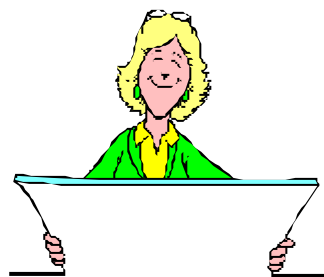Federation of European Chemical Societies
Division of Chemical Education

# MAKING A PRESENTATION IN ENGLISH AT A EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

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# Hallmarks of Good Presenters

- They are well prepared, and they have practised beforehand.

- They begin with an introduction, and end with a summary.

- The information they provide is relevant, well organised and timely.

- Their voice can be heard easily, is clear and free from mannerisms.

- They command the attention of the audience and hold its interest.

- They project positive and appropriate body language.

- They have an enthusiasm for their subject.

- They use visual aids effectively.

- They finish within their time, and are willing and able to take questions.

- They reflect on their presentation, so they can be better next time.

# Contents

# 1. Why are we writing this booklet?

Over the last few years, English has become the major language of European conferences, and many Europeans are now contributing to conferences in English rather than in their mother tongue. At the same time, native English speakers often have to address mixed audiences which include a number of people whose command of English is less than fluent. The idea for this booklet arose from the 1st European Conference on Chemical Education (1st ECCE) held in Budapest in 1998. A group of several participants was called together by Michael Gagan, Chair of the Federation of European Chemical Societies (FECS) Division of Chemical Education, to discuss what went well, and not so well at that Conference. Divisional Council members recognised that with a little help, many of the presenters could have made things much easier for their audience, and this would have richly improved the level of understanding and participation.

For the IOSTE Science Education Conference 2000 in Prague, Raymond Wallace prepared a presentation also directed at tackling this problem. These two sources formed the basis for a proposal to the Divisional Council, who readily agreed that this would be a useful project for the Division to pursue.

We assume you are keen to develop your presentation skills and so will be interested to read further. Everyone who has been to conferences has known disappointment with some of the speakers. Anthony Jay[*] expresses it this way:

> "It is difficult to go to any presentation without encountering the most elementary errors of conception and execution" and he goes on to note with amazement "... the patient tolerance of the audiences who sit through (presentations) in charitable silence with a politeness that approaches the heroic."

We are sure that you do not wish to try the patience and politeness of your next audience. We hope, therefore, that the suggestions given here, which should take no more than an hour to read, will lead to an improvement in the quality of your presentations at future conferences, and to the greatly improved enjoyment and understanding of the audiences who listen to them.

# 2. Where do you start?

It is always useful when looking to improve, to begin by finding out where we are. So before reading further you are invited to try out the self-assessment test below. In includes all the important skills required for an

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[*] Anthony Jay, a former BBC Television, writer, editor and producer, is the author of *Effective Presentation* (British Institute of Management, 1971) from which a number of quotations are taken.

effective presentation. Assuming you have given a presentation before, think back to the last time, and fill in the final column as honestly as you can. Were you well prepared? Nervous? Did you answer the audience's questions? Could everyone in the audience hear you? In the scale, consider a grade '1' as 'excellently' and '4' as 'not very well'.

If this is your first presentation, just miss out this list.

### *Self-assessment test on presentation skills*
Ask yourself, how well did you:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Choose an appropriate topic? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Focus on your topic? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Define what you hoped to achieve (set objectives)? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Develop a logical structure? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Match your presentation to suit the audience? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Deliver your presentation from your notes? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Control your nervousness? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Maintain eye contact with the audience? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Prepare your visual aids? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Use your voice (by changing tone, volume, rate, and pitch)? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Relate your body language (gestures, posture, facial expressions) to what you were saying? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Keep the interest of the audience to the end? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Don't worry if you scored a few '3's and '4's. The first step towards becoming a better presenter is to recognise that there is room for improvement, and to discover which skills you need to improve. You will find lots of help in the following pages.

## 3. Planning your presentation

What is a presentation? It is hard to improve on the definition given by Anthony Jay:
> "To put over to small groups of people, new facts and ideas in an attractive interesting and persuasive way, by the simultaneous use of words and pictures."

There are three steps to giving a presentation - planning, performing and reviewing. Of these, the most important by far is certainly the planning step. Anthony Jay again:
> " It is worth spending some time and trouble to achieve maximum clarity, conciseness, impact and persuasion; or at least, to avoid alienation, catastrophe and humiliation."
> "By the time the day of the presentation comes, almost all the factors that will determine its success or failure have already been decided."

*Objectives and outlines*
The first question to ask is: "Why am I giving this talk?", that is to set your objectives. See if you can write down before you begin, a single sentence that captures the whole essence of your talk. You may need to modify this as you continue your planning, but this simple device should keep you from straying off the point.
Then you should ask: "What do I want to get across to the audience?"
Most conference organisers ask for an abstract, so take this as an opportunity to think about these two questions.

*Winning over the audience*

You also need to consider the questions: "What will the audience be like?" "What do they need to get out of my talk?" "How can I get them on my side?"

Presenters should approach their audience with respect. C.P.Scott, the long serving Editor of the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper had this advice, which is still sound today: "Never overestimate your audience's knowledge; never underestimate their intelligence." You are not taking a lesson; nor are you giving a lecture to students. Remember you are probably more anxious to impart your ideas to them than they are to receive them from you. Yours may not be the item in the seminar that they have come to hear, but that is no reason to bore or confuse them. Much better for them to go away thinking: "That was much more interesting that I expected," rather than: "I wasn't expecting much from that, and I was right." On the other hand it is usually safe to assume that the audience arrives prepared to listen ... until you persuade them otherwise!

However, it is unlikely that anyone in the audience will know as much about the topic as you do. So do keep in mind that:

- They may not be familiar with the technical terms you use, and especially abbreviations, so inform them. They may be irritated that you have not explained a term, but they will be too polite to shout out.
- They may have difficulty with English, so make it easier for them by using visual aids.
- They may not want to know the fine details, so try to avoid being too comprehensive. Instead, concentrate on the most interesting concepts, outcomes and applications; selecting points that will develop their interest, and stimulate questions and discussion. Details can be provided on a fact-sheet, or at a personal consultation later.
- Even if this is not their main area of interest, you want them to take away a definite impression. About what they have heard. Overall this should be close to your one-sentence objective.

One of the secrets of good delivery is to address the audience as though it were a single person.

*Getting off to a good start*

When trying to win over the audience it is very important to get your presentation off to a good start. It is now conventional to begin with a title overhead, also showing who you are and where you come from; and while it is on the screen, you could thank the organisers for inviting you.

A very good way to start is to say something about yourself, in addition to the formal information of your name, your university or college, and your e-mail address! Any expression of personal feelings, or an honest and interesting story about your recent past, can win the audience over to your side. For example you could start: "The last time I was in Brussels, I went into one of the local markets ...", or "You will have noticed I come from Manchester, and you may be aware they have a football team there ..." or something similar. It should not take very long to do this!

If you feel that you can do it, one of the most effective ways of starting is to address the audience with a few words in the language of the country where the conference is being held. It need only be something like: "Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen," or "Thank you for inviting me to your beautiful country", or "I am pleased to be in Paris, Warsaw ..." This shows that you respect the native language, and the people who speak it, even though you are not able to use it fluently yourself. There are hardly any problems with an opening like this. Accent does not matter much, as long as the native speakers can understand what you are saying (think of Winston Churchill!). But to be on the safe side, check what you plan to say with one of the local organisers, get them to listen to your pronunciation, practice the phrases beforehand, and write it down, so that you can carry on if your mind goes blank in the excitement of the moment.

It is probably unwise to try to begin with a joke unless it is told against yourself. It only works if the audience laughs, and it may misfire. Jokes are notoriously difficult to translate from other languages, and anyway, what may amuse an Italian could fall flat with a Norwegian.

Above all, don't go off at a gallop and leave your audience behind. Start where you think their interest and understanding lies, before venturing out into new territory.

*Winding up*

After getting off to a good start, the next most important part of your presentation is the ending. You want your finish to leave a good impression with the audience, and with the organisers (if you would like a further invitation!). Here are some of the 'Do s' and 'Don'ts' of your final few minutes .

- Do summarise the main points of your presentation. Again this should incorporate your basic objective.
- Do acknowledge contributions by co-workers. A nice touch seen these days is to show a picture of your colleagues, and possibly your place of work, at the end of your talk.
- Don't repeat 'lastly', 'finally', 'in conclusion' throughout the last five minutes of your talk. this is particularly annoying to your audience.
- Don't just finish with a phrase like: "Well, that's it. Any questions?" It is the place of the Chair to ask for questions, not the speaker.
- Don't just come to an untidy end.
- Don't forget to say thank you if there is applause.

You may be thinking now that we have discussed the beginning and end of your presentation – "What about the middle; the main part of the text?" Never fear, that will come in the next section.

## 4. What are you going to say?

After deciding on your objective, what your audience will be like, and how you are going to begin, the next thing to consider is the body of your text. You may have heard the opinion that as long as you know how to begin and how to finish, the middle will take care of itself. No such luck! It is a mistake to assume that because you know everything that there is to know about your topic that you will automatically give a good presentation, in a logical order, and full of interest for everyone present. You will need to make a basic plan:

- Listing the key points
- Considering what you want to say about each one
- Allowing each one the time appropriate to its importance and relevance
- Sorting them into the correct sequence.

