



Neighbourhood WATCH

Toolkit

Module 7: Speaking to a group of people

This module looks at how to give effective presentations to a group of people.

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- plan the content of a presentation so that all the important information is included;
- structure your presentation so that it is easy for your audience to follow; and
- deliver your presentation effectively.

Introduction

Neighbourhood Watch always involves meetings - some with just a few people and some with a large audience. Whatever the size of your scheme, you will probably have to address a group of people. This task may seem daunting, but it will be much easier if you follow a few simple rules.



Remember

It is normal to feel a little apprehensive, but as long as you are well prepared, it will turn out all right on the night!



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There are five stages in preparing a presentation:

Stage 1: Decide what you want to say

Stage 2: Plan how you are going to say it

Stage 3: Prepare for your presentation

Stage 4: Rehearse your presentation

Stage 5: Deliver your presentation

We will look at all five stages in turn.



Remember

People want to hear what you have to say - if they didn't, they wouldn't be there.

Remind yourself of this when you need to boost your confidence. They have come to hear you speak, so what you have to say is obviously important to them.

Decide what you want to say

When you prepare your presentation you will need to take account of:

- the points you want to make; and
- anything else the audience may want to know.

This may seem obvious, so let's look at it more closely. Take, for example, the launching of a new scheme. There are things that you will want to tell the audience: what Neighbourhood Watch is all about, how to get a scheme up and running, etc. There are also things that you may not have thought of that members of the audience want to know about.



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Make notes for what you want to say

- 1 First, get a piece of paper and write down everything you want to say. Don't write it out in full, just make short notes.

When you have written everything down, group the various items together into sections. For example, you may link together items about:

- the purpose of Neighbourhood Watch;
- the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch; and
- setting up a group.

Give each section a simple title or heading like '**Purpose**', '**Benefits**' etc.

- 2 Next, put the various sections into a logical order. Start with the most important items and end with the less important ones.
- 3 Then look at each section in turn and decide which points **must** be included. Highlight these items (e.g. with a coloured pen). When you have done this for each section you will have identified the things that you **must** include in your presentation and the things you would **like** to say if you have the time.

Prepare for questions from the audience

As well as saying what **you** want to say, it is just as important to answer any questions that the audience may have.

You could simply ask for questions at the meeting - this should always be done. Don't forget that you might be asked an awkward question that is difficult to answer 'on your feet'. If you can't answer the question, don't worry. Just explain that you will find out the answer and let people know - it could be an item for the newsletter, or circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

To help you to prepare, you could ask around before the meeting to find out what questions you might be asked. You could either include these points in your main presentation or hold a separate 'question and answer' session during the meeting and deliver your prepared answers then.



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Plan how you are going to say it

Saying everything you need to say within an appropriate time, without rambling or getting mixed up, is not straightforward. To be effective, you will need to plan your presentation.



Stop and think

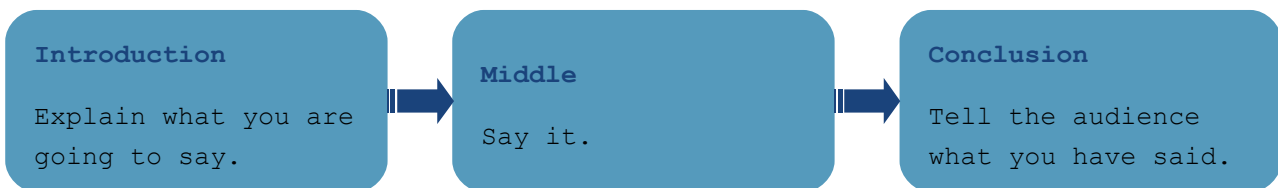
How much time will you have?

You might be able to decide how long your presentation will be. Consider:

- how much there is to get through during the meeting;
- how long the audience will want to listen to one person; and
- how important the topic is.

Then plan your presentation to fit the appropriate time.

A good presentation has three parts: a beginning (the introduction), a middle and an end (the conclusion):



Introduction: Explaining what you are going to say

Start by setting out, in two or three sentences, what you are going to cover in your presentation. As well as preparing your audience for what you intend to say, it gets you on your feet, and once you've started speaking you are up and running. For example, you could start off by saying something like:

'In this short presentation I would like to tell you what Neighbourhood Watch is about, what benefits our community



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could get from Neighbourhood Watch and how we would go about setting up a scheme.'

Say it

If you've been following these instructions, you should by now have a piece of paper listing, in a logical order, the points you want to make, with the main points highlighted. There should be other, less important, points on your piece of paper that you can include if you have time.

You already know how long you have for your presentation; now you need to allot some of that time to each point you wish to make. To do this you will need another piece of paper.

If your presentation is going to be, say, 15 minutes long, work out:

- what you need to say in the first five minutes;
- what you need to say in the next five minutes; and
- what you need to say in the last five minutes.

