

Structuring a presentation

Talking in front of other people isn't always easy.

But whether you need to sell a product, communicate with a work team or impress at a job interview, it's important to know how to give an effective presentation.

You can just do it like this...

Or like this...

But to engage your audience and get your message across, there are better ways.

First, you need to be really clear about what it is you want to communicate.

Say you're launching a new ghost tours experience and you want to give a presentation to potential customers. You'll want them to understand exactly what you're offering, and how to find you.

Next, start on the serious question of how to structure your presentation.

Start with an introduction. If you launch straight into your subject without introducing anything, your audience won't realise you've started, and they'll still be thinking about what they had for breakfast.

First, introduce yourself, then introduce your subject. For example, "Hello, I'm Owen, and today I'm going to be talking about my new tour service – Owen's Ghost Tours."

Once you're fully introduced, you want to get in a hook.

Get them interested with a question, or even a joke, say, "Which mansion house in Wales is home to 15 ghosts?"

But you wouldn't answer the question. Well, not yet anyway. In effect what you're saying is, "To find out what this means, stay tuned."

Great introduction, but where next?

That's where signposts come in. These are key phrases to direct the audience through your presentation.

Phrases like, "I will begin by introducing you to our product" or "Now that we have looked at how this product works, we'll move on to our new online game."

Bitesize

Signposts also provide a natural break in the flow if you're presenting in a team. They allow you to switch easily from one presenter to the next.

You've wowed the audience and kept them awake, so all you need now is to round it off with a cracking conclusion.

That's where you can summarise your message and leave a strong final impression.

And remember that question you asked at the start? Hopefully, it's been keeping everyone wondering. It's now that you'd tell them that Plas Teg, once a local court where people were tried and hanged, is home to 15 ghosts.

This gives a strong conclusion and adds a nice symmetry to your presentation.

So, introduction, main pitch, conclusion.

Or quite simply, first tell them what you're going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you've told them.

And don't forget to thank your audience for listening. Unless they actually fell asleep, in which case, skip that bit.