

Add hedging language to academic presentations tips

Listen to your partner give the present draft of their presentation and give them feedback after the Q&A stage.

Possible feedback topics:

- Aim, and achieving it
- Getting and keeping people's attention/ Hooking the audience
- Connecting with/ Acknowledging/ Noticing the audience
- Using personal information
- Transitions between stages

- Organisation/ Structure
- Visuals (PowerPoint etc)
- Voice
- Stress and intonation
- Pauses
- Pacing
- Speaking without notes
- Looking up from notes/ Making eye contact
- Body language/ Gestures/ Movement
- Taking into account the knowledge and interests of the audience
- Ease of understanding

- Summarising/ Concluding
- Q&A stage
- References/ Further sources

- Preparation, e.g. practising
- Notes/ Script

Switch roles and do the same.

Ask about any topics above which you don't understand, are not sure about good advice for, etc, discussing good advice as a class each time.

In the same groups, discuss these questions about the feedback that you gave and received:

- Which feedback do you most strongly agree with?
- Was there any feedback which you think is generally not a good idea?
- Was there any feedback which was a good general point but which doesn't apply to your presentation?
- Was there any feedback which is basically right but was too strong?
- Was there any feedback which could have been stronger, e.g. times when your partner was too indirect or too polite?

What is wrong with all the statements on the next page? (They all have the same issue).

In small groups, choose one section on the next page (e.g. tips about ending). Make all the sentences in that section more realistic by changing or adding to what is written there. You might also need to make other changes to the sentence to make sure it remains grammatically correct. Your teacher will tell you if/ when you can use the mixed hedging language to help.

Useful phrases for doing the activity

- I would go further and say that...
- I think you can go further and say that...
- I wouldn't go so far. I would say that...
- That's almost right, but...
- I think you're overexaggerating (a little). I think it would be more accurate to say that...
- I think you're underexaggerating (a little). I think it would be more accurate to say that...
- I don't think that's right at all. I would say that...
- I think the real situation is almost the opposite. The way I see it...
- That's exactly right.

Compare the sentences that you wrote with the suggested answers below, then do the same for another section.

Ask about any sentences in the suggested answers which you think are too strong, are too weak, have the wrong advice, etc.

Underline hedging language in the suggested answers and/ or make a list of hedging language from those examples and your own ideas.

Compare with the suggested answers and/ or with the mixed list.

Make similar general statements about these topics related to presentations:

- Filling silence
- Transitioning between slides
- Giving sources
- Practising
- Making sure people listen to you
- Where to stand
- Making easy to use notes
- Technical problems

Ask your partner what topic they might give a presentation about. Make generalisations about that topic or those topics (e.g. generalising about downsizing if they may talk about that) and see if they agree.

Presentation introductions tips

- You must use a phrase and gesture to get the audience's attention.
- It's good to welcome the audience to your presentation or thank them for inviting you.
- You should give your name.
- It's a good idea to state your area of work or studies.
- Mentioning how the audience probably feel is a good way making a personal connection to them.
- Show how topical your subject is to hook your audience.
- You need to have a clear, concrete and achievable aim and to state it in your introduction.
- Divide your presentation into three parts (plus an introduction and conclusion).
- Don't say anything that your audience already knows.
- Questions from the presenter should be rhetorical questions.
- You should invite the audience to ask questions at any time in your presentations.

Presentation visuals tips

- Don't use ClipArt.
- You should only use one font.
- Use the "appear" function so that bullet points appear one by one.
- Use the same background for all slides.

Using your voice in presentations tips

- Record yourself doing the presentation.
- You should use extreme intonation.
- Marking pauses and stressed words on your presentation notes helps.

Body language in presentations tips

- You shouldn't stand in one position for the whole presentation.
- Use many gestures to keep mobile.
- Don't turn towards the screen.

Ending presentations tips

- The rule is not to give new information in your summary/ conclusion.
- Describe the person who you are selecting to ask the next question.
- You should end the questions by inviting more questions by email later.
- Mention the next speaker.

Miscellaneous presentation tips

- Don't apologise.
- What you read from should be in note form. Don't write out full sentences.
- You shouldn't correct grammar mistakes while you are speaking.
- Don't turn the lights off, because it will make the audience concentrate on the screen rather than you and fall asleep.

Mixed hedging language

- almost + always/ certainly
- alternatively
- although/ though
- an exception is
- another option is to
- apart from
- are another good choice
- as a general rule
- but/ however
- can/ could (be a good way)
- generally
- hardly ever
- if (at all possible)
- in general
- in the right situation
- it is also possible to
- it's well worth thinking about
- limit
- mainly
- maybe/ perhaps
- might
- most (or all/ of the time)
- often
- one possible
- only
- possible/ possibly
- probably
- providing
- restrict
- some people
- somewhat
- tends to
- the majority of
- the vast majority of
- there are other options
- try to
- typically
- unless
- unlikely
- usually
- when
- while
- you can make an exception if
- you may (well) want to
- you might want to consider