There are several different ways to structure your presentation, any of which can be effective. You should select the most appropriate approach from our list below, or devise your own:

- *List* - a number of topics is examined in turn
- *Hierarchy* - relating a topic to a group of topics, and developing sub-topics
- *Logical chain* - move from argument to derive a principle and then prove it
- *Deduction* - lead with a general principle, then look at examples and applications
- *Induction* - examine several observations or experiments and develop a general principle
- *Problem based* - outline a problem, discuss possible solutions, and reach a conclusion
- *Comparison* - examine two or more theses under a series of headings
- *Map* - begin in the middle and build up links in different directions.

A simple but effective outline for any presentation is:
- Who I am and what this talk is about
- Why I did this work
- How I did it
- What I found
- What I think it shows
- Summary and thanks

Your aim should be to make your presentation as intelligible, interesting, vivid, entertaining and enjoyable as you can. So when you have listed your essential points, the next thing is to think about those 'extras' which will fulfil that aim.
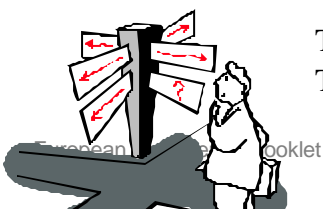
To keep your audience attentive, it is important to let them know where you are going. This is called *signposting*, linking section to section, and one

main idea to the next. A rhetorical question is one device for doing this, but linking phrases like: "And now we shall ... before going on to ..." are equally good. There is an example of what we mean at the end of Section 3, just before we moved on to Section 4. This internal connection is essential, for unlike with a text, your audience cannot hear what you haven't yet said, or go back and hear again what is already past.

## 5. How are you going to say it?

*Variety is the spice of life*
We are sure you are aware that the attention of most listeners begins to fall after about ten minutes continuous talking. So it is important to vary what is termed the *texture* of the presentation. By this we mean introducing any other method of communication by way of contrast with the spoken voice - visuals (OHP/slides), audio clip, demonstration, video sequence, computer display - even a bit of audience participation.

*Practice makes perfect*
Practice is valuable for several reasons:
- it gives you more confidence
- it helps to remove stiffness in front of an audience
- it reduces the chances of you overrunning (or finishing too soon)

Once you think that you have your objective, your opening, your plan, your visual aids, and your conclusion sorted out, give the whole presentation a run through. This is often the time when you see that something is out of order, some item occupies too much time, or some illustration or analogy can be improved.
Just as for the sports star, time spent in practice is time well spent.

*Keeping to time*



Many presenters at the start are worried that they might not have enough to say, and yet the more common experience is that the time seems to pass too quickly for you to say all you were expecting to say. Sound planning avoids both these situations. Always remember that you have a limited amount of time, and try to use it to best advantage. If you do finish before using up all the time you were given, no-one will object to a longer coffee break. By contrast, a speaker who goes on too long is sure to annoy the programme planners, the later speakers and the audience. One of the worst things you can do is to find yourself running out of time, and try to beat the clock by talking faster; this way you are sure to become less intelligible and more indigestible to your audience. If you aim to fill three-quarters (or better still two thirds) of your allotted time, you will almost certainly avoid overrunning. Even so, like a gas, a presentation has the habit of expanding to fill the space available.

*Reviewing your performance*
A final stage in the whole process of giving a presentation is to reflect on how it went. You should treat yourself to the type of feedback questions that are to be found on more formal feedback forms, for example:
- What was the best feature of this presentation?
- What was the worst feature?
- If you had to remove one or two items, which would they be?
- What item could be added to improve the presentation?
- Which visual aid was the most effective?
- Which was the least effective?

Then it would be useful to go over the self assessments included in this booklet to see if you have improved any of your scores; or if you feel you had not been quite honest in your previous assessment. If you wish to be particularly adventurous, you could ask a colleague from the audience for an opinion. It is better to ask specific questions like: "Did you follow the argument about ... ?" or "Do you think I justified the point about ... ?", rather than just a vague: "How do you think it went?" However, you are likely to be your own severest critic, and you are the critic whose opinion you are most likely to trust!

It is unwise to neglect this self-examination, which is the final phase of your presentation.

# 6. Reading, recitation and ordinary speaking.

Once you stand up in front of the audience there are basically four ways of giving your presentation; reading from a script, reciting what you have learned by heart, using your slides as prompts, and speaking from notes. We would dismiss out of hand the spontaneous, *ad hoc*, off the cuff, approach to presentation. Your audience is worth more than that!

*Reading from a script*
Most audiences find a read presentation boring. Nevertheless, for a person who does not have English as mother tongue, reading from a script is the only thing they feel confident to do. Reading, if well done, is not to be rejected entirely. Winston Churchill read most of his famous speeches, but he had polished and practised them until they sounded entirely natural. Many renowned preachers also preach from a script.
However, there are certain essential guidelines that must be followed if you are to keep the audience with you.
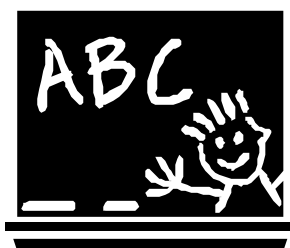
- Vary the pace of speaking, but never go too fast for the non-native speaker
- Use short sentences, with only one idea in each sentence
- Pause at the end of every sentence
- Stress important words and phrases for emphasis
- Avoid dropping your voice at the end of a sentence
- Divide your text into sections, and do not run on from one section to another

It is surprising how many speakers underestimate the importance of pauses, stress and intonation, yet it has been suggested that these three factors contribute at least as much as the words that are spoken, to the understanding of the audience.
Even so, the main reason why audiences switch off from a presenter who reads a script, is that too often the text is in *written English* instead of *spoken English*. If they had wanted to find out what was in a paper, they would have asked for the paper and read it. However, it is possible to write in spoken English; many politicians, for example, can do it. It is important for them that they say exactly what they meant to say, since they may be quoted in the next day's newspaper. But how do written and spoken English differ? Some of the characteristics are listed below:

| ***Written English*** | ***Spoken English*** |
| --- | --- |
| - concise, no unnecessary words | - includes extra words and phrases |
| - No slang, or colloquial phrases | - slang and colloquial phrases used to add colour and impact |
| - grammatically correct | - rules of grammar sometimes ignored |
| - uses abstract nouns | - avoids abstract nouns |
| - repetition avoided | - repetition used for emphasis |
| - formal, literary | - common speech |
| - uses third person, passive | - uses 'I', 'we'; and addresses reader as 'you' |
| | - short sentences, broken up |
| - long carefully constructed sentences | - tabloid (like the *Sun* newspaper) |
| - broadsheet (like the *Times* newspaper) | |

If you wish to think in spoken English, imagine you are sitting in a bar, explaining something to colleagues. You have to ask yourself: "Is this something that one person might say to another?" or better still: "Is this something no-one would *ever* say to anyone else?"

Most Europeans have learned English either from living in an English speaking country, or from a TEFL language school, and both sources generate a colloquial form of English. Similarly, most English people these days would

not notice a split infinitive, or a sentence ending in a preposition, in everyday speech. However, remembering that the audience might have some difficulties with English, there are still some problems to avoid. Other Europeans may not pick up references and allusions as quickly as native speakers, and similarly they may not understand slang and colloquial phrases unless they are explained.

*Reciting what you have learned by heart*
Of the four methods, this is the least attractive. The reason is that it detaches the speaker from the audience. It appears that the speaker thinks that the listeners are irrelevant. It also comes across as insincere, as does the recited patter of the hard-sell salesman.

*Using your slides as prompts*
This has become a popular method of delivery now that everyone seems to have access to the equipment to make their own overheads. However there are dangers to avoid. It is very tempting to put too much material on each slide, as a prompt to yourself. Never forget that the visual aids are there to help the *audience* to understand.

A useful procedure is to print out a second hard copy of each transparency to use as a backing sheet. You probably have an original from which you made the overhead, but it is as well to keep that safe for if you need to remake it. You might accidentally use a *permanent* marker to emphasise a point, for example. You can then write a few additional notes, as prompts, which will be visible as soon as you take off the transparency to place it on the overhead projector.

| Learning Media | Learning Media |
| --- | --- |
| Text | Text `Break up with pictures, questions. Enrichment boxes. Index` |
| Study guide | Study guide `Pacing, exercises, skills, reflection` |
| Audio (tape/book) | Audio (tape/book) `Personal, relief from text, diagrams/flow charts (submarine), conceal answers` |
| Video | Video `strong impression, enrichment – but must make point, lean-forward not lean-back, show action` |
| CD-ROM | CD-ROM `teaching not technology, not linear, minimal text, computer not student, add simulation/animation` |

If you use slides, print out a similar copy of each one, and annotate it to provide you with ready made notes. Many computer presentation graphics programs have an area on each slide development screen for speaker's notes, and the facility to print out a miniature hard copy of the slide sequence.

*Speaking from notes*

The tried and trusted method of delivering a presentation is to speak from notes. They will prompt you during your talk to remember your outline; and can give you a sense of security during your presentation, even if you have already worked out carefully what you are going to say. Nearly all presenters use either A4 sheets or smaller filing cards (A6 or similar size gives most people enough space).

