ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

Here are some tips to help you deliver effective presentations online. Give these strategies a try and be in touch with us for more support in customising your presentation style.

Get used to the platform and test that everything works. Make sure your computer's software is up to date, that your camera and microphone work well and that you can do things like showing your slides: you might need to ask a friend to help make sure that everything works. Try to ensure you have a good internet connection.

Express yourself as clearly as possible. Share your central thesis/purpose at the beginning of a talk and outline how the pieces fit together. Every presentation is about telling a story. For instance, think about the past, present and future to explain the foundations of your research, the method you applied and the implications of your findings. Ask yourself the following questions to prepare:

- What research question(s) am I addressing?
- What context do I need?
- What is my primary takeaway?
- How can I convince my audience?

Communicate in direct language. Your audience might not be used to following your train of thought, so use signposting language to help them out, like "this shows," or "the most important thing is." Technical terms can be helpful, but jargon often gets in the way.

Practice performance, not perfection. Sharing ideas instead of polished phrases can help you communicate clearly and reduce your concerns about making a mistake. Planning what to express instead of what words to use also lets you adjust your pace if you or your audience needs less or more time. Notes to yourself like "should have three minutes left" can also help you adjust your delivery as required.

Practice your presentation **out loud**. If you're using notes, record key terms for yourself so that you can find your place if you get lost. Record yourself to check your speed, delivery and body language, or ask someone to give you personal feedback.

Take deep breaths from your diaphragm. This helps you speak clearly and stay calm when you're feeling nervous.

Design question periods and activities. Invite your audience to discuss topics that interest you and play to your strengths. When answering questions, remember that it's ok not to know everything on a subject if it falls beyond the scope of your work. If you don't know the answer to something, you can say things like "I hadn't thought of that aspect" or "That's a unique perspective," and then ask your peers about their thoughts to spark a larger conversation.

Count to 10. It's fine for you or your audience to pause, make notes and think when answering questions—especially online, these can take time! When responding to a question, rephrasing it in your own words can help to make sure you understand what's being asked and give you time to think.

You're more aware of your mistakes than others. Keep calm and keep going. An attempt to "fix" something can be more distracting than the initial problem. If you've made a serious error, it's good to admit that you misspoke.

Some Areas of Performance to Think About

Not all talks are dramatic, but they all can benefit by being *performed*.

Creativity and risk: Be creative with your project and take a chance: how can you add your personality to the work?

Stance: The way you hold yourself is noticeable. Remember to keep your back as straight as possible, open your shoulders, and keep your chin up. Doing this will help you project calm and ease.

Gestures: Consider grounding your hands on a table or by your side, but use your hands to point or emphasize something when it feels natural.

Facial expression and eye contact: Make sure your face matches your words when expressing the points you want to convey. Find friendly faces in the virtual crowd to connect with.

Enunciation: Practice saying difficult words if you need to use them. Warm up your face and your throat with tongue twisters and exercises to help you pronounce your words clearly.

Pitch and projection: Higher tones and quieter volumes tend to be perceived as eliciting feedback; lower and louder ones are often thought of as "authoritative." While this is a cultural bias, you can use it to your advantage by making adjustments to your pitch at different points in your presentation.

Pace and pauses: Changing the speed of your delivery can draw attention to your speech; forcing a pause can draw an audience's attention, mark a key idea or carve out time to think (for the speaker as well as the audience).