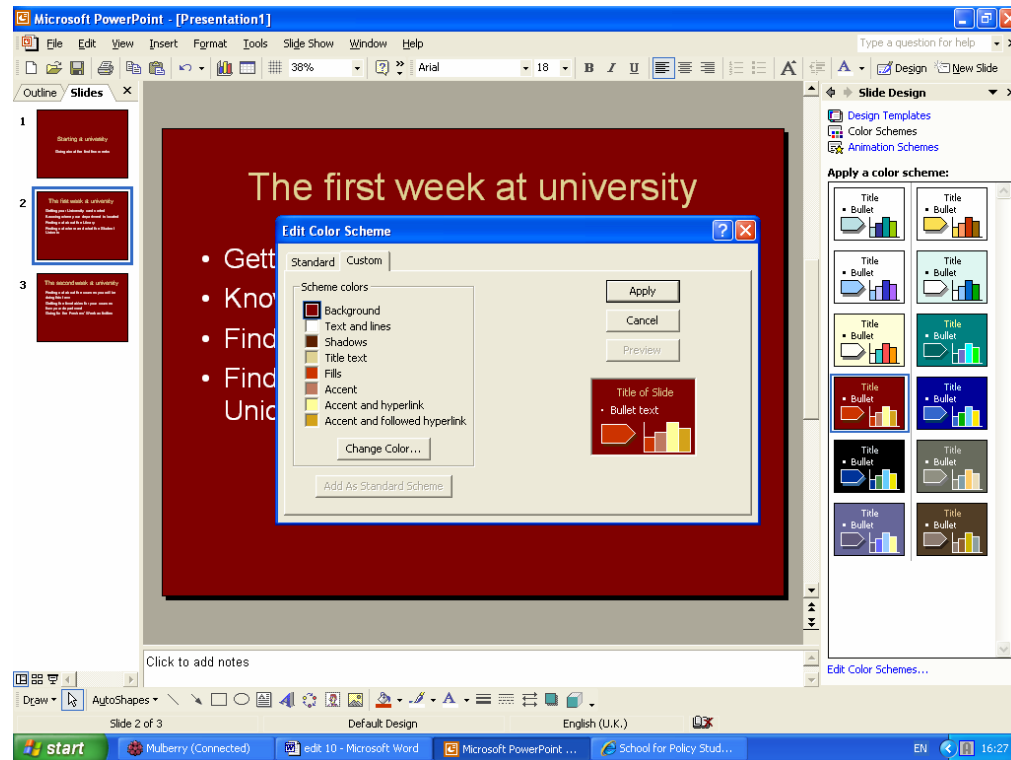
Figure 3

You will also notice on the left-hand side of the Power Point window you will see the collection of slides that have so far been created. You can go to any of the slides you have made by clicking on them from this left-hand side strip. Should you want to give background colour to your slides or control how your slides look you can click on 'Design' on the top right-hand corner of the Power Point window – it is located beside the 'New Slide' button. It will give you options to choose from. For example, if we type in the text for the second slide, and want to improve the appearance by clicking on 'Design' we will see a screen like below:

