

EAP Foundation: Academic Presentations

EAP Foundation: Academic Presentations
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Other data in *Appendix 4* are from various open source data sets (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, The World Bank, WHO, CIA The World Factbook). Acknowledgements are given alongside the data.

About the EAP Foundation series

The *EAP Foundation* series is written for EFL students who are preparing for, or currently studying at, a Western university, including those on foundation or pre-sessional courses. In contrast to many English language textbooks, which offer fragments of information scattered around a series of exercises, books in the *EAP Foundation* series focus on presenting practical information in a straightforward and readable manner, with exercises coming at the end of each unit as a way to check understanding and deepen comprehension. This straightforward presentation of material makes the books ideal not only for classroom use, but for independent study or review after class. There are checklists for each unit, which serve to foster self reflection and peer feedback, which are important principles behind the *EAP Foundation* series of books. All books have additional resources which can be downloaded, including worksheets, copies of checklists, teaching tips, lesson plans and mp3 recordings (for books in the speaking and listening series). This is ideal for personal use (if you are a student) or classroom use (if you are a teacher). These resources are available free of charge, using the access code available in *Appendix 1: Accessing online resources*. A full answer key is provided at the end of the book, meaning there is no need for a separate teacher's manual.

About the author

Sheldon Smith has been teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) since 2002, working in the UK, Indonesia and China. Since 2005 he has been working on pathway programmes which prepare EFL students for university study at Western universities, chiefly in the USA, UK and Australia. In addition to textbooks for academic English, he is the author of several novels and text books for Chinese language learning. He is the founder and chief developer of the EAPFoundation.com website. He currently resides in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, China.

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Introduction

Presentations are a common part of academic life. Although giving a presentation can seem daunting at first, it is actually quite a routine task. Presentations all have the same basic structure and use similar signpost language. As long as you plan carefully and allow enough time to not only prepare the content but also practise to improve performance, you will be able to give an effective presentation time after time.

Features of the book

As with all books in the *EAP Foundation* series, the units focus on presenting practical information in a straightforward and readable manner. There are additional tips in each unit to help you perform well. There are also numerous 'In short' boxes which give a summary of the main points covered (an example of one of these is given to the right). These will help you to preview the unit before reading in detail, and provide a useful way to review the unit later. Each unit also contains a checklist, which is used either to check understanding or to give feedback (to yourself or a peer). Each unit concludes with a range of exercises to check comprehension and deepen your understanding. At the end of the book there are appendices, giving information on accessing online resources, answers to exercises, three presentation topics, data for visual aids, a presentation planning grid and a presentation outline.

In short

The book has the following features:

- Practical information
- Additional tips
- 'In short' summaries
- Checklists
- Exercises
- Additional resources at the end of the book

