

Lesson Note – Informative Presentations

About Informative Presentations

Informative presentations are very common. Whenever you try to tell someone something, that's an informative presentation. Consider these examples:

1. A wife tells her husband what to buy from the grocery store today.
 - If she does a good job with her informative presentation, the husband will remember.
2. A chef explains how to cook a dish.
 - If the chef does a good job, people will be able to make the dish just like the chef.
3. A teacher explains assignment instructions to students
 - If the teacher does a good job, the students will follow the instructions

In your third assignment, you will give an informative presentation. First, we'll look at some common mistakes people make in informative presentations, then we'll talk about how to make a good informative presentation.

Common Mistakes in Informative Presentations

Have you ever told someone to do something, and then later found out they didn't do it the way you told them? Or have you ever tried to teach someone, but they struggled to understand you? If yes, that means your informative presentation was not effective, and you need to improve your communication skills. We'll look at three common mistakes that people make in informative presentations:

1. Didn't get the audience's attention or interest in the topic

Imagine you go to a presentation, and the speaker starts teaching complex knowledge right away. You just sat down, and you're still checking your phone and thinking about your lunch!

Solution: Get your audience's attention and interest at the beginning of the presentation.

In the first example above, where the wife tells her husband to buy some things from the store, she needs to make sure she actually got the husband's attention, or else the husband might not remember.

2. Too much jargon

Jargon means specialized words that only specific people know. Common people wouldn't know those words.

Solution: Explain any jargon that the audience might not understand

In the second example above, where a chef explains how to cook a dish, the chef needs to not use words that only chefs would understand. This is where audience analysis is extremely important. If you know the audience members are beginner cooks, then don't use words like "simmer", "al dente", and "braise" unless you explain them using simple language.

Another example is the name of the ingredients. If you know your audience members are American, then don't use European vegetable names. For example, say "eggplant" not "aubergine"; "zucchini" not "courgette".

3. Too much information (Not simple and organized)

Have you ever listened to someone speak and just felt like it was way too much information coming at you at once? By the time they finished speaking, you could barely remember half the things they mentioned!

Solution: Organize the information clearly, and present the information at a good pace

In the third example above, where the teacher is trying to explain instructions to the class, the teacher shouldn't talk about too many things too fast. The teacher should outline what she will talk about, and then go through each step by step in a relaxed manner. That way, students can follow along and take notes at a comfortable pace.

The Structure of a Good Informative Presentation

There are three parts to any presentation: Introduction, Body, and Conclusion. Let's go over about what each part should talk about in an informative presentation.

Introduction

In the introduction, you need to do four things:

1. Get the audience members' attention
2. Convince the audience member that learning about your topic is important
3. Establish your credibility
4. State your topic at the end

In order to get the audience members' attention, you can do things like asking them a question or telling a joke or telling a short story. That should lead to you explaining why the topic is important. Finally, explain why they should trust you to talk about this subject; you can talk about the research you did or your own experiences.

Here's an example of an introduction for an informative speech on how to use the memory palace technique:

Raise your hand if you ever wished you have better memory?...OK that's almost everyone! Joe, can you share with us why you want a better memory? Great, thank you Joe. So there are many reasons why people want a better memory, such as to do better on tests, to build better relationships with customers, or just to make sure you don't forget what you were supposed to buy from the grocery store. Personally, I've had a pretty bad memory most my life, but I learned a memory technique that has helped me win at memory competitions! It's called the memory palace, and today, I want to teach you how to use it so that you can improve your memory too.

Notice how it starts by getting the audience's attention, then it talks about why the topic is important, and then the speaker establishes credibility, and finally, speaker states the topic of the presentation.

Body

The body is the main part of the presentation. In this section, you should first outline the main points you will talk about. Then you can go into each point in detail. It's very important that you have **transition phrases** to link paragraphs. The bolded sentences in the example below are transitions.

Here's an example of a body section for a speech on how to use the memory palace technique ("blah blah blah" means the speaker continues to talk):

There are four steps to using the memory palace technique. I'll first list the 4 steps, then I'll explain them in detail.

- 1. Pick a setting that you are familiar with, such as your house or office building*
- 2. Pick locations in that setting. However many number of things you want to remember is how many locations you need in that setting.*
- 3. Imagine walking through the setting in a specific route.*
- 4. At each location, place the item you want to remember there. Make it very vivid, colorful, exaggerated, and weird to help you remember the story later.*

Let's talk about step 1: pick a setting that you are familiar with. I suggest using your home or office building or school. Make sure the setting is decently big. Ideally, there's multiple rooms.

Next is step 2: pick locations in that setting. Let's say you want to remember 10 things. Then you will need 10 locations in your setting. For example, blah blah blah

For step 3, you need to imagine a route that you will walk through. Make sure your route goes through all 10 locations, and use the same route every time. That will make it easier for you to remember new lists of items. For example, blah blah blah.

For step 4, you imagine yourself walking through the route that you decided on in step 3. At each location, place the item you want to remember there. Remember to make it really vivid and strange. For example, blah blah blah.

Now that I took you through an example, I want you to try. Blah blah blah.

Notice how the body first outlines the main points and how there's transitions between each point. That helps the audience follow along and not get lost.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, you should

1. Summarize the main points
2. Review why the topic is important
3. End with a call-to-action

Here is an example of a conclusion continued from the above example:

So, in summary, there are four steps to the memory palace technique. First, pick a setting. Then pick the locations in that setting. Then decide on your route. Then imagine yourself walking through that route, placing the items you want to remember at each location. This technique is super useful for remembering lists of items really fast. You can use it for tests, for work presentations, or even for remember your grocery list. Now that you know about the memory palace, I hope you will try it out in your life.

Notice how the conclusion starts by summarizing the main points in the body, then restates the importance of the topic, and then ends with a call-to-action.

Check Your Understanding Questions:

1. Explain three common mistakes in informative presentations and their solutions.
2. What should happen in the introduction of an informative presentation?
3. What should happen in the body of an informative presentation?
4. What should happen in the conclusion of an informative presentation?