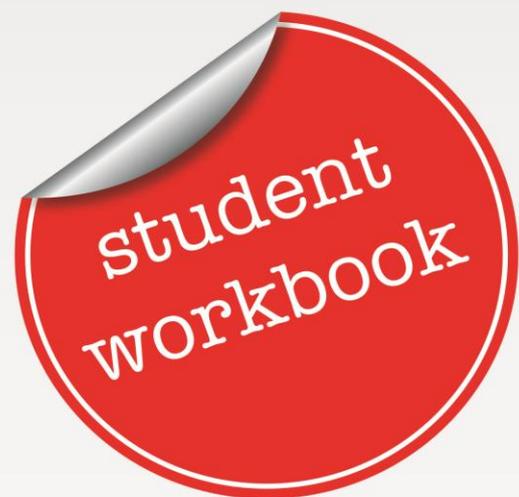


PRESENTATION LESSON HACKS



Written by Phil Wade

Edited by Noreen Lam

Presentation Lesson Hacks

Student workbook

Written by Phil Wade and edited by Noreen Lam

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About

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Phil is an English teacher and the author of several ebooks including Presentation Lesson Hacks that co-won the 2015 BESIG David Riley innovation award. Phil has also written ELT journal and magazine articles, elearning courses, digital and printed courses and apps.

Noreen Lam: Editor

Noreen has taught English to all ages and levels in language schools, university, companies and private groups. She has written articles, published lesson materials and contributed to various ebooks. She is interested in expanding more into publishing, especially digital publications and making them more accessible for teachers.

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Introduction

Presentations have become a common form of assessment in schools and universities across the world. Even the IELTS has a presentation section in the speaking test. This is great news for confident and capable presenters but not so good for shy students who have never learned how to effectively present and just speak. From my experience, quite a few students know the idea of a presentation i.e. to talk about a topic but when you ask about structure, stress, timing and the delivery aspect, they go silent. Why? Probably because they have only been taught presentation phrases and have not developed real presentation skills.

As many people say, HOW you deliver a presentation may be more important than what you say but in my opinion, both are crucial. Every presentation needs content but it has to be delivered effectively. A good presenter can prepare both interesting content and deliver it in an engaging style that captivates and then holds the attention of the audience.

This ebook is the student version of my Presentation Lesson Hacks. After writing it, I realised that many of my students would benefit from a concise version of the main topics, coupled with self-study exercises to do at home or in a class with a teacher or trainer.

Whatever use you find for this ebook, I hope you benefit from it and become a better presenter.

1. Nerve hacks

Getting nervous before and during a presentation is normal. Don't feel bad about it. However, nerves can make you speak quietly, get stuck, make mistakes, avoid looking at people and switch to your native language. All of these are bad for presentations.

Hacks

1. What makes you nervous before a presentation? Think about it, make a list and then brainstorm ways to tackle them.
2. How confident did you feel during your last presentation? Draw a chart and put 'confident to stressed' on the vertical axis and time on the horizontal one. Now draw a line to show your confidence and stress levels. Then, look at where you became stressed and think about why and what you could do to stop it next time.
3. Focus on the positives. When you finish a presentation, write down 3 things you did well and 1 you need to improve on. As you start to feel more confident, ask for more critical feedback from classmates, friends and teachers with tips and reflect on how you can get better. Set weekly objectives.

2. Attention hacks

Audiences get bored of listening unless you are interesting. Even in a 5-minute presentation, listeners, particularly young ones, may want to check their phones or start drawing. Your job is to keep your presentation engaging.

Hacks

1. Practise starting conversations with friends you see outside of class. Focus on how you begin and think about what works. Nobody really walks up to a friend and says very quietly “hello” then walks away. Instead, they smile, shake hands or kiss and sound excited to see them and say something like “Hi John, how are you?” Then, practise starting presentations with that same level of enthusiasm.
2. Who is the best presenter or speaker you know? Why do you like to listen to them? Choose 3 reasons and then practise them in your presentations. For instance, maybe they smile, move around or ask people questions.
3. The objective of a presentation is often to have a mental conversation with the audience. Yes, you will speak for 99% of the time but they must follow you and think about what you are saying. What can you add to your presentations to help make this happen? Pictures? Questions? Jokes?