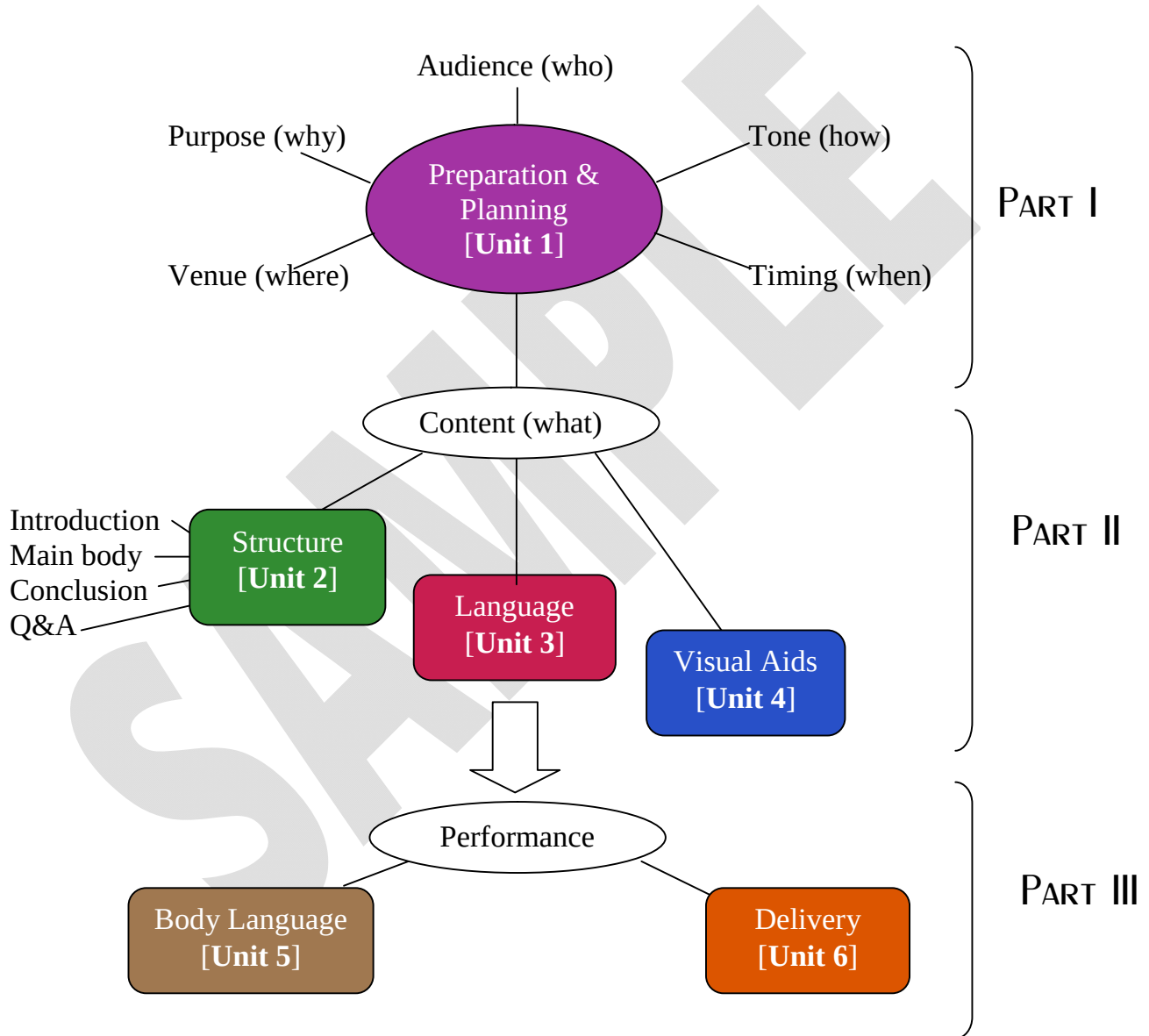
Structure of the book

The book begins by identifying questions to consider when preparing for your presentation, covering *audience, purpose, tone, venue, timing* and *content*. Planning is also considered in the first unit (*Unit 1: Preparation & Planning*). The book continues by examining presentation structure – *introduction, main body, conclusion* and *Q&A* – and considering what each section should contain (*Unit 2: Structure*). A key area which supports the structure, namely signpost language, is considered in a separate unit (*Unit 3: Language*), while an area which supports the content, namely visuals, is also

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considered separately (*Unit 4: Visual Aids*). The final areas of the book relate to presentation performance, namely body language (*Unit 5: Body Language*) and delivery (*Unit 6: Delivery*).

The following graphic summarises the structure of the book.



Internal/external links

Some internal links have been included in the book. These will point you backwards or forwards to other units which are related to the area under discussion, which will help you make connections between different aspects of giving a presentation. The following is an example of an internal link to an *earlier* section of the book. Note the arrows pointing *backwards* (i.e. to the left).



See Venue in Unit 1: Preparation and Planning for questions about the venue, including rearranging the furniture before your talk.

