

## Presentations in English – Teacher’s Notes

### Step 3

#### Use visuals to connect

#### Overall objective

Learners can integrate visual aids into presentations effectively.

#### Specific objectives

Learners:

- develop awareness of the problems around integrating visual information
- appreciate that PowerPoint is not the only visual aid
- have a procedure for presenting visual information
- have a large range of vocabulary for describing trends
- can explain timelines on charts and slides accurately
- can use visual aids so that they add meaning and variety
- can use a more complicated structure that is clear to the audience
- have learnt the basics of presenting in English

#### Tips

##### 1. Visual aids introduction

Pages 36–38

Students who have given good effective simple presentations to this point could well begin to founder when they start to integrate slides into their presentations.

There’s a minefield of potential problems. For example, visual *aids* are not used as support for greater understanding but rather as useless broken crutches that fail to support in any way. Learners prepare their presentations by powering up their computers and producing slide after slide without looking at the big picture – the overall structure and take-home message. Too many slides are prepared and little thought is given to how about each slide contributes to the whole presentation. Then, presenters put too much information onto the slides thinking somehow that this will help their English as they can always turn to the slide if words fail them. There can be a total lack of imagination and creativity and audiences are subjected to what authors call a massive ‘data dump’ or ‘death by PowerPoint’. Presentation slides become documentation and listeners are confronted with a confusion of message as attention is divided between reading and listening. Listeners read faster than the presenter can speak and the presenter is no longer the focus. Focus becomes even more blurred when there are English mistakes on the

slides. Presenters can even become bystanders as they turn their back to the audience to read the slides aloud. It's a minefield and one that all too often leaves presenters stranded.

Negotiating this minefield depends greatly on the coaching, training or teaching situation. Scope for improvement is probably limited when an executive calls and asks for a 2 hour coaching session to help with a 128 slide one-hour presentation he's giving first thing the next morning. Managers can simply feel that extensive use of PowerPoint is professional in their industry and changing years of bad practice can be a daunting if not impossible task. On the other hand, a group of young university students may be open to suggestions Or merely have more time to explore alternatives and be creative. There are cultural factors that also have to be considered. For example, a German national working in an American company may have heard his American boss complain about German presentations being deady boring and stuffed with facts. He actually views American presentation as superficial entertainment but will have to adapt his approach to the use of visual aid information if he is to be successful. This becomes more complicated when you hear the German studied at a Spanish university, now works for an American multinational and gives sales presentations in the Middle East.

It is therefore worth doing the exercises on pages 36–38 in depth as they address these points and give insight into each student's attitudes to the use of visual aids. Recognising that students really like Svtlana's objects or César's pictures or find nothing wrong with Zhan's use of visual aids are key to finding the right direction or at least the next step in treading through the minefield.

## **2. Procedure**

Page 39

Students should appreciate that there are both negative and positive sides to Zhan's presentation of visual information. Zhan probably uses far too many slides and puts far too much confusing information on each slide. However, his presentation of the matrices is arguably very good. He uses a clear procedure and informs his audience exactly what to look at, addressing different levels of audience knowledge and expertise. His message is clear, even to a lay audience. Nevertheless, some dislike this section of the presentation and do not appreciate Zhan's instructions to ignore parts of the diagrams if you don't understand them. It could be argued that these should be included in the presentation documentation but not the actual presentation itself.

Encourage students to use procedure on each slide and to see the information from the point of view of the audience. An audience does not understand the message from a graph if they do not know what the graph represents and they do not remember a picture unless it adds dimension to the presentation story.

## **3. Numbers and trends**

Pages 41–45

The approach to tackling these exercises depends on student needs and there are some who never or rarely need to present figures and trends in their jobs. If this is the case, the exercises on pages 42 and 42 can be skipped although there are individuals who wish to do the exercises simply to extend their range of vocabulary. University courses can require the presentation of trends as an assessed element. The exercises on pages 44 and 45 deal with timelines and it is advisable to cover these, especially if grammar was a problem area in Step 2. If students need to present numbers and trends, ensure they can do this accurately and extensively. Audiences lose interest and attention in graphs that just ‘decrease’ and ‘increase’.

#### **4. Analysis of César’s presentation**

Page 46

César’s visual aids are simple, effective and memorable but there are students who find them too simple and contend that more slides would help understanding. There is an argument that the photographs could be more professional and certainly more consistent. The story moves from left to right on the first two visuals (coke & shampoo) and from right to left on the third (cornflakes). The eye moves naturally from left to right and the third slide should be changed.

César does stick to the brief here although he does seem to be somewhat unprepared as he keeps having to refer to his notes. There is not an information overload and it can be interesting to compare his presentation to Zhan’s on page 37. César was never a fan of PowerPoint and avoided using it, whereas Zhan saw PowerPoint as a necessary professional tool. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages.

César’s presentation is a good example of the 3 in 3 structure. Students should be aware of the effectiveness of this structure. It is an extension of the Rule of 3 that is introduced in Step 4.

#### **5. Presentations diary**

Page 48

The diary is again tucked away at the bottom of the page but stress once more that it is an essential exercise if students are to assess performance and improve their future presentations. The basics of presenting are consolidated by the end of Step 3 and learners should be fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses at this point.

### **Student presentations**

#### **What to look for:**

Use the Feedback Form on page 48 and concentrate on the points mentioned. If you are working with a group, different members of the group can also concentrate on different sections of the form and give feedback.

Presentation of visual information is the most important point here. However, students should keep to the assigned structure and everything they have learned in Steps 1 and 2.

**What to worry about:**

- too many slides for the length of presentation
- too much information on slides
- bad habits when presenting visual information (e.g. back to audience, half turned to audience, turning out lights so audience can see slides but not the presenter, standing in front of slides etc.)
- presenters losing the basics of presenting when concentrating on visual information
- presentation actually becoming worse once visual information is introduced
- boring, repetitive presentation of numbers and trends, especially for certain presenters (e.g. those in accounting, finance, market research, consultancy etc.)

**What not to worry about:**

- Q&A is again not a focus at this stage