A4 sheets may be preferred because:

- They give you a lot of space
- You need fewer of them
- You are less likely to mix them up

On the other hand some people prefer cards because:

- Each topic can be given a separate card
- It is less easy to lose your place
- They are more comfortable to hold
- They are less obtrusive to the audience
- They are better to hold to control nervousness

There are no set rules for making notes. As you give more and more presentations, you will develop a way of preparing notes that works best for you.

We expect we have all experienced speakers who have lost their place, mixed up (or even dropped) their notes, and missed out a slide only to return to it later with apologies. Here are some key points to consider when preparing your notes, to avoid these embarrassments.

- If they are hand-written, use your 'best writing'
- If printed, use a size of typeface that is large enough for you to see at a glance
- Use upper- and lower-case letters. These are easier to read than ALL CAPITAL LETTERS
- Make abbreviations (*e.g.* HOCS - Higher Order Cognitive Skills), proper names (*e.g.* Alex Johnstone) dates and figures (*e.g.* $1.8 \times 10^{-5}$ mol $l^1$) clear. When nervous you may forget, or make errors, even with the most familiar concepts
- Write out any quotations in full
- Mark *exactly* where your overheads, slides or other visual aids should come in.
- Use only one side of the page or card
- Mark section headings well, or if using cards, use a new card for each section
- Number each card or page
- Don't bind or staple your cards or sheets together. Fasten with a paper clip that can be removed prior to speaking. This allows you to slide one card under the next, rather than flipping them over.
- Notes can be organised in various ways. Bulleted points with key words on each card is one way to prepare notes. Or you may want to write out or type a broad outline of your presentation on the cards.

Here is a specimen card with notes for a lecture to schools entitled "*All the colours of the Rainbow.*"

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**6**

**Flower colours**

Roses are red, violets are blue …

**Slides** – poppy and cornflower

Sir Robert Robinson (Nobel Prize 1947)

**Litmus experiment on OHP**

**OHP** – anthocyanidin formulas

**OHP** – hydrangea

Acid soil – blue; alkaline soil – pink

Joseph Busch (1871) gardener to Russian Czar – to get blue hydrangeas,

water with alum. 120 Years later shown that blue H contain almost 2x as

much Al as pink.

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The presentation based on this card might begin something like this:

"One of our most familiar experiences of colour is seen in the world of flowers. Remember the old poem: 'Roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet...', and here are two of the most vivid colours we see in the fields. The dazzling red of the poppy (show slide/pause), and the wonderful deep blue of the cornflower (show slide/pause).

"The chemicals that cause the colours of flowers were investigated by an Englishman, Sir Robert Robinson. Incidentally, this was one of the bits of research which earned him a Nobel Prize in 1947, along with other more important things, like finding out what the complicated structure of the drug morphine was. Imagine his shock when he found that the red colour of the poppy, and the blue colour of the cornflower, were both caused *by the same chemical* in the plants. But should it have been such a surprise? Like every schoolchild he should have known about *this* experiment, that I can show you now.

"I've got an aqueous solution of a well known material here in this flask, and although the light is quite strong through the OHP, I think you'll agree that it is blue. Now I'm going to add a few drops of acid ... and, as I'm sure you expected, the solution has turned red. It's the well-known colour change of the indicator, litmus."

... and so on!

Even if you do not like reading to an audience, remember that there are some things that it is better to read, for the sake of accuracy. These include quotations, complex data, historical information (dates, places, names) and captions to figures or illustrations. This is why you are recommended to write out these items in full in your notes.

One final suggestion about giving presentations, which ought to happen more but we feel sure will rarely be taken up. If in your research group you have a colleague who is better at presenting your material than you are, why not let them give the presentation? Your part would them be to introduce them to the audience.

## 7. It ain't what you say it's the way that you say it.

It's time now to do another short exercise.

If you can, tape record yourself giving a short talk (two or three minutes). Listen to your voice and answer the following questions, as before, to check on your verbal communication skills - how well do you talk?.

*Self assessment on verbal communication skills*
Ask yourself:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| How well did you project your voice? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Did you convey enthusiasm with your voice? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Did you speak clearly? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Are you talking to quickly? too slowly? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Did you mumble or talk too softly? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Did you talk in a monotone? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Did you drop your voice at the end of sentences? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Are you emphasising certain words for impact? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Are you using simple clear English? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you have any audible nervous mannerisms (throat clearing, coughing)? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Do you use meaningless fillers (e.g. 'sort of', 'you know')? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Did you use any abbreviation or technical term that the audience may not have understood? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

# 8. Non-verbal communication

You have seen that both content and verbal communication are essential to a successful presentation, but there is one further component to consider. This is non-verbal communication, or to use the popular name, 'body language'. You are not simply presenting your material, in a very real way you are presenting yourself as well. If you wish to project a good self image - confident, well prepared, interested, enthusiastic - you must contribute to this by how you look as well as by what you say. If you have mannerisms like ear pulling, or running your hands through your hair, the audience may be watching out for you to do it again, rather than listening to what you say. Similarly if you fidget by pacing up and down, rocking backwards and forwards, or fiddling with pointer, pen or chalk, you will be distracting listeners from the content of your talk. Almost important bit of body language is to maintain eye contact with the audience. Of course it is impolite to let your view remain too long on a single member of the audience, but you should always have it fixed on someone. For this reason, turning away from facing the front, tilting your head down, and referring too frequently to your notes, should all be avoided as much as possible.

*Self assessment in non-verbal communication*
You can obtain valuable feedback on your physical presence by making a videotape of yourself talking. If you are unable to do this, try to rehearse a presentation while watching yourself in a mirror. Answer each of the following questions in the usual way (1 = yes; 2 = most of the time; 3 = some of the time; 4 = not really) to improve your image as a polished speaker.
Ask yourself:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Are you standing straight? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Do you look natural and relaxed? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Do you refrain from slumping over the podium? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Are your hands out of your pockets? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Can you avoid fidgeting with your hands (tie, necklace)? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Do you maintain eye contact with the audience? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Can you manage not to cross your arms? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Do you keep nervousness out of your facial expressions? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Do you avoid overdoing hand and arm gestures? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Do you walk with confidence to the podium? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Does your dress project a positive image? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Here again you my find that there are a few scores in the 3s and 4s. Nevertheless a second practice session should see a notable improvement.

# 9. Question and Answer Period

One of the most, or least effective parts of a presentation is the activity that follows the 'chair' asking if anyone in the audience has a question for the speaker. Anthony Jay speaking again, "The power of questions to help a presentation is less than their power to damage it." A speaker's ability to handle the question and answer period is as important as the delivery of the presentation itself. This interactive session provides feedback from the audience on the ideas you have discussed in your talk; perceive it and treat it as a valuable part of the presentation. The key to dealing successfully with the question and answer period is, once again, proper preparation.

*Why Does the Audience Ask Questions?*

- For clarification

- To gain information

- To assist you and your research

- To test your knowledge

- To hear themselves talk

- To demonstrate how
  knowledgeable they are

- To gain attention

*Preparing for Questions*

The following ideas will help you respond successfully to questions from the audience.

- Take time during the presentation to anticipate questions your audience may ask. Make a list of possible questions and appropriate answers. You should be able to anticipate most of the questions to which you will need to respond.
  - Rehearse answers aloud. A cassette recorder may be helpful. While answering the question, watch yourself in the mirror. Do you appear nervous? Are you maintaining eye contact?
  - Which questions would you prefer not to answer? Work out responses and rehearse. Being prepared for the most difficult questions will make other questions seem easier.
- Be prepared in case no questions are asked. One ploy here is to consider leaving out something which should have obviously have been mentioned, in order to provoke a question. The alternative (or additionally) is to formulate one of your own. For example: "One question that I often get asked is... ?" This may initiate audience involvement and reduce the anxiety of standing alone in silence.

*Receiving Questions - Do's*

- Show that you are interested in the question by concentrating fully on the questioner while it is being put.
- Repeat the question in case some of the audience did not hear it. This also gives you time to gather your thoughts.
- Make certain you understand the question. Ask for clarification if necessary.
- Stay calm and relaxed. Never react as if you feel you've been put on the spot.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Do not try and improvise. Mention to the questioner that you will obtain the necessary information to find the answer. You may want to ask the questioner to provide you with his or her address. Say for example, "I would like to analyse my data carefully on that. I'll be happy to send you the results". Your own opinions can be given if you feel this would be helpful.
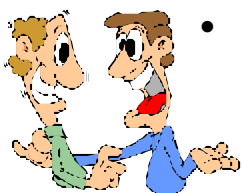
- Maintain eye contact with the person asking the question. Once you begin to answer, take in the entire audience.

- Answer all questions cordially. Remember to stay in control at all times.

*Receiving Questions - Don'ts*

- Don't respond to every question by stating, "That's a good question". Use it sparingly for the exceptional questions. And do consider that it may offend some of the audience by implying that their questions were not good questions. Similarly, "I'm glad you asked that question," is unhelpful. It is in essence a meaningless statement and can appear to be condescending.
- Don't show impatience with a question that has already been covered in the talk. Answer cordially. It may be that you have expressed that idea badly and others have not understood it either.
- Never talk down to an audience no matter how irrelevant the question seems.
- Don't finish an answer by asking, "Have I answered your question?" This gives the impression that you are unsure of the answer.