The following is an example of an internal link to a *later* section of the book. Note the arrows pointing *forwards* (i.e. to the right).

See Unit 3: Language for more examples of language to use in the Q&A section.



Some content may be closely related to another aspect of EAP. For example, transitions in a presentation are very similar to transitions in lectures. In this case, there may be an external link to another book in the *EAP Foundation* series. The following is an example of an external link. Note the arrows pointing *forwards* and *backwards* (i.e. out of the book). The colouring is also different for clarity (dark background with white lettering).



For more on how transition phrases are used in lectures, see EAP Foundation: Academic Listening.



Key to language phrases

In *Unit 3: Language* the language phrases are shown in a way which minimises space and shows how the parts of the phrase can be combined. For example:

- My

presentation
talk

 will

take
last

 about 20 minutes.

These parts can be combined into four possible sentences, as follows:

- My presentation will take about 20 minutes.
- My presentation will last about 20 minutes.
- My talk will take about 20 minutes.
- My talk will last about 20 minutes.

SAMPLE

PART I:

PREPARATION & PLANNING

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

Unit 1: Preparation & Planning

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should:

- understand the importance of preparation for giving a good presentation;
- know how to prepare for a presentation by considering six areas: audience, purpose, tone, venue, timing and content;
- be aware of key questions to ask regarding each of these six areas;
- understand the importance of planning in order to deliver an effective presentation;
- be aware of the different stages involved when planning a presentation.

By completing the exercises, you will also:

- understand some common problems encountered when giving presentations;
- be aware of actions you can take during the preparation stage to avoid these common problems;
- study examples of general and specific purpose;
- begin answering key preparation questions related to a presentation you will give;
- set deadlines for stages of work for a presentation you will give.

Key Vocabulary

Nouns

- audience
- purpose
- tone
- venue
- timing
- content

Verbs

- prepare
- plan (*also a noun*)
- inform
- persuade
- instruct
- motivate
- entertain

Adjectives

- general
- specific
- informational
- persuasive
- instructional
- motivational
- entertaining

Additional Vocabulary

Academic Collocations

- final section (adj + n)
- high score (adj + n)
- key elements (adj + n)
- logical arguments (adj + n)
- potential problems (adj + n)
- specific focus (adj + n)
- specific purpose (adj + n)
- technical problems (adj + n)
- give a presentation (v + n)
- present arguments (v + n)

AWL words

For AWL words in Unit 1, access the online resources (see *Appendix 1* for instructions).

Overview

Giving a presentation can be an incredibly daunting task. Speaking in public is many people's greatest fear. However, even apparently confident speakers may be extremely nervous before or during a talk. The reason they appear so confident is that they have spent enough time preparing. They therefore understand their topic well and know what they are going to talk about and how they are going to say it.

In short

When preparing your presentation, you should consider the following:

- Who – audience
- Why – purpose
- How – tone
- Where – venue
- When – timing
- What – content

Three key elements to consider during the preparation stage of any form of academic output, including presentations, are the audience, purpose and tone: the who, why and how. When preparing a presentation it is also important to consider the venue (where), the timing (when), and, most importantly, the content (what). Each of these is considered in more detail below.

Planning is also a key ingredient of success. Without good planning, too much preparation is done at the last minute, and the presentation will not be as effective. The stages involved in planning a presentation are considered in the final section of this unit.

Audience (Who)

Who your audience is will determine what you say and how you say it. A group of professors who are specialists in your field is a very different audience from a group of first year students with little knowledge of the topic you are presenting on. The following are key questions to answer about the audience as you prepare your presentation.

- How many people will be in the audience?
- Who are they?
- What do they know about the topic?
- Why are they attending the presentation?

Purpose (Why)

Why you are giving the presentation, in other words the purpose, may seem quite straightforward. Often you are giving the presentation because you have to, for example because it is a compulsory assignment on your course, and you may think your purpose is something along the lines of 'To get a high score!' However, this is the purpose of the presentation *in relation to you*.

