

# Teaching Orientation @ Ohio State: Session Agenda

## Developing Effective Presentation Skills

**Session Coordinator:** .... UCAT Staff, [ucat@osu.edu](mailto:ucat@osu.edu)

**Date:** ..... Autumn

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### Goals

Effective presentation skills foster student learning by establishing clear communication and helping students engage in the learning process. In this session, participants will examine effective presentation techniques related to course content, delivery, and emotional connection to students.

### Objectives:

*By the end of this session, participants will:*

- Recognize that anxiety is normal, be able to discuss how nervousness can affect teaching behavior, and be able to use relaxation techniques to help manage their anxiety
- Be able to list features of effective presentations and explain why they are important
- Be able to explain how planning for presentations involves planning content, delivery, and ways to emotionally connect with students
- Identify one specific teaching behavior related to presentation that they want to focus on for the next semester and establish a preliminary plan for developing or improving that behavior

### Timeline:

_____ - _____	(10 minutes)	Activity 1. Addressing Teaching Anxiety
_____ - _____	(15 minutes)	Activity 2. Identifying features of effective presentations
_____ - _____	(13 minutes)	Activity 3. Planning the content of presentations
_____ - _____	(12 minutes)	Activity 4. Planning the delivery of a presentation
_____ - _____	(10 minutes)	Activity 5. Planning how to connect emotionally with students
_____ - _____	(10 minutes)	Activity 6. Setting goals for developing presentation skills
_____ - _____	( 5 minutes)	Activity 7. Wrap-up & Evaluations

### Facilitator Resources:

“Effective Lectures” ([http://ucat.osu.edu/read/teaching/strategies/strategies\\_lecture.html](http://ucat.osu.edu/read/teaching/strategies/strategies_lecture.html))

### Materials:

Attendance sheet (will be in materials bin in your classroom)

Scrap paper or notecards

A set of 3x5 index cards printed with movement suggestions (*in materials bin*)

Presentation Planning Worksheet (handout, overhead transparency, & flash drive)

Presentation Skills Self-Assessment (handout & longer version on flash drive)

Additional Resources on Developing Effective Presentation Skills (flash drive)

Dealing with Teaching Anxiety (flash drive)

Using Humor in the Classroom (flash drive)

Using PowerPoint Slides in Teaching (flash drive)

DVDs: Critical Incidents I-VI (2005) by the University of Victoria (will be in your classroom):

*Boring!* (3:42), on Disc 1, Section I “Instructional Resources”

### Other Details:

Time & room number for first session: \_\_\_\_\_; for second session: \_\_\_\_\_



Effective presentations can enhance learning, fostering clarity and student engagement, but as anyone who has ever sat through an ill-executed presentation can attest, ineffective presentations can be detrimental to learning. Being a good presenter does not come naturally to most people, but we can become effective presenters by practicing, working on improving one or two skills at a time. In this session, participants will identify elements of effective presentations and develop strategies for mastering those skills themselves.

## **Activities**

### **Activity #1: Addressing Teaching Anxiety (10 minutes)**

*NB: In the past, participants have consistently given feedback that talking about managing anxiety is one of the aspects of this workshop that they find most helpful.*

- Ask how many of the participants are feeling nervous about teaching. Point out that “stage fright” is very normal, even among seasoned presenters, and that being nervous about teaching is also very common. If you get nervous prior to teaching, tell your participants. Reassure them that it is possible to move past their nerves. Point out that for those who aren’t feeling anxious, some of the techniques that you will be talking about can STILL help them to be more confident, effective teachers.
- You might consider using the following metaphor (*or use your own*). Think about brand new drivers. Would you rather share the road with an over-confident new driver who thinks he can do no wrong, or with a teenager who’s a little bit nervous? Which driver is more likely to make safe decisions and to realize that learning to drive will require a lot of concentration to begin with? Just like sitting behind the wheel of a car, being entrusted with a class to teach gives you a lot of responsibility. It’s good to think carefully about how to wield that responsibility. Being nervous can help lead you to make better choices. (Though of course, as with new drivers, being *too* nervous can get in the way, so there’s a healthy balance.)
- Remind participants: Your department gave you this job because they are confident that you are qualified. Relative to your students, you are an expert in your field. If you remind yourself of this fact regularly, it can go a long way toward making you feel positive about your teaching!
- Share techniques you and others have used to prepare yourself mentally before class, for example
  - the importance of planning, how the process of planning can reduce anxiety
  - practicing lesson plans out loud the day before
  - being prepared for class: arriving early to get materials ready
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- If teaching anxiety is a real concern that is keeping them from being successful as a teacher or graduate student or in some other area of their lives, there are resources available at the Counseling and Consultation Services. (<http://ccs.osu.edu/>; phone 292-5766; email [ccs@studentlife.osu.edu](mailto:ccs@studentlife.osu.edu)).

