

6. Criteria for preparing project work

The following guidelines are not all equally applicable to all the different kinds of project work that exist but can be adapted to your needs.

- Consult your teacher if you are not definitely sure if the topic is suitable.
- Speak English throughout the whole work process as this will help you express your contributions in English.

Preparing your project work:

- Start with some brainstorming about what you want to deal with, what you want to find out, what results you expect.
- Note down aspects you will have to cover.
- Note down the kinds of material useful for your project.
- Outline the content of your project and structure your ideas.
- Decide who in your group is responsible for what.
- Write "to do lists" for all team members. Keep on doing so during the whole work process.
- Devise a schedule which includes the different stages of your work, deadlines to be met and the names of the students who are responsible for certain tasks.

Carrying out research together:

- When carrying out research draw on different sources and assess their validity (see Tip 2).
- Keep a record of your results by making notes (see Tip 3). Also, if you come across new words and phrases which you need to deal with and which are relevant to the task, note them down and learn them.
- If need be, make use of the "Skills Pages" in your English textbooks, refer to dictionaries, grammar books, encyclopaedias, etc. (see Tip 4).
- In the course of your work you might have to redefine some aspects of your work or aims of your project. Do not hesitate to ask your teacher for advice.
- While working you will have to alter/update parts of your schedule, but make sure to meet the final deadline.

Reflecting on your work:

- At the end of your work assess your results/products/what you have learnt and achieved and discuss what you will do differently the next time.

Tip 2: Assessing the reliability and validity of sources

- Determine what kind of publication it is and where and by whom the source was published (e.g. university, serious/popular newspaper, commercial website).
- Look at the date of publication to make sure you are not referring to material that is outdated / not useful for your purposes.
- Examine the source closely for information about the author/s and find out what qualifications he/she/they has/have for writing about the topic.

- Establish whether the author/s seems/seem objective or biased by considering his/her/their language and purpose (e.g. to inform, to comment, to influence/persuade the reader, to sell a product).
- Compare the information with information you have found about the topic in other sources. Does it confirm/contradict information from these other sources?

Tip 3: Making, compiling and organising notes

When you make notes you collect condensed information from a text.

- Focus on the information relevant to your task. Skimming or scanning can help you find the passages you need. If possible, highlight them in the text.
- When making notes write keywords, not complete sentences.
- Divide up the information by means of headings, subheadings, numbers, letters, etc..
- Group together notes with similar information.
- Arrange different notes in a logical order. This might already reflect the structure of your paper or presentation.
- Graphic organisers such as concept maps or diagrams can also help you develop a structure and understand interconnections and relationships.

Tip 4: Using Encyclopaedias

Encyclopaedias are reference books containing general and/or specific information which is usually arranged in alphabetical order. There are basically two types of encyclopaedias: general encyclopaedias (e.g. the Encyclopaedia Britannica), covering all subject areas and branches of knowledge, and subject-related ones (e.g. International Encyclopedia of Women Scientists), providing in-depth knowledge on one area only. Encyclopaedias can consist of one or many volumes. Most of them are also available as CD ROMs and some are online.

- Use an encyclopaedia if you want to get general background information, narrow down a topic you are dealing with and check on information you are not sure about.
- Refer to the index and table of contents if the alphabetical order of the encyclopaedia does not yield satisfactory results for you.
- Skim and scan the entry/article and look at fact boxes or pictures with captions to find relevant information.
- Look at the cross-references/hyperlinks (on the Internet) which lead you to other articles related to the topic.
- Study the bibliography which leads you to articles, books etc. that you might need.

6.1 Self-assessment grid: Project Work

You can use this self-assessment grid to evaluate your own contribution individually or your work as a group. While checking your progress and work, answer the questions below and tick:

😊😊 - well done 😊😊 - pretty good 😐😐 - OK, but needs some improvement 😞😞 - needs improvement

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Date:</i>				<i>Date:</i>				<i>Date:</i>			
	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊
	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊	😊😊
General rule												
I/We speak English throughout the whole work process.												
Preparation												
I/We have clearly defined the topic and considered its suitability for the set task.												
I/We have examined all the aspects of the topic.												
I/We have considered all the material necessary for the project.												
I/We have structured our ideas and written an outline.												
We have assigned tasks to all group members as equally as possible.												
Carrying out research												
I/We have written and updated my/our "to do lists", which include the different stages of my/our work, deadlines to be met (in groups: the names of the students who are responsible for certain tasks).												
I/We have drawn on different sources and assessed their validity.												
I/We have kept a record of my/our results.												
I/We have reflected on our project and where necessary, redefined its aim and/or certain aspects.												
Assessment												
I/We have assessed my/our results and discussed what should be done differently next time.												

8. Criteria for giving presentations / presenting project work

The following criteria primarily apply to PowerPoint presentations, but with minor alterations they can also be used for talks and formal speeches and be enhanced by overhead transparencies or other visual material. They are applicable to group presentations as well as to talks given by individual students.

Planning and putting together your presentation / your talk on your project work:

Make sure you understand the task. Do not hesitate to ask your classmates or your teacher.