3. Eye contact hacks

You know someone is talking to you when they make eye contact. A good presenter must look at all the audience in the eye several times. This means scanning the audience and making eye contact with everyone throughout the presentation. It does not mean staring at one person or looking at a random location. Make it natural.

Hacks

1. Sit at a table and put 3 chairs opposite you. Pretend they are your audience and just talk to them. Try to give each equal attention. Don't just talk to chair 1 then 2 then chair 3, alternate your order and also try quickly sweeping across all of them.

2. Make some note cards or write your notes on post-its or your phone. Find a room with chairs and do a mock presentation using your normal style but set up your phone and video yourself. Watch it back and note how often you looked around the room. Count how many times. Do it again and try to double the amount of eye contact.

3. Do a practice presentation and follow this formula: 'read your notes, look at a person'. When you feel more comfortable, try 'read your notes, look at 2 people'. Build up to just glancing at your notes and making eye contact with many people. Aim for only 10% of note reading and 90% looking at the audience.

4. Hand gesture hacks

Your hands are effective tools so don't keep them in your pockets, at your side or behind your back. In some countries, people almost seem to talk with their hands. Think about how you can use them in combination with your presentation content but don't be too aggressive.

Hacks

1. Hold your note cards or phone in one hand and experiment using the other. Try double hand gestures and single ones. Also experiment with holding your card or phone in both hands and then moving it to your other.
2. Think about what emotions are linked to your presentation topic and purpose. If you are trying to persuade people, do you need to be angry or persuasive? If you are informing people, should you be relaxed or something else? Now consider how you can use your hands with those emotions and practise. For instance, when a presenter is attempting to persuade people to do something and giving facts, they don't have their hands in their pockets. They may point, use a fist or gesture to the audience.
3. Look at your notes and think of useful gestures to match each point. For instance, how can you indicate the audience without pointing? An open palm? Finger numbers? A fist? Try saying sentences and using one gesture each time.

5. Stress hacks

There is nothing more boring than listening to a flat speech. A presenter who does not stress anything will fail to sound interesting and their listeners will not understand what is important. After just 2 minutes, few people will follow them and if they continue for 5 or 10 minutes, they may start daydreaming or playing with their phone.

Hacks

1. Start mechanically adding word stress to verbs and nouns in a short written paragraph and then reading it aloud. After that, try to say the text without reading it but stressing the same words.
2. Prepare a short presentation but with longer and more advanced vocabulary. Check where the stress is if you are not sure. Do the presentation but at a slower speed to make sure you use the right stress. Do it again but speed up until you sound fluent.
3. Plan out a simple presentation of just one minute. Note down the most important words: they will probably be the topic, the subtopics, verbs and nouns. Say the introduction sentence and stress the topic word(s) by saying it louder. Try 30%. Practise a few times at different volumes until it sounds right then continue.

6. Pause hacks

You need to breathe and the audience needs time to process. Pausing helps both you and them. Silence is important but can be frightening as a lot of presenters just want to read out their content and finish as soon as possible. You must become comfortable pausing. Presentations are like music in that it is as much about the spaces between notes as the notes themselves.

Hacks

1. Do your presentation as fast as you can without stopping. Notice how you feel after. Tired? Out of breath? Stressed? Then, try it but pause where there would be commas and full stops. Check how you feel and compare it to the last time. Finally, experiment with pausing near the beginning, the middle and towards the end of sentences. Contrast your feelings and speed.
2. Do a presentation and start by pausing before important pieces of information like names and numbers. Count 1 second. Then try pausing for 2 seconds and after that 3. Look at your notes again or think of what you said and write down where you should do 1, 2 and 3 second pauses. Often the longer the pause, the more important the following information.
3. Pausing is part of breathing. Choose any topic and breathe in then speak. When you feel you naturally need to breathe in again, do so. Keep going and you will realise your speech is during your out breath. The faster you talk, the faster you breathe and take short breaths and so get stressed. Experiment until you find your right speed and pauses.

