

---

## The goal of the presentation

It should go without saying that you know why you are presenting in the first place. Which goal are you pursuing in your presentation? Possible goals can be divided into three areas:

Cognitive goals: teaching knowledge and promoting understanding

Affective goals: teaching values and attitudes

Psychomotoric goals: teaching skills



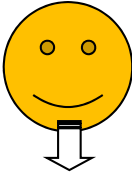
To make sure your listeners don't go home thinking merely that 'it was nice', make sure you are very aware of the goal your presentation should achieve. Here are some ideas:

- An appeal
  - The listener should take action or buy something, for example in the case of a sales pitch or promotional event. "Just do it!"
- Moral
  - The listener should discern a moral. "Careful when you dig someone else's grave because you might fall in yourself."
- Stimulate contemplation
  - The listener should do some deep thinking, take a moment to see something from another side. "Is our society going down the right path?"
- Convey information
  - The listener should have more information at his disposal after the presentation than before. "The Berlin Wall was built starting 13 August 1961."
- Entertainment
  - The listener should be entertained and distracted from his daily cares. "Let me tell you a story."

## Chapter 3 – From Greeting to Closing Remarks

### Should you put your presentation in a frame?

How do you like the idea of setting your presentation within a framing story? Let's say the title is: 'Marilyn Monroe'. A frame could take three original forms:

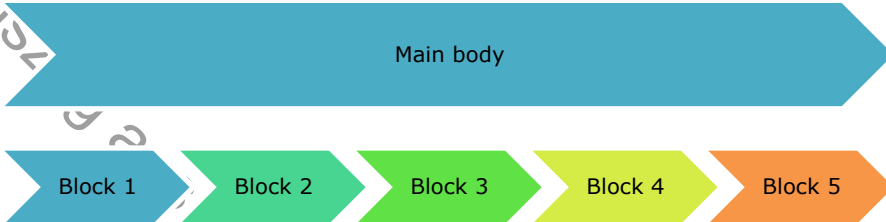
<p>A: (about - the person)</p>  <p>You talk about Marilyn Monroe. You speak of her in the third person: "When <u>she</u> met Kennedy, <u>her</u> heart was in her throat."</p>	<p>C: (around - the person)</p>  <p>"Marilyn set off for her appearance at Kennedy's birthday party. In just a few minutes, she would be standing in front of the most powerful man in the USA. And then she saw him ..."</p> <p>Now change your physical standpoint (the place you are standing) and your mental standpoint (the person you are representing). Continue in the first person: "When <u>I</u> met Kennedy, <u>my</u> heart was in my throat."</p> <p>At the end of your portrayal, change your standpoint again and continue with your presentation: 'It must have been one of the most exciting moments in Marilyn Monroe's life.'</p>
<p>B: (in - the person)</p>  <p>You take the role of Marilyn Monroe and speak in the first person: "When <u>I</u> met Kennedy, <u>my</u> heart was in my throat."</p>	

A presentation in the first person conveys a course of events in a more tangible, vivid way. The listener can follow what is being related more easily and with greater attentiveness. A small side effect: in the first person, there is less need to use the distancing pronoun 'one'.

---

## The Main Body – The Security of Structure

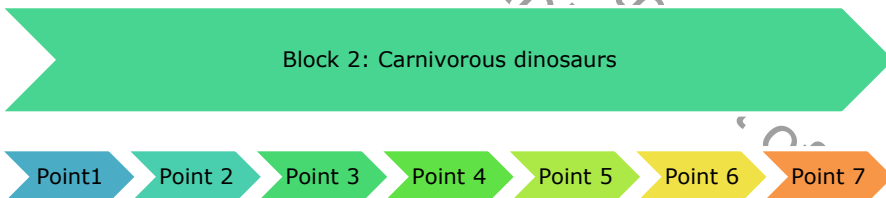
Just as if he were taking in a survey, the experienced presenter structures the main body of his presentation carefully. The main body consists of several blocks set one after the other.



Each block corresponds to a logical unit. This means that the points to be treated in that block are related logically.

- Block 1) General information on dinosaurs
- Block 2) Carnivorous dinosaurs
- Block 3) Herbivorous dinosaurs
- Block 4) Omnivorous dinosaurs
- Block 5) The end of the dinosaurs

Arranging these blocks in the right, logically progressing, order is called macro planning. Within each block the information is once again structured so that each point follows logically from the previous one.



- Point 1: Carnivorous dinosaurs
- Point 2: Four-legged carnivorous dinosaurs
- Point 3: Two-legged carnivorous dinosaurs
- Point 4: Flying carnivorous dinosaurs
- Point 5: Swimming carnivorous dinosaurs
- Point 6: Other carnivorous dinosaurs
- Point 7: Summary

The order of the points within a block is called micro planning.