*Types of Questions*

Audience questions can be divided into two categories: information seeking (presenter friendly) and antagonistic (presenter unfriendly). Each category has several types of questions. Being able to recognise the type of question asked will help you to formulate an appropriate answer. Generally questions will be of the former type (presenter friendly), particularly if the audience perceives that you are nervous, or knows that you are in the early years of your career. New speakers should not live in fear of antagonistic questions. A good chairman/chairwoman should offer some protection from some questions of this type by intervention between the questioner and the presenter if necessary.

*Information-Seeking Questions (presenter friendly)*

**Misunderstanding**    Here the questioner thinks you have said one thing when you have said another. This can be a frequent problem with international audiences. *This is why it is essential that your visual aids should be correct and clear, to clarify ambiguities in what you might say.*

**Clarifying**    This type of question is the simplest to answer. Give a brief explanation or example in a different way from that which you used during the presentation. Watch to make sure that the audience is satisfied with your answer.

**Technical**    Summarise the answer such that the rest of the audience can understand. If the questioner has an advanced technical interest, offer to discuss the issue with him or her later.

**Anticipatory**    Often interrupting the presentation, this type of question asks something that you plan to bring up later. Answer with a quick and simple comment and state that you will elaborate later. Try not to appear annoyed or irritated.

**Peripheral**    The question appears irrelevant. Offer to discuss the matter with the questioner later and politely steer the discussion back to the present issue or subject.

**The Set Up (positive)** This is a question that is asked (prompted or unprompted) by someone who knows you know the answer. Beware of answering it too glibly, or your collusion may show. On the other hand, it is a good way of getting the session started.

*Antagonistic Questions (presenter unfriendly)*

**Loaded**    The purpose of this question is to destroy your argument. Acknowledge the questioner's point of view then restate your own information and conclusions.

**Alternative**    If the questioner tries to put words in your mouth, politely provide the correct information in your own words.

**Multiple List**    This is a rapid series of questions. Answer one question at a time, repeating each question for the audience giving yourself time to gather your thoughts. Consider jotting the questions down on a piece of paper.

**The Set Up (negative)**    This question is asked in order to identify the shortcomings of your work and presentation. Acknowledge shortcomings, if there are any, and explain how you plan on dealing with them.

*Handling Difficult Questions*

- Maintain your composure. Don't apologise or collapse under the pressure of a difficult question.
- Rephrase a speaker-unfriendly question in an objective way.
- You may want to offer to discuss the issue after the talk.
- Repeat or rephrase the question to give yourself time to formulate a response.
- Acknowledge the remark and then add information you would like the audience to have, for example, "That is a very interesting concept but my results indicate..."
- If you don't know the answer, simply say no. For example, "I'm sorry these data are not available at the present time."

*Ending the Question and Answer Sessions*

Try to avoid an ending such as "Well, if there are no more questions, I guess that's about it". A closing remark should end the presentation session and maintain rapport with the audience. A summary statement or comment will leave the audience with a continued impression of you as an effective speaker. For example, "Thank you for your attention and questions. I have enjoyed this morning's session".
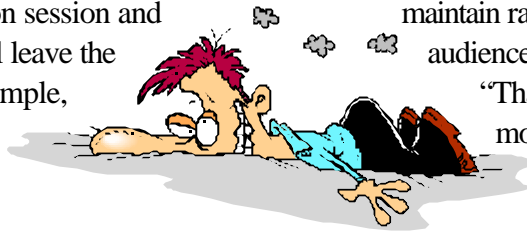
# 10. Visual Aids

One of the most essential parts of your preparation will be deciding about your visual aids. Time spent on this is never wasted. So, before we venture into this area, we shall ask you to do another of our self-assessment exercises.

*Self assessment on visual aids*

How well did the visual aids on your last presentation measure up? As before score yourself on the various qualities required in a good visual aid. How well did you:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fonts** | Choose an appropriate font? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | Select a font of the right size? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | Keep fonts consistent from slide to slide? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Text** | Lay out your text on the slide? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | Keep text to a minimum? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Tables, graphs** | Convey clear messages through your tables, graphs and charts? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **and charts** | Select only a few relevant figures to put into tables? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | Use the right form of display for your data –e.g. bar charts, line graphs, pie charts? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Colour** | Use non-distracting colours and patterns for backgrounds? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | Make points more clearly by using colour in the body of the text? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **General** | Prepare your visual aids? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | Manage to have the right number of visual aids – not too many; not too few? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Use illustrations, cartoons to reawaken interest? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Help the audience's understanding by the visual aids that you used? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Perhaps as you read through the list you were not even aware that you should have considered some of these items. Still, do not worry; there is plenty of helpful advice to follow.

First of all we must define what we mean by the term *visual aid*. Generally we should take it to mean an overhead projector (ohp) transparency, slide, acetate, or screen presentation by a computer program such as Powerpoint ®™. We shall use these terms interchangeably in our text, since all of them provide the means to present pictures, flow charts, diagrams, graphs, and tables, which



"I know you may have trouble reading some of this; I'll explain it to you."
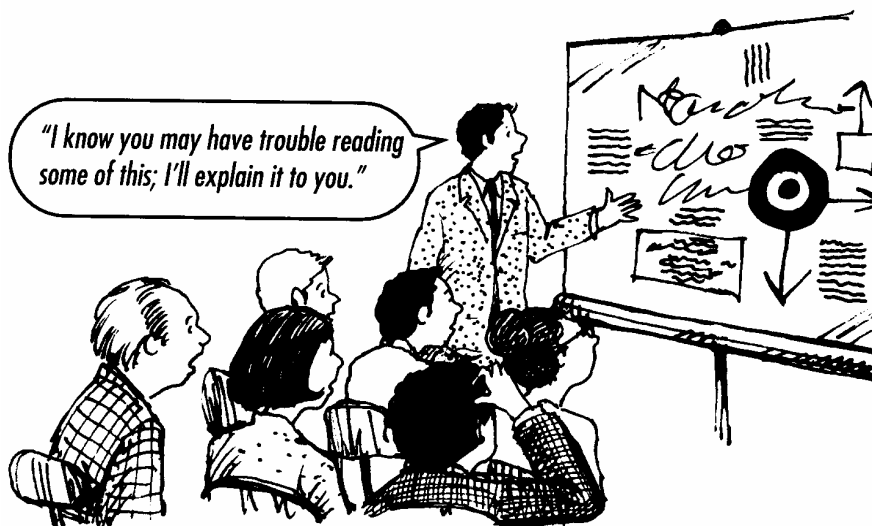
are the *real* visual aids. A visual aid however doesn't necessarily have to be something you view on a screen. It might be something to handle – pass along a row, for instance a model, a piece of apparatus, or a student workbooks for. Above all a visual aid should be *something to help the audience, not alienate them*.

- Do not use hand drawn visual aids (it gives the impression that you could not be bothered to spend much time on your presentation).
- Do not use out of date slides or those that really go with another presentation. Again the impression is one of not caring about the audience.

Remember visual aids must be necessary and they *must be visual*. Words on an overhead are not strictly visual aids. They are of course if you cannot hear and they are used to focus on key points, but are not true visual aids.

First of all you must decide what each visual aid is for. Essentially they should do one or more of the following: convey something impossible to convey verbally, save time, encapsulate a complex idea, portray something vividly, create interest, add variety, add impact and if they are really good, remain in the memory. Ask yourself these questions. Is your visual aid for an explanation? Is it for corroboration (pictures to back up a slide or statement)? Is it for impact (cartoon)? Depending on your answers, choose appropriately from the various aids we describe a little later on in this booklet.

*Principles of Designing Visual Aids*

Visual aids must be well designed for them to be effective. If they are too complicated and difficult to interpret, your message will not get across to the audience. So let us have a look at the potential pitfalls.
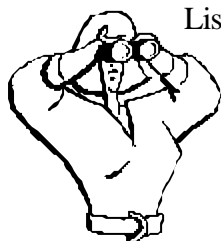


Listed below are the major points to think about when preparing visual aids. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, neither is it written in tablets of stone. It simply summarises major points to consider and suggests approaches that are effective.

- Each visual aid must be visible and readable by everyone in the audience or you might just as well not use it. The Kodak company suggests a "six times the width" method to assess readability. Before making the overhead, read the text at a distance equal to six times its width. That is, if the text is 12 cm wide, move 72 cm away from it. If you cannot read it easily, then people at the back of the room will not be able to read the projected overhead. Alternatively, a font of 18-24 points is suitable for most room sizes.

- Use of a coloured background can be effective, but be careful in your choice of colours. Backgrounds should not distract, so think carefully before using pictures and dominant patterns. Pastels are better than strong colours for the same reason.
- Title each visual aid and keep the headings uniform. This will help the audience not 'to lose the plot' and give a sense of continuity.
- If using all block letters, use them for titles only. Use upper- and lower-case letters for the remainder of the overhead since these are easier to read than all capitals.
- Understand the use of the two major types of font, *serif* and *sanserif*. *Serif* fonts have a slight projection finishing off a stroke of a letter as in T contrasted with Τ which is a *sanserif* font. A *serif* font is easier to read in extensive small type. It makes for easier eye flow in blocks of text and thus is better for handouts. *Sanserif* is a better, though not an exclusive choice for overheads. Since we encourage you in any case not to put too much information on each slide, font choice should not be a problem. Think about going for a lively modern typeface such as Comic Sans or even Jester. As we said earlier avoid the dramatic – Creepy - unless making a visual Joke (Jokerman font) – but BEWARE jokes don't always cross national boundaries!
- State only one central idea or main point per visual aid. The message should be clear and concise. Trying to put too much detail on a single overhead is by far the most common reason for a visual aid losing its impact.
- Use a simple type style and keep type uniform throughout the presentation. Be sure there are no typographical errors. Carefully proofread each overhead if you want to avoid embarrassment and stifled laughter in the audience.
- Use a list with bullets or colour to break the monotony and add interest.
- The use of pictures can break up text.
- Cartoons can be effectively if used sparingly. This is potentially a difficult area with an international audience.
- Putting a simple border round text can be effective.

