



**STUDENT  
DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE**

+

**SKILLS  
EMPLOYABILITY**

# SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

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# SPEAKING SKILLS



# WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

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1. Understand the variety of academic contexts in which speaking skills are useful
2. Build confidence in speaking, managing shyness and learning how to work with your fears and strengths
3. Develop skills in listening to and engaging with your peers



# WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

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- Why do social scientists need speaking skills?
- Engaging with and contributing to discussions
- Preparing for a presentation
- Delivering a presentation
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Further resources and support

# WHY DO SOCIAL SCIENTISTS NEED SPEAKING SKILLS?

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- Speaking skills allow us to:
  - Engage with our peers through discussion of readings, thoughts, and ideas
  - Deepen our thinking on a topic and strengthen our arguments by putting forward our own ideas and opinions
  - Work together with other people in our field who share our interests to exchange ideas and advance knowledge
  - Create an active and lively space for learning and thinking, where knowledge can be developed and ideas can be tested and refined

# DEVELOPING YOUR SPEAKING SKILLS

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- Over the course of your degree, you will have the chance to develop your speaking skills:
  - In tutorials and seminars
  - Through public speaking and presentations
  - By working together on collaborative projects
  - By conducting original social science research



# SPEAKING IN TUTORIALS

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- It's your opportunity to ask questions, especially about any parts of the reading you didn't understand or concepts that weren't clear
- You can present and refine your own thoughts and opinions, and help your peers to develop theirs
- You get out of a tutorial what you put into it. If you don't contribute, you miss a valuable opportunity to deepen your understanding of a topic.
- A discussion is a group effort. When more people contribute, the discussion is richer and has greater breadth and depth.
- Participation can be graded – check your course handbook!

# TIPS FOR SPEAKING IN TUTORIALS

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- Be prepared – reflect on both the readings and the lecture in advance and arrive with comments and questions in mind.
- Participation is a skill that improves with practice. If you're nervous, set yourself small goals so you can build your confidence over time (e.g. challenge yourself to ask at least one question per tutorial).
- Participation isn't just about speaking, it's also about *actively listening* to what your classmates and tutor are saying. Don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions or present counter-arguments – this is what makes for interesting and productive discussion!

# PREPARING FOR PRESENTATIONS: WHAT ARE THEY FOR?

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- Discussing a specific topic in an allocated amount of time
- Putting forward an argument or idea with clarity
- Identifying and summarising the key points and evidence that supports your argument
- Engaging with wider audiences to seek feedback and review



# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A PRESENTATION

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- Define your title and topic (make sure you're not trying to cover too much in the time allocated)
- Do your research – identify the key themes and supporting evidence your presentation will need to cover
- Create a presentation plan
- Prepare visual and written aids e.g. a slideshow, notes to guide speaking
- **Practice, practice, practice!**
- Put some contingency plans in place
  - Think about what you can do if you lose your place, the computer crashes, you run out of time etc.
  - Back up/make copies of your notes and slides in case of technological problems

# SOLO & GROUP PRESENTATIONS

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- **Solo presentations**
  - Each person presents individually
  - Means you are responsible for every aspect of preparing and delivering the presentation
  - Are often shorter and require a less in-depth discussion
- **Group presentations**
  - Two or more people work together to prepare and deliver a presentation
  - Are often longer and can go into more depth than a solo presentation
  - Preparation and delivery should be divided equally between group members – discuss in advance what needs to be done and how this can be most fairly and effectively divided
  - Communication is key – check in with each other regularly, ask each other for feedback and help and practice delivering the presentation as a group at least once. This is a good opportunity to develop your skills working in a team!

# STRUCTURING YOUR PRESENTATION

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- Presentations are structured very similarly to a written assignment, with just a few minor differences:
  - Introduction – introduce yourself and your topic, briefly outline what you will be discussing
  - Main body – present the key points and supporting evidence you have chosen to support your argument. (Tip: make sure you aren't trying to say too much in the time allocated)
  - Conclusion – summarise the key message that you want your audience to take away
- Thank the audience and invite questions – if you want to ask your audience for any particular advice or feedback, this is a great opportunity to do so.