## Chapter 3 – From Greeting to Closing Remarks

---

Paying close attention to micro- and macro-planning makes your presentation easier for listeners to follow and the structure more readily comprehensible. At the same time, suspense is built up – the listener stays curious and can keep his mind on the subject.

Incidentally: Some trainers think that the main body should account for about 80 to 90% of the presentation (with the introduction and conclusion making up 5 to 10 percent respectively).

### ***Building suspense***

The right structure helps listeners to pay attention. Curiosity and the questions each participant is asking in his head, such as: 'I wonder what's coming now', build up noticeable suspense.

Further suspense can be created when the topic is given a skilful psychological spin. We already saw in the chapter on 'Title' that a title with a question mark leaves the outcome of the talk open. In other words: up until just before the end of the presentation, the listener doesn't necessarily know what conclusion will be reached.

### ***Seven is the magic number***

Despite the boundless enthusiasm of the lecturer to impart as much information as possible to his hapless participants, he should nonetheless keep in mind their limited capacity to take it all in at once. Short-term memory can usually process only five to nine new bits of information on the same material. The average of five to nine is seven. This is why no more than seven points should be made in the micro planning (see above). The same goes for macro planning: no more than seven macro-blocks.

With the right sub-structure, the 'seven' points can be supplemented (see our example of a presentation on dinosaurs above).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Block 1<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Point 1</li><li>○ Point 2</li><li>○ Point 3<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Sub-point 3.1</li><li>▪ Sub-point 3.2</li><li>▪ Sub-point 3.3</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>▪ Point 4</li><li>▪ Point 5</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Block 2<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Point 1</li><li>○ Point 2<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Sub-point 2.1</li><li>▪ Sub-point 2.2</li></ul></li><li>▪ Point 3</li><li>▪ Point 4<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Sub-point 4.1</li><li>▪ Sub-point 4.2</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul> |
|---|--|

---

## **Numbering**

People who take a rational approach to their work have an easy time orienting themselves around a numbered structure (first, second, third, ...). Be careful that you don't mention in your introduction that the "following five topics" will be addressed, and then proceed to list four or even six or more points. The listener will probably be irritated ("Didn't he skip something?" or "I thought that was already the end!").

## **The structure of the main body**

Evidently, structure has a way of giving us a feeling of security. We have something to 'hold onto'. This goes for both speaker and listeners. So take advantage of this effect: structure not only your complete presentation, but especially the main body! Incidentally: A logical outline as structure aims at a comprehensible sequence of arguments. And psychological structure appeals to listeners' emotions.

### **How to proceed through the main body?**

Here are some options for how to proceed:

- From detail to big picture
- From big picture to details
- From the general to the specific
- Objectives - planning - execution
- Cause - effect - solution
- Target/performance comparison
- Problem (challenge) - cause - possible solutions

Consider the following possible structures.

### **Time axis**

The time axis is frequently used in the main body of speeches, lectures and presentations.

- Yesterday - today - tomorrow
- Past - present - future
- Grandfather - father - son (in IT data backup)

A tripartite division is already congenial to our way of organizing our thoughts. And it is easy for many to follow when the main body begins with: "In the old days ..." followed by a description of the original thought, the beginning, the vision, the founding, the objectives or something similar. For many listeners, this answers the question of 'Why?', 'Where did it all start?', or 'How come?'. Then the speaker

## Chapter 3 – From Greeting to Closing Remarks

---

changes to the present: "Today, the situation is more like this ..." and describes the actual state of affairs. The listener now understands under which aspect the current status should be viewed. And finally comes the third component, namely tomorrow: "How does the future look ...?" The target situation is described. It is now clear to the listeners 'what', 'how' or 'when' something should happen.

### **Line of reasoning**

Here, you work with five blocks:

1. Key idea
  - o Present a key idea.
2. Explanation
  - o Discuss or explain your key idea.
3. Example
  - o Give at least one example for your key idea. The examples should be convincing and optimally chosen to fit the needs of your target group.
4. Conclusion
  - o Derive your conclusions from the examples cited.
5. Proof
  - o Prove through your conclusion that your key idea is right.

### **Thesis & Co.**

Make an allegation: posit a 'thesis', and explain how you arrived at it. In the second block, present the corresponding counter-argument (– anti-thesis. Elucidate this anti-thesis in detail. Thesis and anti-thesis then culminate in the synthesis (bringing together or summarizing individual parts to make a [new] whole, in which a contradictory thesis and anti-thesis form a higher unit). Present your conclusion.

Incidentally: Out of two syntheses you can once again derive a thesis and anti-thesis. And start up a new round of argument.

### **Pros & Cons**

Split your main body into two parts: 'Pros' and 'Cons'. First, explain all the 'Pros' and then all the 'Cons'. Decide at the end of your presentation for either the 'Pro' or 'Con' side or leave the decision up to your listeners. (Each can for example decide on his own, or you can take a vote.)