Figure 4

If we want to add a neutral background colour we click on 'Color Schemes' and you will see a range of template options to choose from. The next figure will show how it might look if you choose the following:
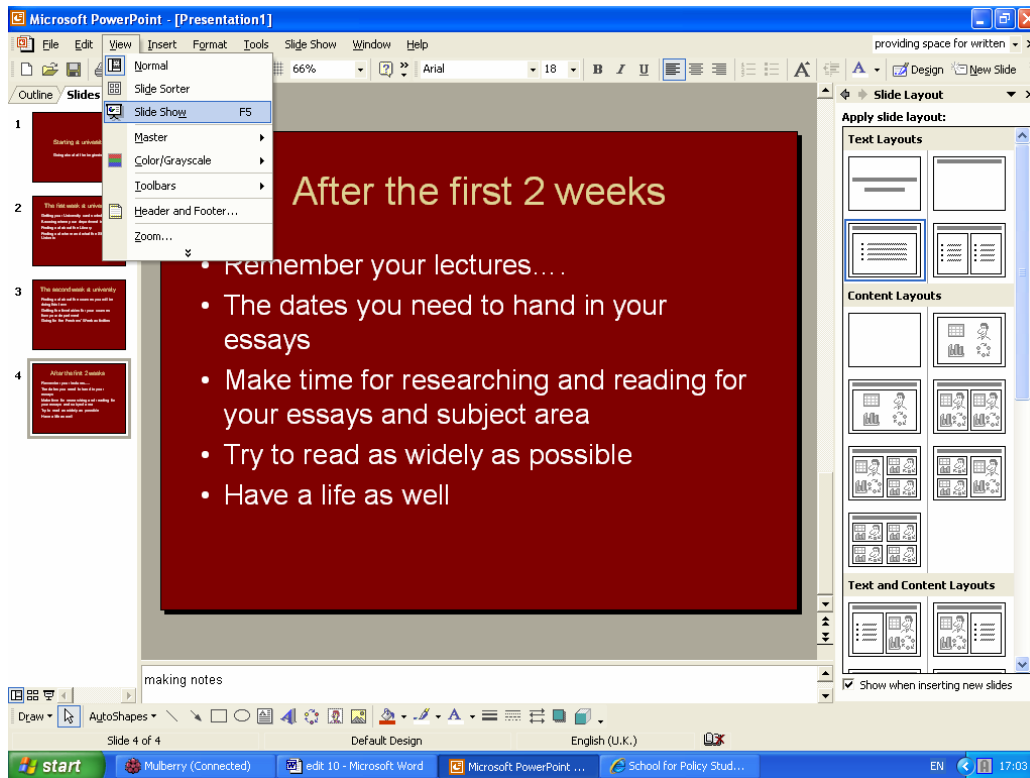

Figure 5

You can choose to apply this colour scheme to all your slides or to the slides you select. You can edit the colour by clicking 'Edit Color Schemes' at the bottom right-hand corner of the window. If you do you will see a screen like this below which you can make your choices from - for example below:
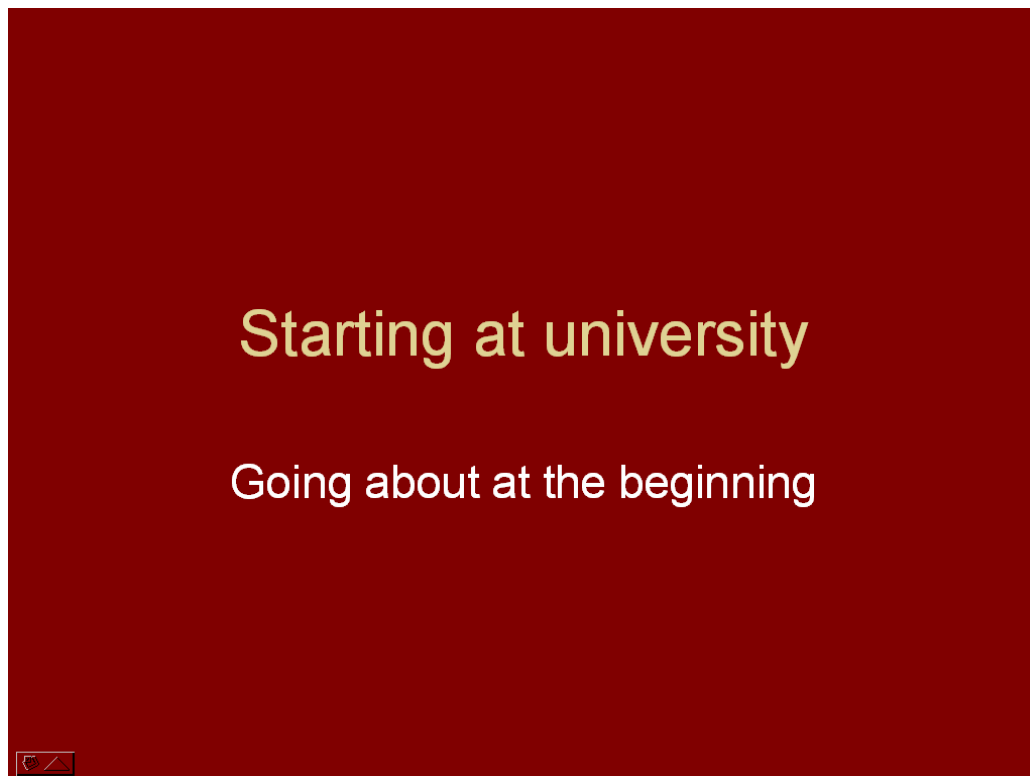