What is more important is the purpose of the presentation *in relation to the audience*. You need to think about what they will gain by listening to your presentation, in other words what you want them to know, believe or do at the end that they did not already know, believe or do before your talk. This depends, of course, on who the audience is and what they already know about the topic (see *Audience* above). Being clear about your purpose will not only help the audience understand the main message, but will also ensure you select appropriate content (see *Content* below). This is similar to the way a thesis statement in writing helps both the reader to follow the text, and the writer to know what to include.

Your presentation will have a *specific* purpose, which depends on the topic and focus and your approach to the task, and you will usually tell the audience this at the start of your talk. While there are countless possibilities for the specific purpose, all of them can be categorised as one of five types of *general* purpose.

- **To inform.** An informational presentation seeks to give or report information.
- **To persuade.** Persuasive presentations seek to present arguments to convince the audience regarding a particular point of view.
- **To instruct.** Instructive presentations seek to instruct or 'educate' the audience on a particular topic.
- **To motivate.** Motivational presentations seek to arouse interest in a topic, and may encourage the audience to take action. This type of presentation is common in the business field, though less common in academic settings.
- **To entertain.** An entertaining presentation seeks to present material in a humorous way. It is possibly the least academic and most difficult to deliver.

Types of purpose

The following are types of general purpose your presentation may have:

- To inform
- To persuade
- To instruct
- To motivate
- To entertain

Key questions for purpose are:

- What is the *general* purpose of your presentation (*to inform, to persuade, etc.*)?
- What is the *specific* purpose of your presentation?
- What will the audience gain by listening to your presentation?

Tone (How)

The tone of your presentation comes from your attitude towards the topic and how you convey this to the audience. It can range from serious to humorous to emotional, and as with any kind of spoken or written output, it will largely depend on the audience and purpose. Just as an academic report is different in tone from a letter to a friend, so a formal presentation to a large group of academics will be different in tone from an informal presentation to a small group of fellow students.

In writing, the tone depends mainly on the language, in other words the vocabulary and grammar. Language is likewise important for setting the tone of an academic presentation. In general, most academic presentations will be fairly formal, though not as formal as written academic English, meaning there will be more shorter sentences, simpler grammatical structures, more use of active rather than passive, and more informal words such as 'So' and 'And' and 'But' instead of 'As a result' and 'In addition' and 'However'.

There are, however, two additional aspects of tone in a presentation which are not found in writing. One of these is your *presence*. This means your voice and body – how you sound and how you look. How you dress will play a part: smart clothes signal a serious presentation, while T-shirt and jeans suggest something very casual. Another aspect of a presentation which is different from writing and which adds to the tone is the images you use. Usually there will be more images than in writing, possibly including video clips.

Key questions to consider in relation to tone are:

- What tone do you want to convey to the audience (serious, humorous, etc.)?
- How will you convey this using your language, voice and body?
- What do you plan to wear? Does this match your intended tone?
- What images or video do you plan to use? Do these match your intended tone?

Venue (Where)

Where you give your presentation is also going to be important. Presenting in a small room, with a maximum capacity of 20 people, is very different from presenting in a large auditorium which can hold hundreds of people. Even if the size of the audience is the same for both, other factors are different, such as the sound and how loudly you have to speak.

Some important questions relating to venue are:

- How big is the room?
- How easy will it be for the audience to see/hear you?
- What equipment is available, e.g. projector, computer, speakers, microphone, whiteboard?
- Can you use your own equipment, e.g. laptop?
- If you are using someone else's computer, what software is available?
- Is it possible to access the room before the presentation, to practise or to get set up?
- What furniture is in the room (chairs, desks, etc.)?
- Can you rearrange the furniture before your presentation?

Presentation Tip: Back up!

Many good presentations have been ruined by technical problems, e.g. broken computers, corrupt memory sticks, or PPTs prepared on newer versions of Office. Don't let yours be one of them! Anticipate potential problems, and make sure you have a back-up plan in case things go wrong!