7. Presentation language hacks

You need to know all the key presentation phrases that everyone uses. Learn them, practise them and make them natural. Try 3 a week. But the key is not to make them sound robotic. Some presenters just repeat the phrases almost one after another every time they present. This is not interesting. You also must show flexibility.

Hacks

1. Decide on a basic topic and say the short and informal “Hello, my topic is...” then the longer and more formal “Good morning, I’m going to talk today about..”. Take a paper and draw 2 columns. Write ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ as headings. Add whatever phrases you know in either column and think of and write down their formal or informal equivalents.
2. Choose a topic, write 4 related words and then do the presentation by only using presentation language phrases like “and now I will move on to..” and “In conclusion, I have described...’ and those 4 words, for instance, ‘cybercrime, hackers, data, jail’. Cut out all the rest.
3. Go to YouTube and find a clip of a series or a film you know. Watch 30 seconds then do a 30 second presentation about it. As you only watched very little, you will have few things to say so focus on the phrases.

8. Note card hacks

Note cards are very useful for presentations but a small mobile phone or tablet is even better. A lot of presenters just write down everything they will say on paper and then read it out. Others do the same on cards. The best presenters write key words, quotes and statistics on cards or on their phone and tablet and refer to them when needed. They are a tool and not the presentation.

Hacks

1. Make a card the size of a post-it or a bit bigger. Plan out a presentation in your head and then write a few key words or numbers on the card. Give the presentation and use the card. Were the words useful? Were they big enough to read? Did you spend more time reading the card than looking forward? Keep practising with cards or your phone until they become useful.

2. Choose an app on your phone where you can write then note down some things you like to do. Stand up, do a pretend presentation and use the notes. When you finish, think about how easy it was to use your phone and if it helped or damaged your presentation. Did the screen close? Did you have to scroll down? Enlarge?

3. Take a small blank card. Select a simple topic and talk for a minute or two. Then take a pen and write out the outline on your card but only use single words. Add any key numbers and anything else important. Be as minimal as you can. Now, get another card and make an even simpler version. Add drawings if you want. The idea is to make a visual prompt.

9. Visuals hacks

Never begin making a presentation with your first slide. What is written on the slides is not the presentation. What you say and how you deliver it are. Slides are just a tool to enhance the presentation and to help you. Average presenters lose all power to the slides and the audience just reads. It's quite normal. After all, people need a single focus of attention so if you have a person speaking and some text, most will just read the latter as it's quicker and easier.

Hacks

1. Do your next presentation with no slides. None at all. It might be hard but try it and then think about how engaged the audience were and whether it would have been better with slides. If so, which and where? For your next one, ration your slides to maximum 1 per minute.
2. Look at or remember an old presentation you did and analyse the slides. How much text did you have? Did the audience read it or listen to you? How did you keep their attention? Complete this sentence: 'In my next presentation, I will...'
3. A picture paints a thousand words and graphs save many. Consider how you can utilise both in a future presentation. Brainstorm information for an upcoming or possible presentation, draw a few slides and their content in your own style then try to draw possible alternatives with pictures or graphs.

10. Self-assessment hacks

How good are you at presenting, really? Be honest. What are you bad at? OK at? Good at? Great at? It doesn't matter what your weaknesses are, you just need to understand them, admit them and then find solutions. Bad presenters will never confess their problems as they either don't know or don't care. On the other hand, a good presenter is always improving.

Hacks

1. What are your presentation weaknesses? Think then think again. Write them down and keep writing until you have run out. Label them as 'm' for minor weaknesses and 'M' for major ones. Decide which are damaging your presentations. Find a friend or teacher and ask them for help or go online and Google some solutions.

2. What is the difference between doing a presentation and just talking? Have a real think about it. For some people, they are the same. When you have an opinion, go on TED and watch a few minutes of different presentations. Watch them with and without sound. Now consider the original question again and how you can improve.

3. Do a presentation and write 2 things that you did well, 2 things you didn't and 2 things that you could have done to have made the presentation better. Do this same exercise to reflect on any presentation you have done. Start noting these today in a journal or some kind of book and you will see your development.