TOPIC 7 | MAKING A PRESENTATION

How to plan a clear message, use visuals effectively and speak with confidence.

1 | What makes a presentation work?

Imagine a five-minute presentation to an international team. Choose the three features that would make it most effective and explain your choices.

FEATURE	YOUR PRIORITY
a clear main message	☐
strong evidence and practical examples	☐
simple, readable slides	☐
confident voice and eye contact	☐
a useful conclusion and next step	☐
opportunities for questions	☐

Which feature is most difficult for you personally, and why?

2 | Plan before you open PowerPoint

Good presentations start with a decision about the audience, not the slide design.

PLANNING QUESTION	EXAMPLE: A PROPOSAL FOR A STUDENT CAREER EVENT
Who is listening?	University managers and potential business partners
What is the purpose?	Persuade them to support a hybrid networking event
What should they remember?	A hybrid format improves access without exceeding the budget
What evidence is useful?	Interest from students, estimated cost, expected benefits

Your turn

You want to recommend a new online booking system at a university. Complete one sentence: “By the end of my presentation, the audience should…”

Presentation rule: One central message supported by two or three clear points is usually stronger than a long list of unrelated facts.

3 | Build a clear structure

Use this four-part structure to help the audience follow your ideas.

STAGE	MAIN PURPOSE	USEFUL CONTENT
Opening	Capture interest and explain the goal	Greeting, hook, purpose, short outline
Main body	Develop your argument	2–3 key points, examples, evidence, transitions
Conclusion	Make the takeaway memorable	Summary, recommendation, clear next step
Questions	Clarify and discuss	Invite questions, listen carefully, respond honestly

A. Put the presentation in order

Number the statements from 1 to 7 to make a logical presentation. Write the number beside each letter.

____ A. Let me begin with the problem our customers currently face.
____ B. To conclude, I recommend a three-month pilot project.
____ C. Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us.
____ D. First, I will explain the situation and then present our proposal.
____ E. I would be happy to take any questions.
____ F. Today I would like to discuss how we can improve customer support.
____ G. Now let us move on to the main benefits of the proposed solution.

B. Find the main message

A company trained 20 service advisers. Over the following six months, its average response time fell from 48 hours to 20 hours. Management wants to decide whether to continue the programme.

Which is the stronger slide title? Circle A or B and explain your choice.

A. Staff Training Update B. Customer Response Time Has Fallen by More Than Half

C. Repair the structure

Replace each weak sentence with a professional presentation phrase.

1. “OK, I have lots of things to say today.”

2. “Anyway, here are some other numbers.”

3. “That is everything. Bye.”

4 | Presentation language bank

Learn expressions that help your audience understand where you are and why each point matters.

FUNCTION	USEFUL EXPRESSION	УКРАЇНСЬКОЮ
Purpose	The aim of my presentation is to…	Мета моєї презентації — …
Overview	I will focus on three main points.	Я зосереджуся на трьох основних аспектах.
Starting	Let me begin by outlining the problem.	Дозвольте спочатку окреслити проблему.
Transition	Let us now move on to the next point.	Перейдімо до наступного питання.
Visual aid	As this chart illustrates, …	Як показує ця діаграма, …
Emphasis	The key point here is that…	Ключовий момент полягає в тому, що…
Conclusion	To sum up, our recommendation is…	Підсумовуючи, наша рекомендація — …
Inviting questions	I would be happy to answer your questions.	Із задоволенням відповім на запитання.
Checking a question	Could you clarify what you mean by…?	Чи могли б ви уточнити, що маєте на увазі?

A. Complete the phrases

Choose from the box. Use each expression once.

Word bank: focus • briefly • move on • illustrates • return • sum up • clarify • welcome

1. Today I will _____ on three practical improvements.
2. Let me _____ explain the background.
3. I would now like to _____ to our proposed solution.
4. This chart _____ how customer satisfaction has changed.
5. Before I finish, let me _____ to the original question.
6. To _____, the results are encouraging.
7. Could you _____ what you mean by “cost-effective”?
8. I would _____ any questions at this stage.

B. Make it sound professional

Rewrite the sentences in a more confident and natural business style.

1. “Look at this picture. It is pretty good.”

_____

2. “I finished this bit. Next thing.”

_____

5 | Use visuals to support your message

A slide should make your idea easier to understand; it should not become a script that you read aloud.