   Experiment with borders – single line, double line, 3D effect to see which suits the topic best.
- Display data by using simple graphs and tables. If your data can be displayed in a graph, avoid using a table. There are lots of other ways of presenting data besides lists of figures.
- Try to use all horizontal or all vertical overheads unless absolutely necessary. If you have both types, make sure that you don't need to adjust the projector during the presentation.
- Bilingual overheads can be useful at international meetings if large numbers of the audience are local speakers. This may necessitate two overhead projectors and the help of an assistant.
- Built up visuals are both effective and fun. They should be built up faster at the start, then more slowly to reach the main point.

So much for the overheads themselves, we conclude this section with a few points associated with their use.
- Don't have too few or too many overheads. One visual aid should last approximately 1-3 minutes.
- Don't put overheads on too early or leave them on too long; but do give enough time for the audience to write down information on them. The only time one of us has seen the effective use of what amounted to 'rapid fire' overheads was in an after dinner speech, when the presenter was telling a series of 'quick fire' jokes. On that occasion it worked to good effect. If overheads are removed too quickly, they leave your audience with a sense of frustration, leave them there for too long (when you overlabour a point) and you will leave them equally frustrated!
- Always give yourself enough time to read an overhead, e.g. a quote, so then you know the audience has had time to read it too. This is all part of empathising with your audience. Concentrate on the audience while presenting visuals. You should always try to direct the audience's attention to where you want it to be, not allow it to become distracted.
- Make sure you can work all the equipment needed, OHP, projector, computer, lights (dim, raise, board, house); operating faults result in ridicule and lack of credibility. (In this context also, working models and demonstrations must work. Practice until they do.)
- Our advice is not to use a laser pointer; it can be quite distracting. If you use an ordinary pointer don't use it

(a) like a baton (b) as a back scratcher (c) like a toothpick (d) like a snooker cue, not least because any of the aforementioned could result in personal injury and your promising career as an international speaker could lie in ruins – think of the embarrassment! Point and stop, don't waver.

# 11. Displaying information

In the next few pages, we are going to show you some examples of visual aid design. At the end of the day your slides reflect you as an individual. The styles that we show work well but they are not exhaustive. Your overriding principle should be to aim for clarity. Things which may appear clear to you, may not always be so - check with someone else.

**Text**
The use of words on visual aids should be kept to a minimum. Too much text will distract the audience from what the speaker is saying, or bore the audience if the presenter reads each slide. Type should be flush to the left margin and landscape ragged on the right. When do you use text?
- Lists
- Quotes – make them brief and to the point (be guided by reading your computer screen from a distance – only one, or two sentences at most can you assimilate easily)
- Nothing else!

2.Each text overhead format, should have a title and a maximum of six to eight lines with a maximum of six words in each line (this is the 6 by 6 rule). For 'portrait' overheads, use the 6 by 9 rule: six words maximum on each (at most) nine lines. Use boldface type for all letters. Remember that the print must be large enough to read from any point in the room. Keep words to a minimum, using short phrases. You can (and should) always amplify any words on a screen by what you say. Again Jay says, "The best slides are not sufficient on their own; they need the presenter's words to make them properly intelligible." Use numbers only when sequential; otherwise use a list with bullets, arrows, checkmarks, etc., in the left margin. Avoid vertical lettering.

In Figures 1 & 2 we have contrasted the best and the worst in text-based slides. Look at both and pick out the points that make Figure 1 so much better than Figure 2, before reading our commentary.

**Figure 1**

| GAGNÉ'S LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS |
| --- |
| • Signal Learning |
| • Stimulus-Response Learning |
| • Chaining |
| • Verbal Association |
| • Multiple Discriminations |
| • Concept Learning |
| • Rule Learning |
| • Problem Solving |

*Figure 1        Neat Text Overhead*  ☺

*On a text ohp, keep words to a minimum, and use bullets for easy readability. Fonts – heading is Arial, bullet points Comic Sans.*

**Figure 2**

| ***GAGNÉ'S LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS*** |
| --- |
| Signal learning associates exact response to stimuli and |

stimulus-response learing associates exact responses to stimuli. Chaining acquires a number of S-R bondings and with verbal association, verbal chains are acquired. Multiple Discriminations discriminates between apparently similar stimuli. Concept Learning, concepts are classes of stimuli and the learner can recognise these classes. Rule Learning chains of two or more concepts are called 'principals' or 'laws'. Problem Solving discovering of relationships where rule learning is applied.

*Figure 2      Cluttered Text Overhead*

*Avoid this text design! Everything is bunched up and the title is not centred. The text rambles, has typographical errors, and takes up too much space. Fonts – heading is Bauhaus 93 in italics – almost unreadable (use of italics in headings –never wise), cluttered text is Arial Narrow.*

## 12. Tables

Use tables only when your data cannot be presented in the form of a diagram. Because people comprehend and retain visual information more readily than textual information, try to present tables in a visual manner, if you must use them. It is much better is to use pictorial means of presenting data such as pie charts, histograms etc (see a little later in the text). Limit the context of each table to four/five rows and three to four columns (resulting in a maximum of 16-20 numbers), bearing in mind that an audience can probably take in 10 numbers at best from an ohp. Detailed statistical information is therefore best provided as a handout. Include only relevant data in each table.

Figures 3 & 4 show two approaches to presenting tables. Which do you think is the more effective?

**Figure 3**

**PERCENTAGE COMPOSITION OF LIPOWITZ'S FUSIBLE ALLOY, MELTING POINT 70$^o$C**

| Element | (%) |
|---|---|
| lead (Pb) | 26.7 |
| tin (Sn) | 13.3 |
| bismuth (Bi) | 50.0 |
| cadmium (Cd) | 10.0 |

*Figure 3      Table with Numbers*

*If your data are displayed in a table with numbers, they may be difficult for the audience to visualise. Try to put numbers in ascending or descending order if possible. This is particularly important if there are many items in the table. For instance if the alloy had, say 20 components where the percentages of each were close together, then this would help significantly in the audience appreciating quickly the component which was present in the greatest amount. Font – Arial.*

**Figure 4**

| PERCENTAGE COMPOSITION OF LIPOWITZ'S FUSIBLE ALLOY, MELTING POINT 70$^o$C | |
|---|---|
| *Element* | *(%)* |
| lead (Pb) | +++++ |
| tin (Sn) | +++ |
| bismuth (Bi) | ++++++++++ |
| cadmium (Cd) | ++ |

*Figure 4      Table with +++ Instead of Numbers*  ☺

*These data are easier to grasp quickly. Any audience interested in the precise percentages will probably ask; meanwhile everyone quickly sees that bismuth is the major component of the alloy. In this example the order of elements is now less important to appreciate this fact. Font – Arial.*

*Presenting Statistical Information with Diagrams*

The preferred way of presenting statistical information is by using diagrams. There are a number of methods of doing this and we illustrate the common ones, which are pie charts, line graphs, histograms and bar graphs (charts).

**Pie Charts**

A pie chart is used to depict parts of a whole and illustrates how one part relates to the others. The most important or first of a series should be at the 12 o'clock position and move clockwise as you fill in the second, third etc. Avoid very small slices; combine these and label the slice as 'other'. Four to six slices allow easy reading. Use solid colours for easy comparison of slices; patterns make it harder to compare slice proportions but if you only have a monochrome slide, patterns may be better than too many different shades of grey. Avoid using the same colour in a pie slice that was used for the title. (See Figure 5). A 3-dimensional pie chart is more 'lively' than a flat one
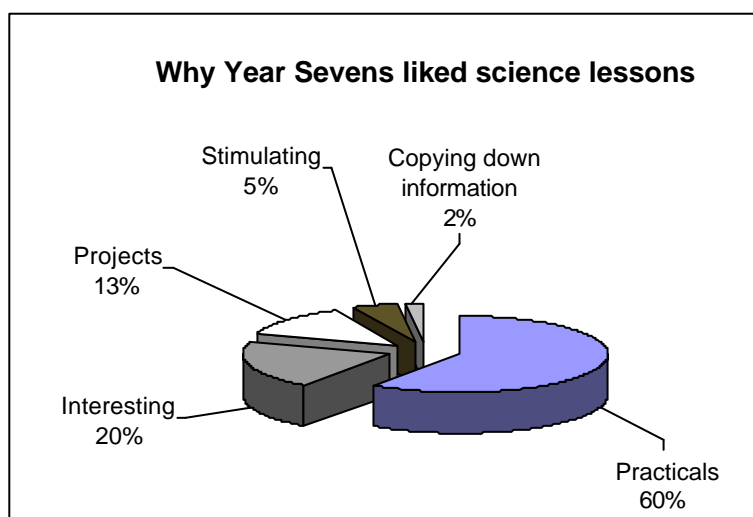
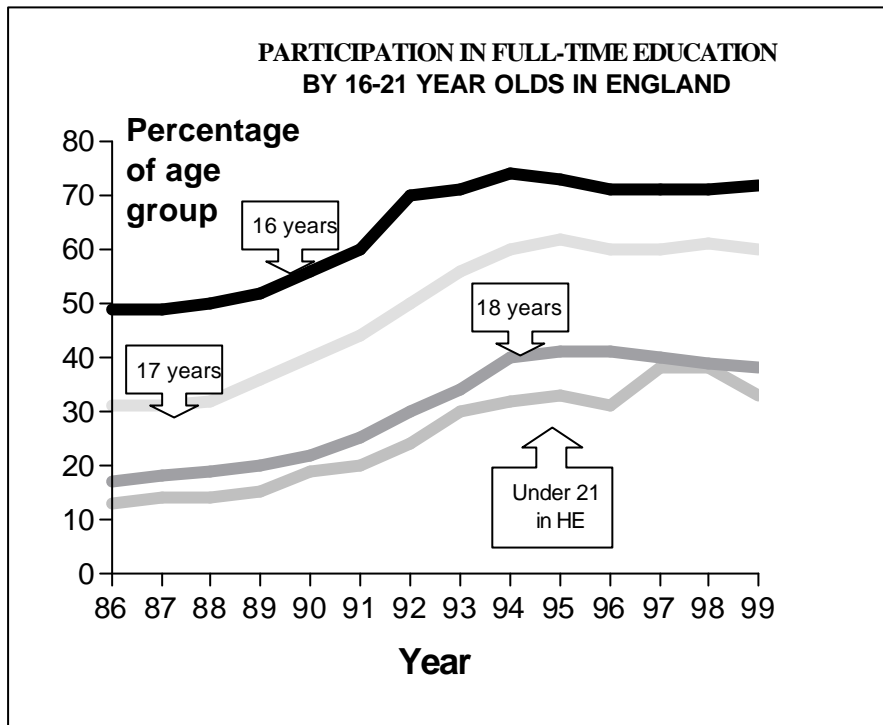**Figure 5**