Timing (When)

There are several aspects to consider in relation to timing. The most one is how long your presentation should be. The longer it is, the more you will be able to include. When you give your presentation is also crucial. You want to prepare your presentation in advance, so you need to make sure you have enough time (see *Planning* section below). The time of day may also be important. If you are presenting just after lunch, for example, your audience may be sleepy, which may affect your approach and content.

Important questions about timing are:

- How long should the presentation be?
- When (what date) is the presentation?
- What time is the presentation?
- How much time do you have to get ready?

Content (What)

The content of the presentation is the final area you should consider, as it depends on all of the above. For many presentations at university the topic will be given in advance, which will limit what you can include. However, you may still need to narrow the topic to a specific focus. A presentation will not be as in-depth as an essay or report and you will therefore have to decide what elements to include and which ones to omit.

Having a clear purpose (see *Purpose* above) is especially important in determining the content. If your general purpose is *to inform*, you will want to select the strongest information and data available. If your general purpose is *to persuade*, you will need to choose convincing and logical arguments and evidence. If you plan *to instruct*, you will need to research the topic thoroughly and may need to include quite a lot of detail. If your purpose is *to motivate*, you will need to choose interesting and inspiring stories and quotes and present them with vivid language. Finally, if your purpose is *to entertain*, you will need to find humorous stories to include, or some other way to amuse the audience.

Important questions about content are:

- What is the topic of your presentation?
- Do you need to narrow the topic?
- Do you need to do any reading/research?
- What areas will you include?
- What areas can you omit?
- Does the type of information you have chosen match your purpose?

Planning

As mentioned at the start of the unit, it is not enough simply to prepare for a presentation; you must ensure you allow enough time to prepare *well*. Planning will help you to achieve this.

Planning means making a step-by-step guide to achieve your purpose, in this case, to deliver an effective presentation. To make your plan you will therefore need to understand the different steps involved. The first step, as with any kind of academic output, will be to understand the task and what you need to do. Ask other students or your tutor if you are not sure. After this, you need to prepare by considering the areas above, namely audience, purpose, tone, venue, timing and content. The content will be the most difficult area, and in order to decide what to include you will probably need to research the topic in more depth. The content will probably be supported by some kind of visual aid, and the next step will be to design this. Once you are fairly sure of the content and have some kind of visual, you can begin to practise the presentation. If possible, you should try to get feedback – from peers, your tutor or yourself – and use this to make improvements to the content and performance. Don't forget to practise answering questions to help you prepare for the Q&A section. Further practice, feedback and improvement may be useful. At this point, you should be almost ready to give the presentation, and will be making final arrangements such as finishing your PowerPoint, copying any handouts, and checking the venue. It will then be time to give your presentation. Your task should not end there though as you will want to get feedback on your performance in order to reflect and improve next time.

In short

When planning your presentation, you need to:

- Understand the task
- Prepare for the task
- Research the topic
- Select content
- Make visual aids
- Practise
- Make improvements, based on feedback
- Continue practice
- Make final improvements
- Make final arrangements (finish PPT, copy handouts, check venue)
- Give presentation
- Reflect on performance

Checklist

Below is a checklist for preparation and planning. Use it to check your understanding of the main points of this unit.

Item	OK?	Comments
I understand the importance of preparation and planning for a good presentation.		
I know the six different areas I need to consider when preparing.		
I know key questions related to <i>audience</i> .		
I know different types of <i>general purpose</i> (e.g. <i>to inform</i>).		
I know key questions related to <i>purpose</i> .		
I understand the elements which make up the <i>tone</i> of an academic presentation.		
I know key questions related to <i>tone</i> .		
I know key questions related to <i>venue</i> .		
I know key questions related to <i>timing</i> .		
I understand how <i>content</i> relates to <i>purpose</i> .		
I know key questions related to <i>content</i> .		
I know the stages to consider when planning my presentation.		

