



Speaking to a group of people:

Introduction

This module looks at how to give effective presentations for your Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

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 listeners to follow;
- deliver your presentation effectively.

This module is in two parts:

- Part one contains the Development Notes with guidance on how to design and deliver presentations.
- Part two contains the Session Notes to allow a group to design and deliver short presentations.



SPEAKING TO A GROUP OF PEOPLE

Notes



Speaking to a group of people:

Development Notes

Neighbourhood Watch will always involve meetings – some with just a few people and some larger. Whatever the size, it could mean that for the first time since leaving school, you will have to address a group of people. This daunting task may strike fear into your heart, but by following a few simple rules the job will be made that much easier. If you do not feel a little apprehensive or you do not think you will need to prepare, it will most likely turn out to be a total disaster.

Take your preparation through five stages:

Decide what you want to say

Plan how you are going to say it

Prepare your presentation

Rehearse your presentation

The big day – delivering your presentation

Let's look at each stage.



Decide what you want to say

The first stage of building your confidence is to realise that:

people want to listen to what you have to say or they would not be there.

There is no law which says they have to come and listen, so what you have to say is obviously important to them.

In preparing 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 a little further.

Take, for example, the launching of a new scheme. There are things that you will want to tell the audience: covering what Neighbourhood Watch is all about and how to get a scheme up and running, and so on. There are also things which you may not have thought of that members of the audience want to know about.

Make notes

First, get a piece of paper and write down everything you want to say. Don't write it out in full but 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, setting up, and so on. Give each section a simple title or heading like '**Purpose**', '**Benefits**' etc.

When you have done this put the various sections into a logical order. Start with the most important items and end with the less important ones.

Next, look at each section and decide which points **must** be included. Underline those items with a coloured pen. Do the same with each section. When you have done this 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.



Having decided what you want to say, it is just as important to answer any questions the audience may have. You may do this in a number of different ways. First, you could ask for any questions at the meeting. This should always be done, but be aware that awkward questions could be thrown at you which you may have difficulty in answering 'on your feet'.

You could avoid this by making some enquiries before the meeting to find out what questions you may be asked. You could either include them in your main presentation or have the answers prepared for a separate 'question and answer' session during the meeting.

Having decided what you want to say, let's move to the next stage.



Plan how you are going to say it

People who don't plan ahead usually give dreadful presentations. It is not because they don't know what they are talking about: it's because they don't know when to sit down and shut up. Often they ramble on so much that the audience not only start looking at their watches but even start to shake them to make sure they are still working. Having realised the audience have had enough, the speaker sits down having only covered a quarter of what he or she wanted to say.

A good presentation has a good beginning, a good ending, and as little as possible in between. It is vital to decide how long your presentation will take and keep within that time limit.

A simple guide to planning your presentation is to:

Say what you are going to say

Say it

Then quickly round off with what your main points were



Say what you are going to say

Start off by setting out in two or three sentences what you intend to cover in your presentation. Apart from letting your audience know what you intend to say, it gets you on your feet, and having 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 could get from Neighbourhood Watch and how we would go about setting up a scheme."

Say it

If you have taken your preparation through the various stages of these notes, you should by now have a piece of paper with the main points you want to make underlined with a coloured pen. The points should be in a logical order. There should be other information on your piece of paper which you can include if you have time.

Having decided how long your presentation will be, you then need to allot the time available 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 have said 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.

Remember to leave the last minute to bring your presentation to a 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." Round your presentation off with a brief summary of what you have said. You could summarise by saying, "So, to recap, we need to decide what benefits we can gain from Neighbourhood Watch, what our commitment will be, and do we now go ahead and launch a scheme."

When you've planned how to present your information, the next step is to prepare the materials you will need.



Prepare your presentation

Notes

Most people like to refer to notes when giving their presentation. If you can deliver a presentation without notes, that's all well and good, but there's nothing wrong with referring to notes if it will help. How you write those notes out is entirely a matter of personal choice. Some people prefer to use cards, others a paper with a short reminder of each section of the presentation written in different colours. It all depends on what you feel comfortable with.

You may have seen some people delivering presentations to large conferences, where they read 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 it is not the best practice to read your entire speech from a script.

Getting the message over

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

There are many things which go unnoticed when you are having an everyday conversation. Are you standing up, sitting down, hands in pockets, leaning on a table? – all sorts of things. However, when you address a group of people you come under more concentrated attention. Things that go unnoticed in everyday conversation are noticed when speaking to a group of people.

We all have habits, some good, some bad. Unfortunately, when you are talking to a group they can distract the audience from what you have to say. Things like constantly taking your glasses off and putting them back on again, or doing the same with your watch. Using the same phrase over and over again, for example saying 'OK' at the end of every sentence.



As well as causing a distraction, some aspects of your stance could add or detract from the message you are trying to put over.

To add to the importance of your message you could stand in front of your audience, emphasise the point with hand movements (without overdoing it) and stress the main points you wish to make. On the other hand, you could sit on the table with your hands in your pocket and immediately you have taken on a casual attitude.