*Figure 5      Pie Chart*  ☺

*Pie charts or circle graphs illustrate parts that are percentages of a whole. Font – Arial.*



Why Year Sevens liked science lessons

Stimulating 5%
Copying down information 2%
Projects 13%
Interesting 20%
Practicals 60%

**Line Graphs**

Line graphs are used to indicate change or to display trends. They are useful when presenting a large number of data points or illustrating a small change or variation in the data. Label the axes horizontally for easy readability. A maximum of three to four lines on each graph avoids confusion. If possible, distinguish lines by colour and thickness since marker symbols (e.g., • • / - -) add clutter. For easy comparison, use the same scale and the same colours for graphs of similar data. (See Figure 6).

Figure 6

**PARTICIPATION IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION
BY 16-21 YEAR OLDS IN ENGLAND**



*Source: DFEE Statistical Release SFR 13/99. Data is for England*

*Figure 6      Line Graph*  ☺

*Keep line graphs simple, with distinctive lines and horizontal labels. This is best achieved through suitable choice of colours. Thick/thin/dotted/grey lines are options to use if you do not have access to a colour printer. Font – heading Times New Roman, remainder Arial.*

**Histograms and Bar Graphs**

Histograms and Bar Graphs emphasise the relationship between variables. Use them to demonstrate change over time and to compare data. (*For purists – with histograms blocks are drawn such that their areas [rather than their height as in a bar chart] are proportional to the frequencies within a class or across several class boundaries. There are no spaces between blocks in a histogram whereas there can be in bar charts.*) They allow the audience to easily understand a trend more easily or make a comparison between two or more items. Bar graphs may be drawn vertically or horizontally, but write the axis labels horizontally for easy reading. Draw the bars wider than the spaces between them (see figure 7). Shading or 3D effects look very good in bar charts but should not be used in histograms.
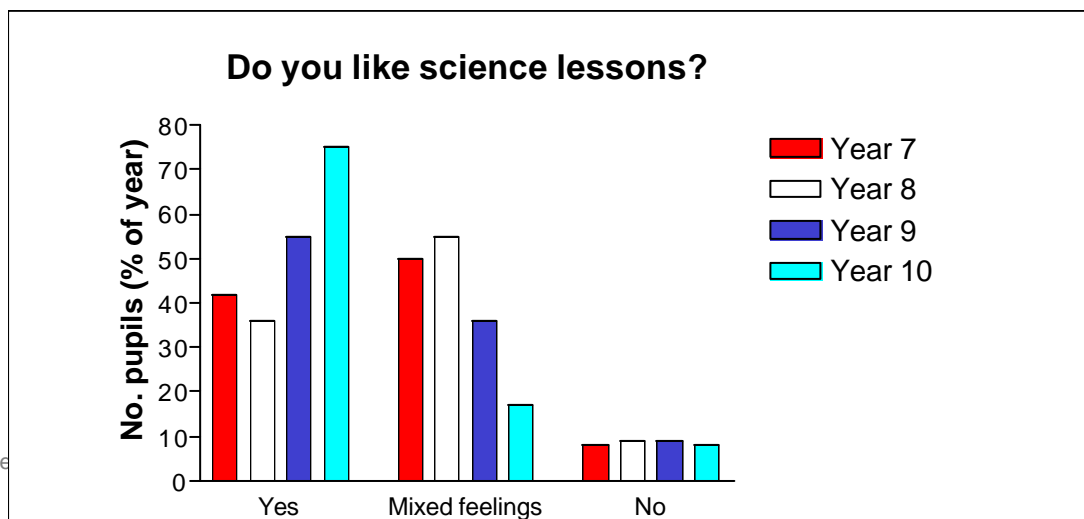
Figure 7



**Do you like science lessons?**

*Figure 7*    ***Bar Graph 1***    🙂    (*There is a fault – can you spot it?*)

*Example of a bar graph. Font – Arial.*

**Figure 8**

### Do you like science lessons?

No. pupils (%
of year)

Year 7   Year 8   Year 9   Year 10

- Yes
- Mixed feelings
- No
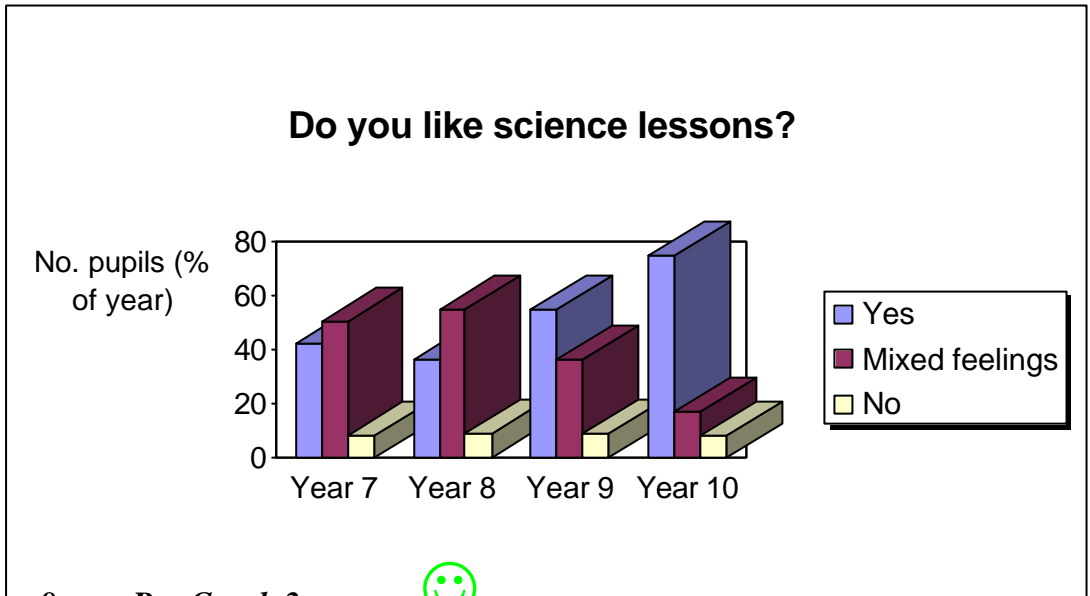
*Figure 8*    ***Bar Graph 2***

Example of a bar graph. Font – Arial.