Figure 6

Once you have created the number of slides you need for your presentation, you can view your slide show. For example let us say that we have four slides altogether, we make sure that we first save the presentation. Then we click on the drop-down menu option 'View' and you will see 'Slide show' or you can use the F5 option. You will see something like the screen below:
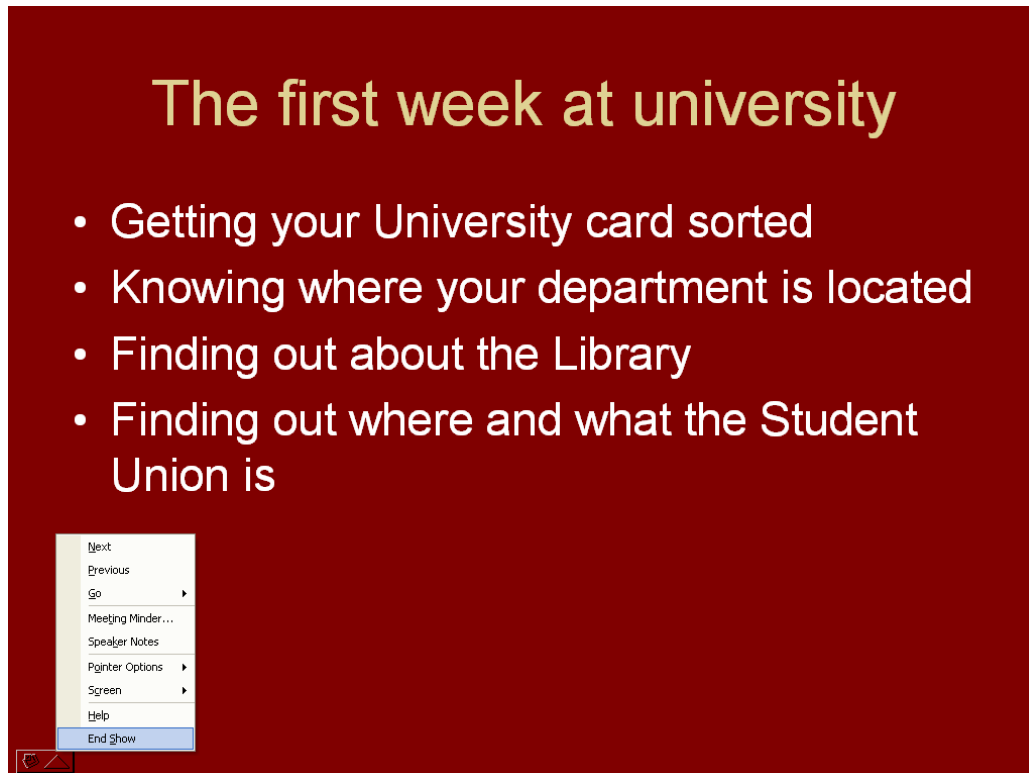
Figure 7

If you click on 'Slide show' or 'F5' you will see a screen like this:

Figure 8

To shift from one slide to the next you press 'enter' on the keyboard, or left-click the mouse. To go to a previous slide just press the back-space tab on your keyboard. To end the show, move your mouse over the bottom left-hand corner of the full screen where you can see a rectangular box with an arrow, click on it and you will see 'End show' as one of the options to choose from. It will look something like this below:

Figure 9

Once you have checked that you like the way your slide show runs you are ready to save it and present it. On the day of the presentation, make sure you have it saved in your USB or floppy disk whichever is relevant. All you have to do is connect it to the lap-top available, start the Power Point programme, go to 'File' on the Menu task-bars, choose 'Open' from the drop-down menu, and you can locate and open your file from your floppy disk or USB stick. Then you can repeat the steps as shown in Figures 7 – 9.

It is often good practice to end your slide show with either going back to the first opening slide or letting the last slide stay on the screen whilst you move on to discussing with your audience about what you have presented. The attention will be drawn to the discussion and yourself, but the audience and you will still have a visual reminder of the topic of discussion from what is on the screen. And if you choose to place pictures or photographs on the slides, again it is another source of good visual background evocative reminders to what you and the audience are discussing.