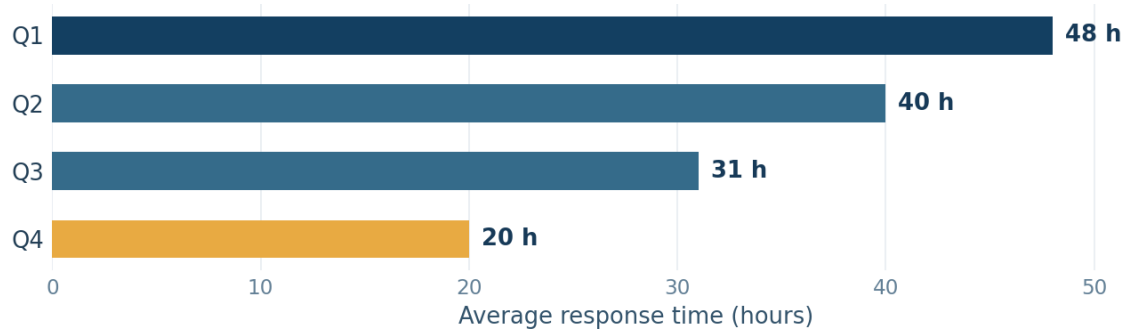
A. Which slide would you rather see?

SLIDE A — DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW	SLIDE B — CLEAR TAKEAWAY
SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT During the past year the department carried out numerous activities. The team held regular meetings, trained 20 advisers, used feedback forms and reviewed working practices. Response time was 48 hours in Q1 and 20 hours in Q4. The overall situation is now better in several areas.	RESPONSE TIME CUT BY 58% 48 hours → 20 hours 20 advisers trained Next step: test the approach in another department

Identify two reasons why Slide B is easier to understand.

B. Read a simple chart

The following figures are fictional and are provided for classroom practice. The chart shows the average time needed to reply to a customer enquiry.



1. Describe the main trend using “As the chart shows…”

2. What would be a stronger headline than “Response time by quarter”?

C. Match a visual to the purpose

Write the best option: bar chart, line chart, pie chart or process diagram.

1. Compare sales results for four different products: _____
2. Show how website traffic changed over twelve months: _____
3. Show the stages of a job application: _____
4. Show how a fixed budget is divided among activities: _____

Useful habit: Give a visual a message-led title, name the source of your data and explain what the audience should notice.

6 | Reading: The presentation that changed a decision

An original fictional business case study

A good idea is not always a convincing pitch

A small technology company can have an excellent product and still fail to win support. That was the problem facing Northbridge Labs, a fictional start-up preparing to launch a digital booking platform for local businesses. Its engineers believed the product could save staff time, but their first presentation to potential partners created more confusion than enthusiasm.

The team had prepared 27 slides for a ten-minute meeting. Several contained long lists of technical features, while others displayed detailed charts without explaining what the numbers meant. The lead developer spoke confidently about the software, but hardly mentioned the practical difficulties that customers wanted to solve. When the audience asked about training costs and data protection, the team gave answers that were accurate but difficult to follow.

A week later, the company had another opportunity. This time the operations manager redesigned the presentation around a single question: What will change for a business that uses this system? The opening began with a familiar situation — a customer phones a busy office, but nobody is available to confirm an appointment. Instead of describing every feature, the manager explained how a shared booking calendar could prevent missed requests and reduce repeated administrative work.

The new presentation used five slides. One showed the problem; another demonstrated a typical customer journey. A simple chart compared the estimated time required for manual booking with the time expected after the change. The figures were clearly labelled as projections rather than proven results. That distinction mattered: the manager did not ask the audience to accept uncertain savings as facts.

During the presentation, the manager paused after the main figures and asked whether the example reflected the partners' experience. Two people described similar problems in their organisations. The discussion helped the team identify a concern it had underestimated: some staff might need additional training before they felt comfortable using a new system.

The conclusion did not promise an immediate transformation. Instead, the company proposed a limited pilot, agreed success measures and invited questions about implementation. The partners approved a further meeting to consider the pilot; they did not yet sign a contract. For Northbridge Labs, that was still progress. The revised pitch had turned a complicated technical explanation into a realistic business conversation.

The lesson is not that short presentations are automatically better. It is that each slide, example and question should serve the audience's decision. Clear structure, honest evidence and thoughtful delivery are often more useful than impressive graphics or a long list of features.

A. True, false or not given?

Read the article on the previous page. Write T (True), F (False) or NG (Not Given).

____ 1. Northbridge Labs designed a digital booking platform for local businesses.

____ 2. The original presentation concentrated strongly on customers' everyday problems.

____ 3. The company's second presentation contained five slides.

____ 4. The estimated time savings were based on results from a completed pilot.

____ 5. The partners signed a contract immediately after the second presentation.

____ 6. The start-up's operations manager had previously worked in marketing.

B. Choose the best answer

1. What was the central question behind the revised pitch?

A. How can we display more technical details? B. What will change for users? C. Which competitor is strongest?

2. Why did the manager ask a question during the presentation?

A. To learn from the audience's experience B. To avoid discussing the results C. To finish the presentation early

3. What did the partners agree to do?

A. Purchase the product B. Invest immediately C. Hold another meeting about a pilot

C. Reading for vocabulary

Find expressions in the article that match the meanings below.