Your message will also become casual and its importance diminishes.

The question of whether you stand up or sit down will obviously depend on the size of audience. If you are addressing half a dozen people in someone's house, standing up would be a little odd and distracting in itself. For a larger audience, in most circumstances it would be 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 at one person throughout the entire presentation. The audience is made up of individual people and your message is important to them as individuals. By looking at your audience you are creating that individual attention which is so important.



Rehearse your presentation

Time spent in practice and rehearsal is never wasted. Having prepared your presentation, make your first audience the bathroom mirror. It cannot throw things at you, and perhaps more importantly, it cannot walk out on you. Apart from checking that you look right, you should check on your timing to ensure you do not overrun the time you have allowed for your presentation. When you are happy with what you see in the mirror, try it again in front of a member of your family or a friend. In particular, if you can rehearse in the room in which you are going to give your presentation, so much the better.

If you really want to go a stage further and have access to a video camera, give your presentation in front of the camera. Then lock yourself in a room and watch yourself. You will find that you have no greater critic than yourself, but accept that you are more likely to over-criticise and you should not be too harsh on yourself.

The big day – delivering your presentation

Arrive in good time and satisfy yourself the room is set out as you want it. Ensure that you have everything you need for your presentation as you planned it. As your audience arrive, mix amongst them and talk. When you start your presentation they will not be strangers.

And finally, take a deep breath and go for it.

Good luck!



Notes



Speaking to a group of people:

Session Notes

About this session

This session is designed to show participants the basics of planning and giving presentations. By the end of this session the participants will be able to:

- develop the confidence to speak to groups of people;
- plan a short presentation;
- deliver a presentation.

How long the session should last

Forty-five minutes.

How many people should attend

Fourteen to 16 people.

The resources you will need

- a good sized, comfortable room;
- flipchart and coloured marker pens;
- the handout included with this session;
- pens and paper for those attending.



Session plan and time allocation

Introduction 0–10 minutes

Start by introducing yourself and then ask each member of the group to introduce themselves briefly. There is no need for them to stand up or go to the front. Reassure them that you do not intend to embarrass them. The kind of introduction you want is:

“I am Mary Jones, I live in Oak Avenue. I am married to Bill and we have two children, Sarah 4 and Edward 2. Our favourite pastime is caravanning.”

When everyone has introduced themselves, ask the group how they feel about speaking in public.

When they have all expressed their fears and reservations, point out that they have all just been talking in public to a group of people!

Explain that there is a simple set of rules for making effective presentations. Give the group copies of the handout ‘Five Stages of Presentations’.



Deciding what you want to say and how you want to say it 10–25 minutes

Explain to the group that the amount of information in a presentation depends on the amount of time available. It is important that the content of a presentation is planned out in advance. Also, every presentation should have a timetable which gives the presenter a guide.

This part of the session is designed to give the group practice in planning a presentation about the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch. Explain that the presentation is meant for residents in an area who are considering setting up their own scheme. You should cover the following points:

- ask the group what they think the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch are and list them on the flipchart. Encourage the group to go into some detail. For example, do not just list ‘community spirit’ but include things like ‘taking milk in when the neighbours are away’ and so on;
- use different colours to indicate those items which naturally go together. You may decide, for example, that a number of items come under the overall heading of ‘creating community spirit’;
- when all the items have been sorted out, ask the group what they think must be included in the presentation and what could be left out if time did not allow; ask the group to consider the order that the points should be presented in;
- finally, put timings against each set of points. Don’t forget to allow time for an introduction and conclusion.

Explain to the group that the next part of this session is designed to let them practise planning and giving a short presentation.

**Presentations 25–40 minutes**

Ask each member of the group to choose a subject they know something about – the local football team, a favourite holiday, anything. Get them to jot down a few notes about the subject they have chosen.

Ask the group to arrange their notes under headings, decide what the important points are and arrange them into a one-minute presentation.

Give the students the handout 'Tips for Presentations'.

Giving the presentation 40–60 minutes

Finally, ask each member of the group to give their presentation. Don't take it too seriously – it is better that they enjoy the experience rather than be put off for good.



Five stages of good presentations

Decide what you want to say

Plan how you are going to say it

Prepare your presentation

Rehearse your presentation

The big day – delivering your presentation



Tips for presentations

- Use notes when giving your presentation. It will help you keep to the point and make sure that all the important information is put over to the audience.
- Are you using the right body language and mannerisms? We all have habits, some good, some bad. Unfortunately they can distract the audience from what you have to say. Things like constantly taking your glasses off and putting them back on again, or doing the same with your watch; or using the same phrase over and over again, for example saying 'OK' at the end of every sentence.
- To add to the importance of your message, stand in front of your audience, emphasise the point with hand movements (without overdoing it) and stress the main points you wish to make.
- If your attitude is too casual, it could make the audience think that your message is not important.
- Maintain **eye contact** with your audience. By looking at your audience you are creating that individual attention which is so important.
- Practise your presentation at home before you have to deliver it in public. This will help you iron out any problems and make sure that you stick to your planned time.