**Choose ONE of the following activities.**

Which one you choose may depend on what time of day it is and whether you need to energize or relax your participants.

**A. Progressive muscle relaxation.** Have participants start by sitting comfortably in their chairs. Lead them through tensing and then relaxing the muscles in their toes, then in their ankles, their calves, and so on, progressively working their way up to their neck and face. Have them tense muscles in each area as tightly as possible for five seconds and concentrate on what it feels like, then relax and focus on how it feels to let the tension flow away for 5- 10 seconds. This activity helps demonstrate how tense muscles feel different from relaxed muscles. As you become more aware of what this difference feels like, you will be better able to catch when your muscles start to tense up and to relax them.

**B. Shake out.** Have participants stand up, feet 12 inches apart, arms at sides, fingers unclenched. Have them shake each part of their body (shaking out the tension), moving from bottom. They should shake each part vigorously until it hangs limply. When you get to your shoulders and neck, though, roll your shoulders and roll your head. (Don't shake your head vigorously!)

**C. Deep breathing.** Explain to participants that when you take deep breaths instead of shallow breaths, it slows your heart rate and reduces blood pressure. It also helps your voice become fuller and more audible, so breathing exercises can take care of more than just nerves. Instruct participants to sit comfortably with their backs straight and feet flat on the floor. Put one hand on the chest and the other on the stomach. Have them breathe in through their nose. The hand on their stomach should rise, but the hand on their chest should move very little. Then, they should exhale through their mouth, pushing out the air.

**D. Visualization (a.k.a. "go to the beach")** Have participants relax in their chairs and close their eyes. Guide them in a visual journey to a peaceful place: have them choose whatever setting is calming to them: this could be a forest, a beach or someplace peaceful from their childhood. Instruct them to imagine this place as vividly as they can. Ask them to think about what they see, what they hear, whether it is hot or cold, what they smell, what they can feel. After each question, give them time to experience the sensations of these feelings.

*Which activity will you do?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Activity #2. Identifying Features of Effective Presentations  
(15 minutes)**

Before thinking about the planning that goes into a presentation, it is useful to identify the features of good (and bad) presentations.

- Show video 'Boring!' Ask participants as they watch to make a list of the things this instructor does well, and list of what the instructor could improve. Distribute scrap paper if people need it.
- As a whole group, have participants report the features of the instructor's lecture that they noted. Record these on the board, locating each feature in one of three columns, representing

the categories **content**, **delivery**, and **emotional connection**. You can either label columns right away and ask participants to tell you which column they think a characteristic belongs in, or wait and have participants figure out the labels after you have generated lists under each category.

- Ask for participants to add to the list any other behaviors that they have observed in an effective presentation, e.g. from their teachers, or good conference speakers. As participants tell stories about things they've seen presenters do well or poorly, help guide them to identify the relevant features/characteristics of that presenter. Ask about characteristics they don't come up with in order to further the conversation.
- If you did not do so at the beginning, fill in the titles of each column. See if the participants can figure out the titles. The three categories represent three distinct ways of engaging students. Check whether the categories make sense to participants.
- No presenter will do all of the individual things listed on the board all of the time. The point is that an effective presenter identifies a set of strategies that works to achieve the goals and objectives of the presentation and that includes all three categories. It helps to prioritize your needs as a presenter and work on specific aspects of presentation.

□ Here is an example of the kinds of features that could appear your table.