Preparation of the talk:

- Structure your presentation clearly (introduction, main part, conclusion/summary/outlook/open questions), and present this structure at the beginning of your presentation.
- Think of a catchy beginning/teaser to attract your audience's attention, e.g. an anecdote, a thought-provoking question, quote or picture. You might also state why the topic you have chosen is of so much interest to you and/or of relevance to your audience.
- Use striking facts to keep your audience interested and give good examples to illustrate your points.
- Stick to the topic/key question(s) of your presentation.
- In case of a group presentation, make sure that everybody has contributed equally to it and that this also shows in your presentation. Support each other and act as a team.
- Consider how much time you want to allot to each point and ensure you stay within the time allowed, including questions that might be asked at the end.
- Decide on how to provide yourselves with prompts (keywords, cards).
- Rehearse your presentation/speech before you give it, e.g. in front of friends, family, or a mirror. Do not memorize whole sentences.
- Make sure you can pronounce difficult words correctly. If you use online dictionaries such as *leo.org* or *macmillandictionary.com*, you can listen to the pronunciation.
- Anticipate questions you may be asked at the end of your presentation and prepare a response.

Visual aids:

- Decide on the kind of visual aids most suitable for your topic and material.
- In the course of your preparation, keep in mind that you have to collect visual material suitable for illustrating your results in your presentation.
- Consider carefully why you have chosen certain visual aids (photos, film clips, graphs, etc) and what purpose they serve in your presentation; use your visuals sparingly.

PPP and OHP

- Layout your slides/transparencies clearly and carefully: Use a large font (at least 32 point size); leave sufficient margins on all four sides; in particular at the bottom so that everything can also be seen from the back of the room.
- Do not overload your slides/transparencies with too much information. Use headings, keywords or phrases instead of sentences; make sure they are clear and easy to understand and proofread them for spelling errors.
- If you need a slide more than once, avoid having to go back. Reproduce it at the place where you need it.

Technical preparation:

- On the day before the presentation check that all technical equipment is working.
- Prepare a backup (e.g. overhead projector/transparencies, a second notebook) in case the technical equipment is not working on the day of your presentation.
- Bring all the material you need on the day of the presentation; consider using a remote control device to avoid standing next to the computer.
- Clean chalkboards, whiteboards etc, even if you do not intend to use them.

Giving your presentation / presenting your project work:

- Only start your presentation when everybody is quiet. Pause when listeners are talking.
- Look at the audience and make eye contact.
- Speak clearly, slowly, loudly, fluently and freely (however, you may use index cards as cues if necessary).
 - Do not read out from the slides/transparencies or your cue cards. Use the information on them as support to keep you focused on the structure of your presentation.
 - Take your time: Pause in the right places, give your audience enough time to look at the slides/transparencies/visual aids and to ask questions at the end of the presentation.
- Do not stand in front of the screen. Use a pointer or a pen if you want to show something on the screen.

Reflecting on your work:

After the presentation think about your strengths and weaknesses and what you would do better next time (cf. assessing one's own work and that of others).

Handout

If you do not use PowerPoint or transparencies or do not want your audience to take notes, prepare a handout which you can pass out before or after the presentation. (In the latter case tell your audience beforehand that they will get a handout.)

Consider the following aspects:

- Write your school name, subject/course, your name(s), the date and title at the top. If necessary also include the occasion for the presentation.
- Do not include too much information and make sure your handout relates to what is said in the presentation.
- As a rule of a thumb: The handout should not exceed two pages in at least font size 10 for a twenty-minute presentation unless you need to present additional information / relevant data.
- Structure it clearly and logically so that it is easy to read. Avoid long texts, using e.g. bullet points and keywords instead. Distinguish between main points and supporting points.
- Consider whether you want to leave room for notes.
- Make sure your handout is legible and visually attractive.
- Cite your sources and include a bibliography of works quoted at the end.
- Proofread your handout.
- Staple and punch holes in your handout and make sure you have enough copies for everybody.

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You can use this self-assessment grid to evaluate your own contribution individually or your work as a group. While checking your progress and work, answer the questions below and tick:

☺☺ - well done ☺☹ - pretty good ☹☹ - OK, but needs some improvement ☹☹ - needs improvement

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Date:</i>				<i>Date:</i>				<i>Date:</i>			
	☺	☺	☹	☹	☺	☺	☹	☹	☺	☺	☹	☹
	☺	☹	☹	☹	☺	☹	☹	☹	☺	☹	☹	☹
Preparation of the talk												
I/We have structured my/our presentation using an introduction, a main part, a conclusion/ summary/outlook/ open questions.												
I/We have thought of ways to attract and keep the audience's attention.												
I/We have remained focused on our topic/key questions.												
I/We have made sure we will stay within our time limit.												
I/We have prepared prompts.												
I/We have rehearsed the presentation thoroughly.												
I/We have checked the pronunciation of difficult words.												
I/We have thought of questions that could be asked by the audience and am/are prepared to answer them.												
I/We have chosen suitable visuals/activities for the topic and considered the function I/we want them to serve.												
The layout of my/our slides is clear and well-structured and there are no spelling errors.												
I/We have checked the room and the technical equipment and thought of a backup.												

Presentation				
I/We spoke clearly, slowly, loudly and freely and made eye contact with the audience.				
I/We remained focused on the structure of the presentation.				
I/We did not rush through my part/ our parts.				
The audience could see all the visuals and had enough time to look at them				
Handout				
I/We have checked that we have met the formal requirements (e.g. name(s), date, title).				
The handout is well-structured, legible, visually attractive and easy to read				
I/We have made sure that I/we have included only information necessary for understanding the talk.				
I/We have cited the sources.				
I/We have proofread the handout.				
Feedback and assessment				
We have talked about the strengths and weaknesses of the presentation and what should be done differently next time.				