Exercises

Exercise 1: Comprehension

Answer the following questions about this unit. Either do this after reading the unit, or make notes first then use your notes to answer the questions.

1 What are the six key areas to consider when preparing a presentation? Write them below, then match each one to the appropriate *wh*- question word. An example has been done.

- audience – *who*
-
-
-
-
-

2 Write down *two* questions you can ask about the audience.

-
-

3 Why is the purpose 'To get a high score!' not an appropriate one?

4 The *general* purpose of a presentation is often expressed using a verb. Write down *five* such verbs.

-
-
-
-
-

5 Which of the purposes in question 4 above are most suited to *academic* presentations?

6 How is the tone of an academic presentation *similar to* academic writing? How is it *different*?

7 What is a 'back-up plan', and why is it important to have one for your presentation?

8 Why might the time of day you give your presentation be important?

9 How is the content of an *informational* presentation different from a *persuasive* one?

10 Complete the stages in *planning a presentation* by using words from the box to fill the gaps.

Verbs		Nouns
Continue	Understand	arrangements
Reflect	Practise	visual aids
Research	Give	improvements
Prepare	Select	improvements

1. _____ the task
2. _____ for the task
3. _____ the topic
4. _____ content
5. Make _____
6. _____
7. Make _____
8. _____ to practise
9. Make final _____
10. Make final _____
11. _____ presentation
12. _____ on performance

Exercise 2: Solving Common Problems

Study the following problems which might be encountered when giving a presentation. All of them could have been solved by better preparation. For each problem:

- decide which of the six areas above it relates to;
- try to think of one or more solutions which could have been taken when *preparing*.

An example has been done for you.

Problem	Area	Possible solution(s) – <i>when preparing</i>
1. The projector in the room does not work.	Venue	- Prepare handouts for the audience. - Be ready to give the presentation <i>without</i> PPT.
2. The computer in the room has an older version of Microsoft Office and your PowerPoint does not display properly.		
3. The presentation is too technical and the audience cannot follow the main points.		
4. The audience grows bored with the presentation and at the end, someone asks what it was about.		
5. You have prepared a 30 minute presentation, but are told you can only talk for ten.		
6. You have prepared ten handouts for the audience, but when you get to the room you find there are 50 people.		
7. You prepared a ten minute presentation, but after fifteen minutes you are only halfway through and are told to stop.		
8. You try to make your presentation humorous by including several jokes, but no one laughs.		

Exercise 3: General and Specific Purpose

This exercise will help you understand how *specific purpose* relates to *general purpose*.

First, complete the 'Type' column by entering the adjective form of the general purpose verb (e.g. the adjective of *to inform* is *informational*). Look back in the unit if you need to.

Type	General Purpose
informational	to inform
	to persuade
	to instruct
	to motivate
	to entertain

Then, identify which type of presentation each of the following 'Specific Purpose Examples' is for. An example has been done for you.

Specific Purpose Examples	Type
a) The purpose of my presentation is to inform you of the different types of purpose a presentation can have.	informational
b) What I want to do today is show why informational presentations are better than instructional ones.	
c) My purpose today is to outline simple ways you can exercise while at work, and, hopefully, get you exercising more!	
d) My purpose this afternoon is to show you how to give a terrible presentation!	
e) My purpose today is to report on how often Business students use persuasive presentations.	
f) My purpose today is to demonstrate how to give an effective presentation.	
g) I'm here today to introduce the findings of our research project on eating habits in the over-sixties.	
h) What I'm going to do this morning is explain why global warming is the most significant threat to our planet today.	

Finally, make a note of the language which helped you to match the *specific purpose* to the *general purpose*.

Thank you for downloading this sample of *EAP Foundation: Academic Presentations*. Please purchase to read the rest of the book. The book is available in both e-book and paperback formats. For purchase information, visit Amazon or ask at your local bookshop.

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