<b>Emotional Connection</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Makes eye contact</li> <li>▪ Formality/informality of language</li> <li>▪ Enthusiasm</li> <li>▪ Appropriate emotions for the subject matter</li> <li>▪ Tone: upbeat/positive</li> <li>▪ Validating students' responses to material</li> <li>▪ Cares about students</li> <li>▪ Relates subject matter to the students in personalized ways</li> <li>▪ Use of humor that resonates with students (<i>Point out, though, that a teacher need not be an entertainer!</i>)</li> <li>▪ If humor is used, it relates clearly to the content and is not offensive.</li> <li>▪ Use of personal anecdotes &amp; stories</li> </ul> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Knowledge of subject matter</li> <li>▪ Organization of material</li> <li>▪ Appropriate level of detail</li> <li>▪ Neither too vague nor too general</li> <li>▪ Doesn't overwhelm with too many specifics</li> <li>▪ Breaks up material into manageable chunks</li> <li>▪ Includes activities to break up presentation</li> <li>▪ Leaves time for questions &amp; answers questions well</li> <li>▪ Provides study guides and lecture notes</li> <li>▪ Visual aids supplement content</li> <li>▪ Visual aids are clear and easy to see/read (big enough text size, in focus, dark enough)</li> <li>▪ Assignments in preparation for lectures</li> </ul> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Speaks loudly enough</li> <li>▪ Speaks clearly and is easy to understand</li> <li>▪ Doesn't speak too quickly or slowly</li> <li>▪ Uses inflection (not monotone)</li> <li>▪ No distracting gestures or mannerisms</li> <li>▪ Moves around the room appropriately; Doesn't hide behind podium</li> <li>▪ Doesn't block views of the board or screen</li> <li>▪ Doesn't read directly from notes</li> <li>▪ Instructor's appearance/ dress (looks professional/ looks casual/ looks approachable, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Clear board management (e.g., writing in an organized way, erasing material only after students have had a chance to write it down)</li> </ul> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

### Activity #3. Planning the Content of Presentations (13 minutes)

Distribute the **Presentation Planning Worksheet**. Have participants work through each of the five steps in planning the content of a presentation, using one of the following topics. You may also select a topic not on this list, as long as it is general enough that all participants will be able to relate to it. As you discuss each question, you can write participant suggestions for each onto the corresponding overhead transparency.

Example topics:

Taking an international flight. Present for an audience of students planning on traveling internationally. What would they need to know? What would they need to do prior to the flight? What would they need to do the day of the flight? What tips or advice can you give, based on your experiences or others' experiences flying internationally?

Applying to graduate school. Presentation for an audience of advanced undergraduate students planning to apply to graduate school programs. What do they need to know? What should they do to prepare for applying to graduate schools? What tips or advice can you give, based on your experiences or others' experiences applying to graduate schools?

Returning to college after being out of school for a while. Presentation for an audience of people who may have dropped out of college and are planning to go back, or people who completed an undergraduate degree and worked for more than a couple of years and now are planning to return for a graduate degree. What do they need to know? What should they do to prepare to return to college? What tips or advice can you give them?

*Which topic will you use?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Considerations for each of the 5 questions on the handout:

**Question 1:** What do you want your students to be able to do with what they learn from the class session? Will you want them to be able to identify some things? Be able to recognize some things? Be able to demonstrate some things? Note that learning objectives should be written in an observable and measurable way.

**Question 2:** What misconceptions might some of your students bring to the class session? What accurate knowledge might they bring that you can build on? Students are never "blank slates." They may bring some accurate knowledge about a subject to class, or they may have misconceptions about it. For the ONE misconception mentioned, ask participants why it would be important for the instructor to be aware of this potential misconception, and use this example to underscore why thinking about misconceptions is important.

**Question 3:** What activity or activities might you use during the lecture to assess your students' learning and/or help students process what they are learning? Remind participants that attention span

generally begins to decrease after 15 minutes. This is as much educational opportunity as obstacle to learning, because it allows for including a brief activity to assess whether students are learning the lecture content so far and/or to help students process that learning.

**Question 4:** What written or graphic aids (such as notes written on the board, PowerPoint or other slides, lecture notes, handouts) would be appropriate to use during the lecture?

**Question 5:** What is your agenda for the lecture? What are your major points? In what order will you discuss them? And about how much time can you devote to each one? This part is time-consuming, but all presenters do it, even if in their heads. Those new to lecturing should spend time writing their lecture agendas down on paper. Note that getting the timing right takes practice. It is good to have more prepared in case you find yourself with extra time on your hands.

#### **Activity #4. Planning the Delivery of Presentations (12 minutes)**

Tell participants that while delivery subsumes many different aspects of presentation, you will be focusing on just two: use of voice, and use of physical space in the classroom.

##### **Voice**

- Discuss why voice, including clarity, volume, inflection, pitch, and rate are all important aspects for effective communication. You can refer back to the *Boring!* video to demonstrate their importance.
- Show participants how we use these factors differently when speaking to somebody close by versus to an audience. To do this, use your normal conversational speaking voice to say something (e.g., what you had for lunch) to a participant sitting in a corner of the room nearest you.
- Then, in your presentation voice, ask for a show of hands of who heard and understood what you said clearly.
- Explain that when we yell, our ability to articulate and control our pitch and intonation decreases. So we have to learn to increase our volume in other ways. Thus, learning to speak to a group is something that people have to practice; it is not the same as yelling. Remind participants that breathing is one of the best ways to control pitch and volume. Breathing deeply at regular intervals during a presentation will help them to have better control over their voices. As an added bonus, it will also necessarily help them to control their pacing, because they will have to pause to breathe.
- Point out that while it is important to develop voice control, it is not necessary, nor necessarily desirable, to maintain the same vocal quality throughout a presentation. The voice can change the way it would in a conversation with one person – it is just that you are having a conversation with several people. You can use your voice to communicate emphasis, what is most/least important, what is most exciting, and so on. If you have time, you may want to demonstrate how this works.