# Presentation planner

<b>Title:</b>	
Date:	Time:
Audience:	
Location/venue:	

<p><b>Objective(s) and key point(s)</b></p> <p>Introduction/beginning:</p> <p>Middle:</p> <p>End/conclusion/discussion:</p>
Resources and equipment:

<b>Feedback and reflection:</b>
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Timing	Plan
[Start]	
[Finish]	
[Question(s)]	
[Extra slide(s)]	

# PRESENTATION PLANNER

[http://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/iad/Student\\_resources/Presentations/IAD\\_Presentation\\_planner\\_sheet\\_C\\_C\\_2019.pdf](http://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/iad/Student_resources/Presentations/IAD_Presentation_planner_sheet_C_C_2019.pdf)

# CREATING SLIDES

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- A slideshow should **add value** to your presentation – but remember it isn't the whole presentation! Check your course handbook to see whether a slideshow is required.
- In an effective slideshow, each slide should:
  - Make a clear point – don't try to say too much at once
  - Help your audience to understand what you are saying – for example, through use of visuals or by summarising the key points
  - Fit into the structure of the presentation by building on the point made before and leading into the next point to be discussed
  - Not distract the audience – avoid using too much text or imagery so they can focus on listening to you



# DESIGNING SLIDES 101

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- **Using colour**
  - Be consistent with backgrounds and colour schemes
  - Avoid using red or green for text or highlighting – it can be difficult to read
- **Using text**
  - Use bullet points rather than paragraphs – keep text short
  - Be consistent with fonts, font sizes and text alignment
  - Use **bold** for a clear and simple form of emphasis and headings
- **Using media**
  - Use images, video or audio clips to illustrate your point
  - Check media quality - high-resolution is necessary to prevent blurriness
  - Beware of embedding too many large media files – can cause slideshows to crash

# 'GOOD' OR 'BAD' SLIDES - WHAT DO YOU THINK?



[https://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2005/11/it\\_was\\_one\\_of\\_t.html](https://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2005/11/it_was_one_of_t.html)



<https://appleapple.top/the-main-function-of-the-iphone-which-is-not-said-to-steve-jobs-on-first-presentation/>

# DELIVERING A STRONG PRESENTATION



# DELIVERING A PRESENTATION

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- **Before you present:**
  - Practice out loud
  - Watch talks online (e.g. TED Talks) and try to model your delivery and body language on some favourites
  - Arrive early so you're not rushing and have time to set up
- **When you start your presentation:**
  - Breathe deeply and speak slowly
  - Make eye contact with your audience and smile
  - Don't rush to start until you are sure you have everyone's attention
- **While you are presenting:**
  - Have a drink nearby – nerves can make your throat dry
  - Don't hide behind the desk or your notes – try to move around a little e.g. when referring to your slides
  - If you lose your place or experience a technical difficulty, just apologise and take a moment – it's not a big deal
  - **Remember that everyone is rooting for you!**



# ENGAGING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

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- When giving a presentation, you want to speak **to** the audience, **not at** the audience
  - Make eye contact
  - Smile
  - Interact with them - ask them questions (rhetorical or actual) and invite comments or feedback
  - Give them a practical demonstration
  - Pass around an item or object



# TIMING YOUR TALK

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- Running over time is a lot more common than running under time
- Average speaking rate is approx. 100-200 words per minute – be concise
- It is better to say one or two points clearly than to try and cram too much information in
- **Practice, practice, practice!**
- If you end up running out of time...
  - Identify in advance any sections in the second half of your presentation that you could skip over if necessary
  - If you do end up skipping sections, tell your audience what you're doing and let them know you're happy to answer questions about the skipped material in the Q&A

# EXERCISE

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- Get into pairs and prepare and deliver a **60-second talk** to your partner about how you came to be studying your course at Edinburgh.
  - You have **2 minutes** to plan your speech
  - Go!
- Provide constructive feedback for your partner

# RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

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- When you practice your talk, try to think of any questions that the audience may want to ask so you can prepare and practice any answers
- If there are particular points you'd like feedback or input on – ask!
- Pay attention to whether you are receiving a question or a comment, as these require different types of responses.
- If you don't understand someone's question or comment, it's OK to ask them to rephrase or clarify it
- If you don't know the answer to a question, it's OK to say so
- Always thank people for their questions and comments
- Use feedback from graded presentations to identify areas you can improve

# FEEDBACK

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- Questions and feedback are a vital part of academic presentations. They enable:
  - The presenter to refine their ideas and improve their communication skills
  - The audience to deepen their understanding of the topic
  - The presenter and the audience to work together to think about new ways of approaching a topic and the broader issues and questions
- When watching a presentation
  - Write down questions as you think of them
  - Ask for clarifications on things that weren't clear to you or that you'd like further information about
  - Be constructive in your feedback

# PROVIDING FEEDBACK

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Constructive Criticism	Destructive Criticism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intends to educate</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intends to embarrass</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Related to the work</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feels like a personal attack</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helps build on an idea</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tears down an idea</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Makes the outcome better</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Makes the person feel worse</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is intelligent and calculated</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Includes rapid-fire and random responses</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comes along to help</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tries to take over</li></ul>



# SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

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Remember to sign up for our other skills sessions!