**Figure 9**

## Examination Marks

Frequency
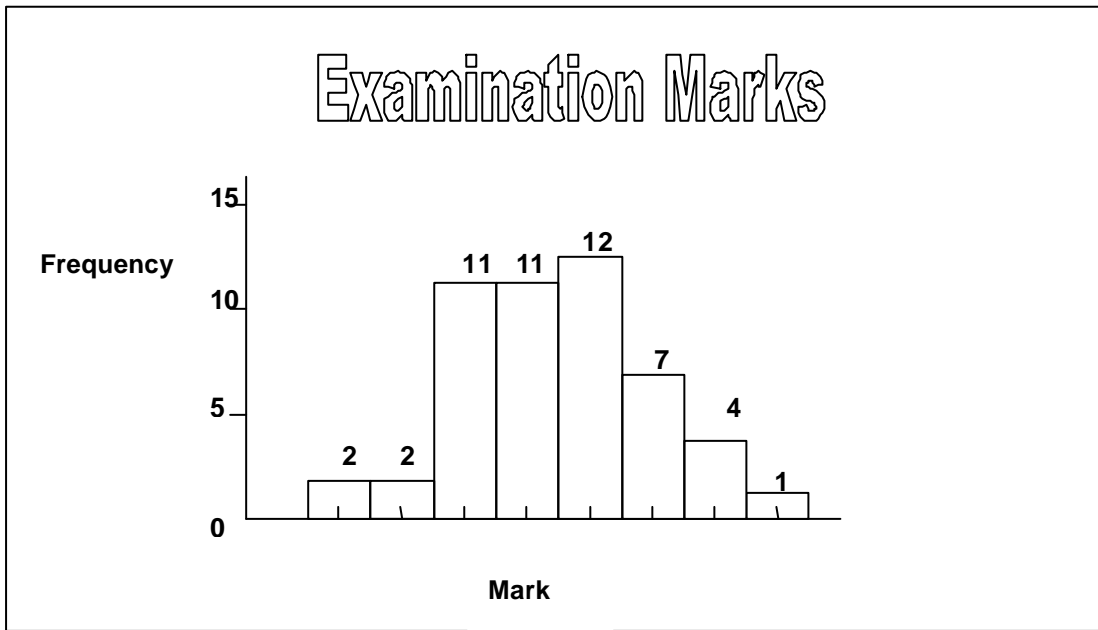
2   2   11   11   12   7   4   1

Mark

*Figure 9*    ***Histogram***    🙂

*Example of a histogram presented in simple format. Don't think that you always need a sophisticated presentation. Font – Arial.*

## Flow and Organisational Charts

Each of these displays the relationships between a number of factors. Flow charts demonstrate a process, step by step, from beginning to end, and organisational charts demonstrate visually the relationship of items in a group or company. When designing a flow or organisational chart, try to limit the number of items to 15 at most. Try to balance the right and left sides of the chart but maintain the overall importance of each item. Since a higher position on the organisational chart generally represents importance, keep equal elements at the same horizontal level as far as is possible.

**Figure 10**
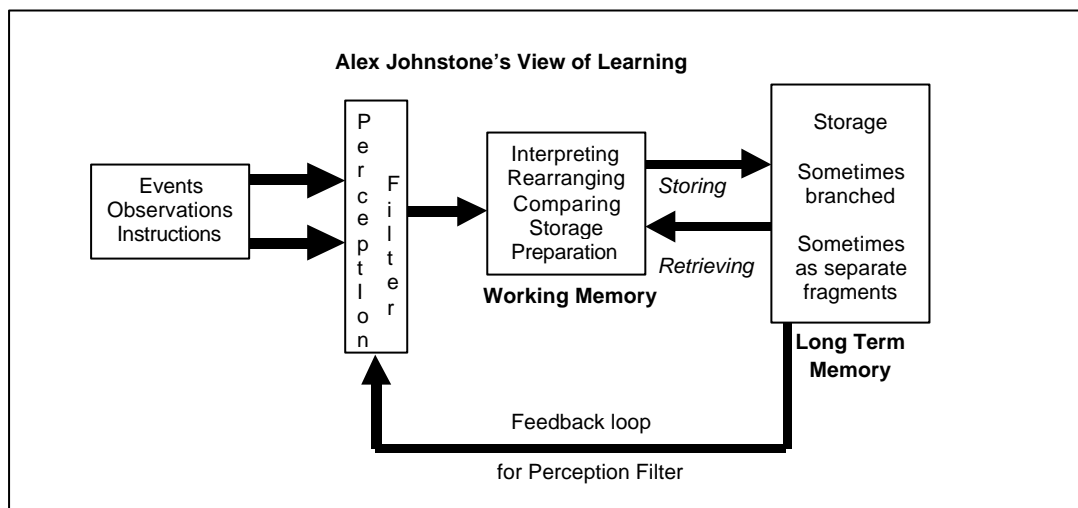


**Alex Johnstone's View of Learning**

*Figure 10        Flow Chart*

*Flow charts illustrate a process. Chemical equations are in fact simple flow charts. Note we have broken a rule in our example but we have done so for a specific purpose. What is it and why? (Answer: the text 'perception filter' is written vertically so that pictorially it models a filter). Font – Arial.*
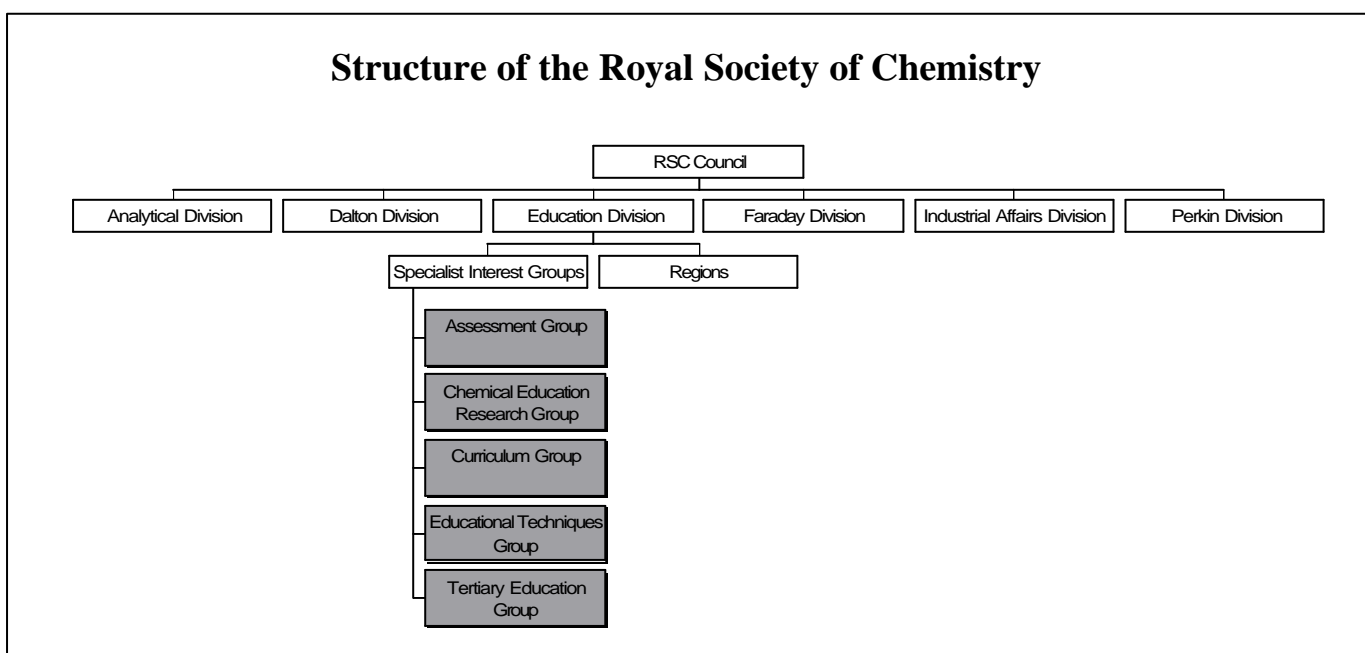
**Figure 11**



**Structure of the Royal Society of Chemistry**

*Figure 11      Organisational Chart*          ☺

*Example of an Organisational Chart. Here if we were to apply the 'keep on the same horizontal line' rule to strictly, we would end up with an unclear slide. Note that the overall main structure is displayed, but then the slide concentrates on the particular part of the organisation that is the topic of the presentation. Font –title is Americana, text is News Gothic.*

# 12. Using Colour

Colour is much more appealing to people than black and white – think of all the old Hollywood movies being colourised; but too much colour, confusing colouration between ohps or clashing colours beside each other may do harm to your presentation. Here are a few tips to consider:

- To give your presentation a unified look, use the same colours on each overhead to represent the same (or equivalent) things.
- Use colour to highlight important information and focus the audience's attention on it.
- For maximum visibility, a blue background with yellow or white text gives a good contrast. Avoid using black letters on a dark background. Interestingly however, among a group of 155 students, three times as many preferred the use of a light background with dark fonts, as opposed to a dark background with light fonts. Black text on a coloured background is still one of the most effective styles of presentation.
- Too much colour can be a distraction. For your basic text, use no more than three colours per ohp.
- Colours should contrast, but avoid using colours that clash, such as purple on green.
- Blue and violet are cool colours that are easy on the eye. Red, yellow and orange are warm colours that draw attention. Intense colours (red, blue, green) project better on the screen than pastel colours, but pastel colours are better as background to text.
- Avoid using red and green together on a visual aid. Colour-blind people cannot distinguish between these two colours.
- If a feature is repeated in the same ohp or appears on successive overheads, you may want to use the same colour. Similarly you can use the same background for one section of your table, but change it when you move to the next section.

# 13. PowerPoint

Microsoft PowerPoint ®™ has become the dominant software for creating and giving presentations at meetings. Indeed the software is being used increasingly for preparing lectures in the university and classroom. As costs fall, lecture theatres and classrooms updated, and expectations rise, the 'all singing, all dancing' presentation will gradually move to the forefront as a teaching delivery method. A word of encouragement, "PowerPoint is easy to use, so don't be scared of trying." However, remember that despite Marshall McLuhan [*Canadian communications scholar, 1911-80, 'The medium is the message.' Understanding Media (1964)*], the medium should never get in the way of the messenger. Use it to advantage. Don't let it take advantage of you!

All the comments we have made relating to visual aids also apply to PowerPoint. There is an extra temptation to be 'flashy' just because the possibilities are there, so even more care is required in thinking about what you are trying to achieve.

