

Understanding the Parts of a Class Presentation

This resource describes the parts of a basic class presentation: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. Your instructor may give you other or more specific instructions for organizing your presentation.

The Introduction (about 10-15% of the talk's length)

The purpose of the introduction is to engage the listeners' interest, state your point of view and/or the purpose of your presentation AND explain how your presentation is organized.

- Greet your audience, introducing yourself and acknowledging the place.
- Engage the listeners with a startling or engaging idea, an anecdote, a surprising fact or statistic, or a cartoon or a quotation.
- Make a transition and then state your purpose and/or point of view (to inform, persuade, review literature, explain personal experience, generate discussion, motivate, or entertain?)
- Explain or show the key parts of how the presentation is organized

The Body (about 75-80% of the talk's length)

Sections. The purpose of the body is to support your point of view or explain your topic. Normally, you divide the body into a variety of sections. For each section, you need to state a main point and then provide supporting evidence (e.g., facts, explanation, anecdotes, statistics, examples, quotes, description). After providing evidence for a point, you need to state clearly how the evidence relates to the main idea or the overall point of view of your talk. It's important in planning your body not to leave the most important information until the end.

Transitions. When planning a class presentation, you need to be especially careful about clearly showing the links between ideas. Use transition words and expressions that show the relationships between one idea and the next. If you have a long presentation, you may want to stop occasionally and recap your points so far and introduce what's coming next. You need to do more of this linking of ideas in a presentation than in a paper to support your audience in following your ideas.

Examples. Plan to use strategies that keep your listeners engaged. Explain abstract ideas by comparing them to concrete and familiar ideas. For example, "This program will cost over \$35 million dollars; that's about one dollar for every Canadian." Another strategy is to personalize your ideas. If possible, include personal experience, stories and examples; they are more engaging than a long list of facts and figures.

The Conclusion (about 10% of the talk's length)

The purpose of the conclusion is to review the talk's key ideas and to provide closure for the talk. It may also serve as a transition to a question-period or discussion, to include the following parts:

- a transition indicating that the end is near. Try, "To end, ..." or "In conclusion, ..."
- summary of the talk's main arguments
- restatement of the purpose and/or point of view
- suggested next steps (possible questions for discussion or actions for listeners to take) or implications of the information given (answer the question "So what?").
- a thank you to the audience