Delivery

One of the most important things about giving presentations is in relation to delivery. There are techniques that you can apply in order to improve your delivery style:

1. Stand in a balanced position, facing the audience.
2. Speak clearly and try not to talk too fast.
3. Don't rush, or talk deliberately slowly. Be natural – although not conversational.
4. Don't be afraid to pause. A pause can have the effect of emphasising the importance of a particular point you are making.
5. Maintain eye contact with your audience. If you don't want to look anyone in the eye, look at a point in the middle of their foreheads.
6. Don't read straight from your paper. This is boring for your audience.
7. Try to express your ideas in your own words. Don't face the display screen behind you and talk to it.
8. Don't obscure the screen.
9. Don't mumble over the over-head projector plate or to the monitor screen.
10. It is preferable to point to the screen than the actual overhead.

Anxiety

Most of us, however practiced, feel nervous at the thought of presenting in front of an audience. In order to counteract your anxiety, before your presentation, find a quiet place and take a few deep breaths. Concentrate on feeling your feet on the ground and remember that thousands of other students have been in the same situation and have survived. If you feel nervous, tell the tutorial group as they will understand. However, some authors recommend that you do not tell your audience this as often your nervousness will not show – but if you think it will help you then tell them. Remember, your audiences consist of your classmates and friends who all want you to succeed, so try to relax.

Language

The content of your presentation and the language that you employ in it should not mystify your audience but should be clear and understandable, therefore:

Language
1. Avoid too many academic terms.
2. Avoid jargon.
3. Explain the necessary terms you use.
4. Use short clear sentences.

Timing

You will always have limited time for your presentation and so you will have to be strict with yourself to ensure that you do not over-run. Therefore, you need to plan the structure of your presentation very carefully, so in doing so consider the following points:

Timing
1. The time limit
2. The amount of information available and how much of it you will cover
3. How much detail you can include
4. The best way to present your information e.g., Overheads, Power Point, handouts.
5. Remember that your presentation will take longer than it did when you practiced it – so allow for that in your timing.
6. Make sure you take a watch.
7. Stick to the plan for the presentation, don't be tempted to digress as you will use up time

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Questions

One of the most daunting prospects for people giving presentations is often the thought of the questions at the end. However, the question session can be the most interesting and informative part of the presentation. It gives you the chance to express your expert knowledge – after all you will know more than anyone else in the class about the subject – and expand on points you never had time for in the presentation. The box below contains information in relation to questions.

Questions

1. Listen carefully to each question and make sure you have understood it.
2. Repeat the question where necessary so that the whole audience can hear it.
3. Rephrase difficult questions to check your understanding.
4. Take time to consider your answer.
5. Reply to the whole audience – do not get into a dialogue with an individual.
6. Do not take hostile questions personally - they refer to the information you are presenting and not to you as an individual!
7. If a question is inappropriate - suggest that you will speak to questioner afterwards.
8. If questions at the end are slow to come - just wait and look welcoming.
9. Don't be afraid of saying you don't know the answer to a question.
10. If you do not know the answer you can say:
    - 'Thank you, that is a very interesting issue you have mentioned and one which I would like to think more about.'
    - 'That is a really good question, thanks for asking, perhaps we can discuss this another time.'
    - 'These are very preliminary findings.'
    - 'I am actually not sure about that but I will find out for you for the next seminar/discussion.'
    - 'I hadn't thought about that, but it is a very good point, thank-you.'

Conclusion

The final box, below, contains a general checklist for presentations. It is perhaps worthwhile to refer to the information contained in this whenever you are due to give a presentation.

Checklist

Before Starting the Work
1. How much time do I have?
2. Do I know the relevant material?
3. Want is the aim of the presentation?
4. What technical equipment is in the room?
5. What knowledge does the audience have of the topic?

The Day of the Presentation
1. Do I have my notes?
2. Do I have my OHs?
3. Do I have my saved soft-copy of my Power Point presentation?
4. Do I know where the room is?

After the Presentation
1. What went really well and why?
2. What could I do better next time?
3. Congratulate and reward yourself on your achievement!