What follows is intended to be a very brief introduction to PowerPoint. If you are already familiar with the software you will learn nothing new. If you are not, then what we say might tempt you to investigate its use. In that, we might have achieved something.

PowerPoint is a powerful tool. It can quickly create effective presentations with a consistent appearance and style. PowerPoint lets you create individual slides or complete slide shows with speaker notes, handouts, graphics, or special effects. Once you create your slides, you can use PowerPoint to print overhead

transparencies, or 35mm slides (if you have access to a desktop film recorder). Alternatively after you have saved the presentation on a disk, it can be taken directly to any large photographic company/photocopy shop and slides made directly from the disk file.

In your presentation you can include information from other Microsoft applications such as Word and Excel, insert clip art, create your own graphics, use scanned images, or add sound or video effects. Also, PowerPoint's Animation Effects feature lets you add motion to your presentations. If you have the facilities the presentation can be run directly from a computer - you will need either a lecture theatre with an overhead, computer driven projection system or a special projector which can take images directly from a PC or laptop - although these facilities used to be rare they are becoming increasingly common.

*Creating a presentation*

There are three ways to create a presentation in PowerPoint which are offered to you when you open the program. The first is the AutoContent wizard, which designs the look and content for your presentation. This option is generally appropriate for a business presentation and is not so useful for academic use. The second presentation method is the Template option, which offers an array of overall slide designs from which you can choose. If you choose one of these templates, although you can decide the content layout of each slide in your presentation, the slides will all have the same overall design, resulting in a uniform look. Many of these templates, however, are also for business presentations, and are less relevant for lecture hall use. The third method is the Blank presentation option, which gives you layout options with no overall design. It is up to the user to choose the design and content layout for each slide.
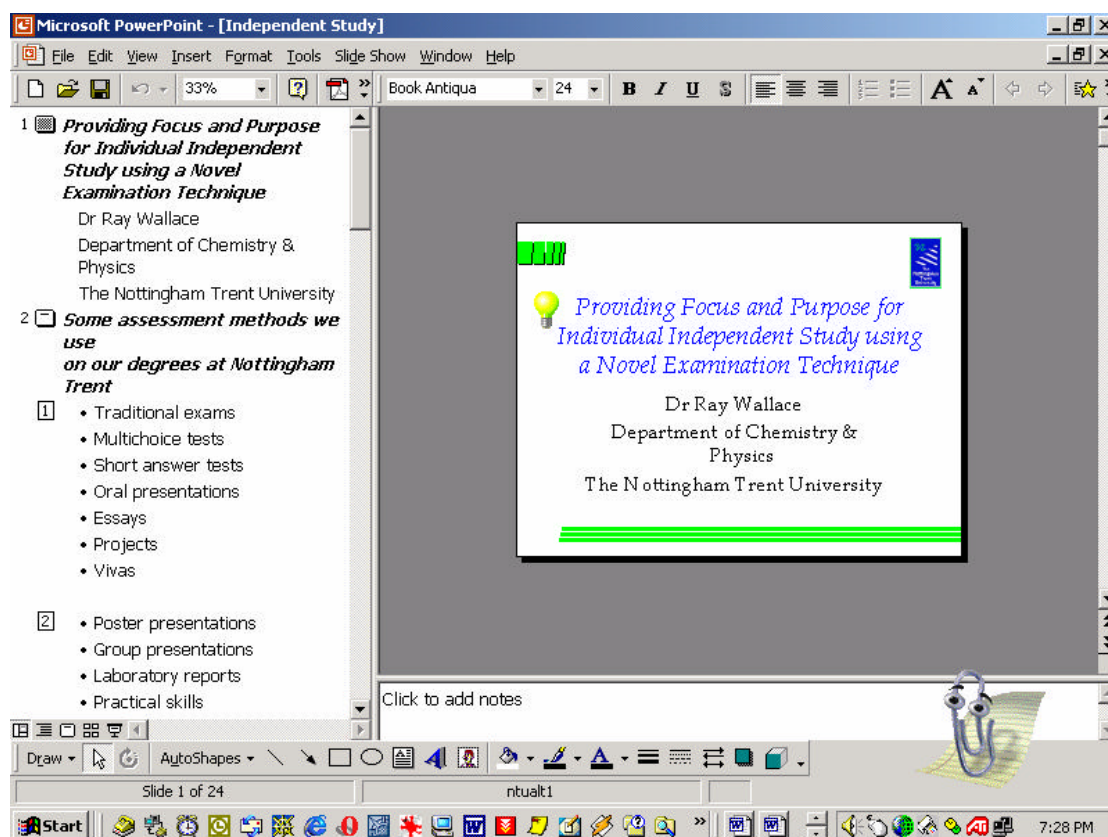


*Working with the PowerPoint window*

In addition to basic Windows operations and the standard Microsoft toolbars, you have to become familiar with the buttons and toolbars of the PowerPoint window.

When you open PowerPoint, any of the extra toolbars below may appear. You can hide or show any toolbar by opening the 'View' menu and choosing 'Toolbars… '. Select or deselect any of the toolbars or features, then click 'OK'. You can click and drag a toolbar into any space in the window.

The **Drawing** toolbar contains buttons for creating your own graphics and provides options for placing images.

The various buttons give you access to preformed shapes, text, colours, lines, and arrows, and let you rotate and move objects, draw images, and add shadows. Clicking the Autoshapes button in the Drawing toolbar displays the **Autoshapes** toolbar, which provides access to additional geometric shapes.

The **Animation Effects** toolbar contains buttons for building text on slides. The information can 'fly' onto a slide, come to a screeching halt, or fade, among other effects. You can display or hide this toolbar by clicking the Animation Effects button in the Standard toolbar.

The **Slide Show** buttons at the bottom-left corner of the window provide different views and editing modes for the slides in your presentation: slide view (edit), outline view, slide sorter view, notes page view, and slide show.

*Working with a PowerPoint file*

When your slides are complete, you can use the presentation features to rehearse and fine-tune your presentation. The following features are available:

*Views:*

**Slide View** is the default view. In Slide View you can create or modify slides.

**Outline View** provides a text-only outline of the entire presentation.

**Slide Sorter View** provides a miniature view of all slides in a presentation on one screen. To move a slide, simply click and drag it to the new position. Slides also can be cut, copied, and pasted here.

**Notes Pages View** lets you write notes and attach them to a particular slide. You can print these notes by specifying Notes Pages when printing or display their contents during a presentation. (In slide show view, click the right mouse button and select 'Meeting Minder.' Click the 'Notes Pages' tab.)

**Slide Show** provides a full-screen preview of your presentation. To modify the content of any slide, return to Slide View. To adjust the timing of a presentation, use the 'View' menu and select 'Slide Show….' From the dialog box, select manual advance (default), rehearse timing, or set timing (see 'Rehearse' below). To view the slide show manually, simply click the left mouse button once. Press F1 to see the options and associated shortcut keys available in Slide Show View.

Additionally you can use various pictures and charts, video and audio clips to enhance your presentation.

*Picture*

To insert a picture into a slide, choose Picture from the Insert pull-down menu. You can choose a picture from PowerPoint's clip art gallery, or you can choose a picture you have gathered from a different source.

*Movie, sound or animation*

To insert a movie, sound, or animation into a slide, choose Movies and Sounds from the Insert pull-down menu. Locate the movies or sound from the PowerPoint gallery or from your files, and click on OK.

*Chart*

To insert a chart into a slide, choose Chart from the Insert pull-down menu. A table will appear that you use to enter the chart data. Type your information over the sample data provided. Use the arrow keys or your mouse to move within the table. To preview your chart, choose Datasheet from the View pull-down menu. Press the Esc key twice to return to the slide view.

There are many other features too numerous to mention, but we hope what we have said above will have given you a 'taster' for what is possible and the incentive to investigate further.

# 14. Up and at it!

If you have reached as far as this – Congratulations! We hope you have found our booklet interesting, and perhaps useful too. You might even have been amused along the way. We should be sad if you feel that your head is now so full of this suggestion and that bit of advice that you are *less* confident about giving your presentation than when you started to read it. So here is our final piece of advice: "Get out into the lecture theatre, classroom, or conference hall and just do it!" There is no substitute for experience. As we said earlier, reflective practice makes a quality presenter. It is our sincere wish that your future presentations bring credit to

yourself and the work you are doing; and if our booklet helps in any way towards letting you fulfil your aim to become a top class presenter, we shall be more than satisfied.

If you happen to have this booklet with you the next time you find yourself listening to a dull presentation, turn over to the last page, and use our check list to amuse yourself as you try to keep awake. Perhaps with a slight smile you will be able to think back to a time when that might have been you – but not any more!

# Characteristics of Bad Presenters

- They do not spend much time in preparation.

- They believe they know the topic so well a logical sequence will emerge naturally.

- They don't use visual aids (or if they do use them, they are poorly prepared and not checked).

- They don't say anything about themselves or their co-workers.

- Their title does not really tell you what they intend to talk about.

- They launch into the talk without an introduction.

- They dress in a slovenly manner.

- They fidget during their presentation.

- They keep the lights turned down.

- They mumble or gabble their talk.

- They read long passages, and read them badly.

- They forget to give a summary.

- They do not establish eye contact with the audience.

- They overrun their time.

- They are in a hurry to leave at the end of their talk.

- They don't think about how well they have performed, and so do the same next time.