It is helpful to allow a minute for the introduction and use the last minute to bring your presentation to a conclusion. Remember that it can be very important that you stick to the timing allocated.

Conclusion: Tell them what you have said

Never leave your presentation hanging in the air. When you get to the end of what you want to say, don't say something like '...and that's it, then'. Instead, round your presentation off with a brief summary of what you have said. For example, you could summarise an introduction to Neighbourhood Watch by saying:

'So, to recap, we need to decide what benefits we can gain from Neighbourhood Watch, what our commitment will be, and whether we now go ahead and launch a scheme.'

Prepare for your presentation

When you've planned how to present your information, the next step is to prepare the materials you will need. You also need to prepare yourself to get the message across.



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Notes

Most people like to refer to notes while they give a presentation. There is no need to give a virtuoso performance – it is more important to be sure that you have said what you want to say.

Some people use cards, others prefer a piece of paper with a short reminder of each section of the presentation written in different colours. Many people now use a computer to prepare and present information at meetings. It all depends on what you feel most comfortable with.

You may have seen people delivering presentations at a conference and reading their entire speech from a script. Often this is because they have to give copies to the delegates and the press. For a small meeting, reading your entire speech from a script is not recommended, since it distances you from your audience and makes it more difficult for them to engage in what you are saying.

Other materials

If you are going to need any props during your presentation, such as examples of leaflets, posters or stickers, make sure that you have them ready, and in the right order. You won't want to have to hunt for something when you are nervous.

Getting the message across

Apart from presenting the right information and having the correct facilities, there are other important things that will make your presentation more successful or less successful. Those things involve **you**.

When you have an everyday conversation, you are not in the spotlight and many things you do go unnoticed, by you and your audience. Are you smiling or frowning? Are you standing up or sitting down? Are your elbows on the table? Are your hands in your pockets?

However, when you address a group of people, what you are doing is more obvious. Sometimes the little things that you do without noticing distract the audience from what you are saying. This would include, for example, constantly taking your glasses off and putting them back on again, fiddling with your watch, using the



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same phrase over and over again and saying 'Um' at the beginning of every sentence or 'OK' at the end of each one.

Your **stance** can add to or detract from the message you are trying to put over. To heighten the importance of your message you could stand in front of your audience, emphasising the point with hand movements (without overdoing it). To play down a point, you could take on a more casual attitude - you could sit on the table with your hands in your pockets, for example.



Stop and think

Should you stand up or sit down while you speak?

This will depend on the size of audience. If you are addressing half a dozen people in someone's house, standing up would be rather odd, and distracting in itself. For a larger audience, in most circumstances it is normal to stand.

It is important to **maintain eye contact** with your audience. When speakers are nervous they often look out of the window, or at the floor, or anywhere other than at the audience. Worse still are those speakers who look directly at one person throughout the entire presentation.

The audience is made up of individual people, and your message is important to each one of them. By looking at your whole audience you give them that individual attention that is so important.

Rehearse your presentation

Time spent practising is never time wasted. Having prepared your presentation, make your first audience a mirror. It can't throw things at you and it won't walk out on you. As well as checking that you look right, time yourself to ensure that you do not overrun the time allowed for your presentation. You may have to cut material if the presentation is too long.

When you are happy with what you see in the mirror, deliver it again to a family member or a friend. It is even better if you can rehearse in the room in which you are going to give your presentation.



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If you have access to a camcorder you can go one stage further and give your presentation in front of the camera. Then shut yourself away and watch yourself. You will find that you have no greater critic than yourself, but remember that you are more likely to overcriticise - don't be too harsh on yourself.

Delivering your presentation



Arrive in good time and check that the room is set out as you want it. Ensure that you have everything you need for your presentation as you planned it.

As the members of your audience arrive, mingle, and talk to them. Then, when you give your presentation, you will not be talking to strangers. When the time comes, take a deep breath and go for it. Good luck!



Remember

Always keep an eye on the time during your presentation.



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Practical activity 7: Presentation practice

The aim of this activity is to practise your presentation skills by creating a short presentation on a subject of your choice.

Choose a subject you know something about – for example your work, a hobby, the local area or your holiday. Then ask friends and family to be your audience, and set a date and time for your presentation.

- 1 Decide what you want to say.
 - Make notes of the key points.
 - Think about your audience. What are they likely to be interested in?
- 2 Plan how you are going to say it.
 - Make sure that your presentation has an introduction, a middle and a conclusion
- 3 Prepare your presentation.
 - Will you need any props or handouts?
- 4 Rehearse what you are going to say in front of a mirror.
 - Time your presentation so that it is no more than 10 minutes long.
- 5 Deliver your presentation to the audience.
 - Prepare the room for the audience and make sure that you have everything you need.
 - Ask your audience not to interrupt you during the presentation, but to provide feedback after you have finished. If you wish, you could write their comments on a flipchart, and encourage audience participation.
- 6 Decide how you would improve your performance when you give a presentation to an unknown audience. Don't forget that you will improve with practice!



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