- Point out that practicing lectures OUT LOUD ahead of time will allow them to practice voice control.

### **Use of Space & Movement**

- Ask for 4 volunteers or choose 4 participants, and give each one of the 3x5 cards. (*You might consider selecting these volunteers before the session begins, handing the cards to participants as they come in to the room.*)
- Tell the participants: “Each of these four people is going to introduce themselves to you. Each is going to tell you their name, where they were born, and what department they are in.”
- Have each volunteer follow the instructions on his/her card by delivering an introduction with the appropriate movement suggestion. After each has followed their instructions, they should remain in their location.
- Ask participants to discuss the effectiveness of each of the presenters' movement behaviors, and what messages that the movements send. If the movements are not effective, are there any circumstances under which they might be effective? How might you change what each presenter did to make it more effective?
- Offer other techniques you have tried (or observed other teachers using) in the classroom. Remind participants that they should do what is comfortable for them, without hiding behind the furniture and without too many distracting movements.
- Point out to participants that they can plan where they will stand at different parts during a class. While it is a bit artificial to plan gestures, they definitely can plan when they will sit/stand/use the podium/point to particular visual aids, etc. This way, they can ensure that they will be able to connect with people in different parts of the room, make effective use of visual aids, and so on.

### **Activity #5. Planning How to Connect Emotionally with Students (10 minutes)**

Research has shown that learning can be enhanced when students feel that their instructors care about their learning. These emotional connections enhance student engagement and motivation in learning the subject matter. They can also help with the teaching of the subject matter. As one former Orientation facilitator said, “If your students know you care for them, they will forgive you for anything. You can make mistakes. They will forgive you.”

- Discuss the following strategies for developing an emotional connection with students. Point out that it is possible to do these things while still maintaining professional distance from your students, and that how teachers do this will vary by personality type. Share your own strategies for connecting with your students, or ask participants what their teachers did to connect with them. Point out to participants that this is not about entertaining students.

- Create an inviting, comfortable learning environment
- Create a sense of community in class that includes instructor and students
- Show caring for student learning
- Show caring for students as individuals
- Provide encouragement and respect
- Demonstrate an enthusiasm for subject matter and for teaching
- Be prepared for class

Decide how you will introduce these points to maximum effect given the limited time—what will you focus on and how will you introduce these ideas to participants?

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**Activity #6. Setting Personal Goals for Developing Presentation Skills  
(10 minutes)**

Distribute the **Presentation Skills Self Assessment** handout. The handout consists of the first two pages of the **Presentation Skills Self-Assessment** document.

In the process of becoming a better presenter, it is not possible to work on everything all at once. Rather, it is more effective to try to make incremental changes by focusing on just one or two skills or presentation behaviors at a time.

- Have participants fill in as much of the first page as they feel they can. In order to demonstrate the diversity of behaviors that participants might choose to work on, provide some examples, e.g.,
  - I will try to keep my hands out of my pockets while I lecture
  - I will work on speaking at a moderate rate without speeding up too much.
  - I will work on reading aloud everything that I write on the board.
  - I will try to incorporate group work and class activities into my presentations.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- After a few minutes, if you choose and if you have time, have participants share their responses with a partner. Ask for a show of hands: who chose to work on an aspect of content, who chose to work on an aspect of delivery, and who chose to work on developing an emotional connection?

- Alternatively, you can discuss one behavior as a whole group and work through the first page together.
- Whichever method you choose, when you are done, show participants the full document on the flash drive, and quickly give an overview of the subsequent worksheets, how they are structured, and how participants might use them to assess their progress during the semester.

**Activity #7. Wrap-Up & Evaluations  
(5 minutes)**

- Address any remaining concerns; check whether there are any final questions from the participants.
- Distribute evaluation forms to the participants and explain how they will be collected.
- Double check that everyone has signed the attendance sheet.

**For facilitators to do after the session:**

Bring your attendance sheet and evaluation forms to UCAT headquarters. Make sure that you turn your materials in and check out with a UCAT staff member.