Tip: If you want listeners to decide in favour of 'Pro' rather than 'Con', you should list the 'Pros' as the second part of your main body. The reason: what a listener hears last remains in his memory longer.

---

## **Advantages and disadvantages**

Proceed here just like for Pros & Cons (see above). List all the advantages and then the disadvantages. Here as well, the second variant should be the one you favour.

## **Length of time**

In your planning, you should establish a certain length of time for your presentation. Or your client will indicate a specified time frame. For example:

Length of time	Type	where to find
1 min	Presentation of oneself	for example in an Assessment Centre, when the candidate is asked to present himself
2 min	Interview	for example on television
4 min	Persuasive speech	for example, a sales pitch, or interviewing for a job
10 min	Dinner speech	the 'official' protocol dictates how long the speech should be
20 min	Speech	the time will possibly be specified by a client
45 min	Presentation, lecture	for example, specified by a customer or client
> ½ day	Seminar, presentation	for example, specified by a customer or client

Even if you practice your presentation at home beforehand and make sure you stay within the time frame, in practice things often turn out as follows:

- The speaker before you exceeds his time slot, so that you have less time for your talk.
- Your nervousness makes you talk much faster than planned. You are 'finished' too early.
- You 'forget' a point and finish before your time is up.
- You get bogged down in details and perhaps have to stop talking before you've reached the conclusion.
- You encounter technical difficulties with the equipment.

In all these cases, you can no longer stick to your carefully planned schedule. This is why it's a good idea in the case of:

In all these cases, you can no longer stick to your carefully planned schedule. This is why it's a good idea in the case of:

- a) too much time
  - to have an extra block in reserve, or

## Chapter 3 – From Greeting to Closing Remarks

---

- b) too little time
  - to include a buffer block that can be omitted if needed.
- If a) you are through before the allotted time is up, your listeners or client might have the feeling that they are not getting their money's worth. To make sure they don't get this impression, add in a reserve block. This reserve block can be used to expand on the theme or provide further examples. Or the reserve block could supplement the theme. But beware: the theme must still be completely coherent without the reserve block! The listener should not notice that you have added in something extra.
- If b) you run out of time, the buffer block is an element of the talk that can be omitted without affecting the cogency of your argument. The theme is complete without the buffer block. The buffer block therefore must not contain any fundamental information that would be required for a full understanding of the subject. Leaving out the buffer block should not detract from the learning effect in any way. The listener should not notice that a part has been omitted.

No matter which block you use, your presentation should always seem comprehensive and complete to your listeners. They should not have the impression that you are keeping something from them, nor that they are being 'burdened' with irrelevant material.

### Active Phases and Learning Units

The human brain can only digest and understand so much data at the same time. If the brain comes 'under fire' from too much information all at once, this 'sensory overload' may cause the listener to switch off. Therefore, people's attention spans are necessarily limited.

After at the latest 20 minutes (!), attentiveness drops to a minimum. This means for you as presenter that longer talks have to contain plenty of variety to hold your viewers' interest. Variety can be brought in through:

- Interaction with the audience
  - asking direct questions
  - asking audience members to do something
  - handing out material to look at
- taking a vote on something
- discussion (for example, following role play)
- active units
- role play



- 
- group work
    - having listeners make something (for example, a collage)
    - having participants present something (for example, the results of their group work)
  - brainstorming
  - creative interruptions
    - brief exercises for muscle relaxation
    - all participants change seats

Learning units should last a maximum of 45 minutes. At the latest after one hour and 15 minutes, you must give your listeners a break or a change of pace. Otherwise, you risk having them demand a break on their own initiative.

Right after lunch, attention tends to flag because the body is at work digesting. This is when you should definitely insert an active break. Overall, active phases should alternate with passive ones (lectures, monologues, explanations, etc.) during the entire course of the seminar.

If, at the end of the seminar, you hear participants say: "... What? It's already over? I didn't even notice the time passing!" then you can assume that you were able to convey your theme in an exciting way, not least thanks to your careful time planning.

We mentioned the necessity for breaks above. These should be integrated sensibly into the presentation. Not every client likes to hear that breaks are planned (how often? too many? too long?). On the other hand, breaks sometimes open the way for new and interesting aspects to come to light that can be very welcome in helping to convey the topic. The participants can move around during the break, freeing them from the structure imposed by the seating order.

More reserved participants, who did not speak up in group situations in the seminar room, are more likely to open up in this more casual break situation.

Some lecturers therefore deliberately use a break or two to delve further into their themes. Of course, this is only possible with groups up to a certain size (16 people at the most). Please don't forget that participants also have other needs to attend to in the breaks. For example:

- washing their hands
- eating or drinking something
- making phone calls
- smoking
- stretching their legs
- and so on ...
- getting some fresh air

And finally: Even the most energetic lecturer also needs to take a short break from time to time.