Suggested answers – without highlighting

Presentation introductions tips

- You must use a phrase and gesture to get the audience's attention. – You can use a phrase and gesture to get the audience's attention (though you are unlikely to need to).
- It's good to welcome the audience to your presentation or thank them for inviting you. – Providing it matches the situation that you are in, it is usually good to welcome the audience to your presentation or thank them for inviting you.
- You should give your name. – You should almost always give your name, unless everyone already knows it.
- It's a good idea to state your area of work or studies. – It's generally a good idea to state your area of work or studies, as long as they are relevant to your presentation (or possibly if they are very different to the topic of your presentation).
- Mentioning how the audience probably feel is a good way making a personal connection to them. – Mentioning how the audience probably feel is often a good way making a personal connection to them, but there are also other options such as mentioning previous contact.
- Show how topical your subject is to hook your audience. – Showing how topical your subject is is one possible way of hooking your audience. Alternatively, using humour, images and interesting facts and figures are also good.
- You need to have a clear, concrete and achievable aim and to state it in your introduction. – You need to have a clear, concrete and achievable aim, and it might be useful to state it in your introduction.
- Divide your presentation into three parts (plus an introduction and conclusion). – If possible, dividing your presentation into three parts is probably best.
- Don't say anything that your audience already knows. – Try to restrict saying anything your audience already knows to things they need reminding of and things which lead on to new information.
- Questions from the presenter should be rhetorical questions. – The majority of questions from the presenter should be rhetorical questions, but survey questions are another good choice.
- You should invite the audience to ask questions at any time in your presentations. – You should invite the audience to ask questions at any time in the vast majority of your presentations, but you can make an exception if there might be too many interruptions.

Presentation visuals tips

- Don't use ClipArt. – Only use ClipArt if it makes your presentation easy to understand and remember, and looks professional.
- You should only use one font. – You should almost certainly only use one font, apart from maybe headings.
- Use the "appear" function so that bullet points appear one by one. – It is well worth thinking about using the "appear" function so that bullet points appear one by one when they don't need to be seen at the same time.
- Use the same background for all slides. – Use the same background for most or all slides.

Using your voice in presentations tips

- Record yourself doing the presentation. – You could record yourself doing the presentation, although it often makes people more self-conscious and nervous and shouldn't be done too close to the final presentation.
- You should use extreme intonation. – You should use somewhat more extreme intonation than in most other language or speaking situations.
- Marking pauses and stressed words on your presentation notes helps. – Marking pauses and stressed words on a small section of your presentation notes helps some people.

Body language in presentations tips

- You shouldn't stand in one position for the whole presentation. – While you shouldn't stand in one position for the whole presentation, in general it's a good idea to have a "home position" which you spend most of the time at.
- Use many gestures to keep mobile. – Using gestures can be a good way to keep mobile, but it is also possible to have too many gestures.
- Don't turn towards the screen. – Don't turn towards the screen if you are not pointing at it.

Ending presentations tips

- The rule is not to give new information in your summary/ conclusion. – As a general rule, don't give new information in your conclusion which should have been in the body. However, you do need to say something new and/ or say the same thing in a very different way, e.g. a recommendation or a catchier message, to make it worth listening to the summary/ conclusion.
- Describe the person who you are selecting to ask the next question. – You might want to consider describing the person who you are selecting to ask the next question, if you don't know their name and won't say something rude.
- You should end the questions by inviting more questions by email later. – Presenters typically end the questions by inviting more questions by email later, but another option is to invite people to speak to you later.
- Mention the next speaker. – In the right situation, you may well want to mention the next speaker.

Miscellaneous presentation tips

- Don't apologise. – Limit apologising to unexpected situations such as computer problems, losing your place in your notes, or not being able to answer a question that you really should have been able to predict would be asked.
- What you read from should be in note form. Don't write out full sentences. – What you read from should be mainly in note form, though you may want to write the introduction and conclusion out in full sentences.
- You shouldn't correct grammar mistakes while you are speaking. – You should hardly ever correct your own grammar mistakes while you are speaking, but an exception is when the errors could cause confusion about what you mean.
- Don't turn the lights off, because it will make the audience concentrate on the screen rather than you and fall asleep. – Don't turn the lights off if at all possible – it tends to make the audience concentrate on the screen rather than you and perhaps fall asleep.

Suggested answers – with hedging language in **bold**

Presentation introductions tips

- You must use a phrase and gesture to get the audience's attention. – You **can** use a phrase and gesture to get the audience's attention (**though** you are **unlikely** to need to).
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- You should give your name. – You should **almost always** give your name, **unless** everyone already knows it.
- It's a good idea to state your area of work or studies. – It's **generally** a good idea to state your area of work or studies, as long as they are relevant to your presentation (or **possibly** if they are very different to the topic of your presentation).
- Mentioning how the audience probably feel is a good way making a personal connection to the them. – Mentioning how the audience probably feel is often a good way making a personal connection to them, **but there are also other options** such as mentioning previous contact.
- Show how topical your subject is to hook your audience. – Showing how topical your subject is is **one possible** way of hooking your audience. **Alternatively**, using humour, images and interesting facts and figures are also good.
- You need to have a clear, concrete and achievable aim and to state it in your introduction. – You need to have a clear, concrete and achievable aim, and it **might** be useful to state it in your introduction.
- Divide your presentation into three parts (plus an introduction and conclusion). – **If possible**, dividing your presentation into three parts is **probably** best.
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- Questions from the presenter should be rhetorical questions. – **The majority of** questions from the presenter should be rhetorical questions, **but** survey questions **are another good choice**.
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Using your voice in presentations tips

- Record yourself doing the presentation. – You **could** record yourself doing the presentation, **although** it **often** makes people more self-conscious and nervous and shouldn't be done too close to the final presentation.
- You should use extreme intonation. – You should use **somewhat** more extreme intonation than in **most** other language or speaking situations.
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- What you read from should be in note form. Don't write out full sentences. – What you read from should be **mainly** in note form, though **you may want to** write the introduction and conclusion out in full sentences.
- You shouldn't correct grammar mistakes while you are speaking. – You should **hardly ever** correct your own grammar mistakes while you are speaking, **but an exception is** when the errors could cause confusion about what you mean.
- Don't turn the lights off, because it will make the audience concentrate on the screen rather than you and fall asleep. – Don't turn the lights off **if at all possible** – it **tends to** make the audience concentrate on the screen rather than you and **perhaps** fall asleep.