1. a trial on a small scale before wider introduction: _____

2. numerical estimates of what may happen in the future: _____

3. put something into practice: _____

D. Think critically

Would the revised presentation have been as effective without its questions and clear explanation of uncertainty? Why / why not?

_____

_____

_____

7 | Engage your audience and handle questions

Engagement is not entertainment. It is helping listeners connect your message to their own goals and decisions.

TECHNIQUE	WHAT IT ACHIEVES	TRY THIS
A short example	Makes an abstract idea concrete	“Imagine a customer who…”
A relevant question	Connects the topic to experience	“Have you faced a similar problem?”
A signpost	Helps listeners follow the argument	“There are two reasons for this.”
A brief pause	Gives people time to process information	Pause after an important figure.
Eye contact	Creates connection and confidence	Look across the room, not only at your slides.

A. Choose the best technique

1. You have just shown a chart with several figures. Your audience looks confused. What could you do?
2. You are describing a new booking app. The listeners do not understand why it matters. What could you do?
3. A few people have not contributed. How could you invite them to speak?

B. Questions and answers: useful language

SITUATION	PROFESSIONAL RESPONSE
Inviting questions	“What questions do you have about the proposal?”
Checking understanding	“If I understand correctly, you are asking about…”
A challenging question	“That is an important concern. Let me address it.”
Not knowing an answer	“I do not have that figure with me. I can check and follow up.”
Keeping the discussion focused	“I would be happy to discuss the details after the presentation.”

C. Respond professionally

Write one or two sentences for each situation. Avoid guessing when you do not have the information.

1. Someone asks about a cost that you have not calculated yet.

2. A participant says, “Your plan sounds unrealistic.”

3. You hear a question but cannot understand the last part.

8 | Confidence, voice and delivery

A clear presentation does not require perfect English or a perfect performance. It requires preparation, understandable speech and a useful message.

A. Before, during and after

WHEN	ACTION	WHY IT HELPS
Before	Practise your opening aloud two or three times.	Starting confidently reduces uncertainty.
Before	Check the equipment and keep brief speaker notes.	You are less dependent on reading slides.
During	Speak a little more slowly than in casual conversation.	Listeners have time to follow your ideas.
During	Pause, breathe and return to your main point if you lose your place.	A short pause is better than rushing.
After	Note one successful moment and one improvement.	Feedback makes the next presentation easier.

B. Spot the problem

Match each habit (1–5) to the best improvement (A–E).

HABIT	IMPROVEMENT
1. Reading every word on the slide	A. Pause after important ideas and vary your pace.
2. Speaking without any pauses	B. Write keywords instead of complete sentences.
3. Apologising repeatedly for feeling nervous	C. Look at different parts of the audience.
4. Looking only at the laptop screen	D. Practise the opening and focus on the message.
5. Finishing without a clear recommendation	E. End with a concise takeaway and next step.

Answers: 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___

C. Mini-presentation model

Read the short example. Underline the opening, a transition, the main message and the conclusion.

Example: “Good morning, everyone. Today I would like to suggest one way to improve how students find career opportunities. At the moment, information is spread across different websites and messages. This makes it easy to miss a useful event. My proposal is a shared online calendar for workshops, employer visits and application deadlines. Let me highlight two benefits. First, students could see opportunities in one place. Second, staff could update information without sending repeated emails. We could test the calendar with two departments before introducing it more widely. To sum up, a small pilot would help us understand whether the idea saves time and improves access. Thank you. I would be happy to answer your questions.”

D. Reflection

Choose two delivery habits you want to practise. Explain how you will improve them.

9 | Your turn: deliver a short business presentation

Choose ONE scenario and prepare a 2–3 minute presentation. Keep a clear purpose, two or three main points, one visual and a practical conclusion.

CHOOSE A SCENARIO	YOUR AUDIENCE / DECISION
A. A digital student services portal	Convince university managers to test an online service portal.
B. A more effective career networking event	Recommend an accessible format to event organisers.
C. A greener office	Persuade colleagues to try two realistic changes to reduce waste.

A. Plan your message

ELEMENT	YOUR NOTES
Audience and purpose	_____
Opening / hook	_____
Central message	_____
Point 1 + example	_____
Point 2 + example	_____
One visual you will use	_____
Recommendation / next step	_____
A possible audience question	_____

B. Put it into practice

Speak using keywords rather than reading a full script. Invite at least two questions after your presentation.

C. Give constructive feedback

After listening to a partner, tick what worked well. Then offer one specific suggestion.

☐ The opening made the purpose clear. ☐ The key message was easy to remember.

☐ The main ideas followed a logical order. ☐ The visual supported the explanation.

☐ The speaker used clear transitions. ☐ The conclusion included a next step.

☐ The speaker answered questions respectfully.

One thing that worked particularly well:

_____

One specific improvement for next time:

_____