

Public Speaking Tips

Summary

This document explains how to prepare for and deliver a study circle, firstly explaining the preparation (spiritual, subject knowledge, and technology), and then pointers about delivery – topic relevance, rhetorical devices, and miscellaneous matters. The ‘miscellaneous matters’ are on how to structure your presentation, and the importance of a powerful beginning and end.

Introduction

When delivering a study circle, the quality of the information is important, however how it is delivered is also of import. Good delivery of a presentation adds to its impact. Here are some public speaking tips which you may find useful when delivering a study circle.

Spiritual Preparation

If you can have an emotional impact on the audience, your heart speaking to their hearts, then you will have more of an impact on them (and yourself).

- Our spiritual development is an ongoing life-long process. The more we focus on dhikr, repentance, du’a, reading the Quran etc. the more it has an impact on every aspect of our lives.
- We constantly need to check our niyyah (intention) for our actions. Is the study circle for the sake of God, or is it out of habit, or to seek fame or praise?
- Start the study session with communal dhikr and then recite Surah Al Fatihah. The latter is a du’a for guidance. Alternatively, one could use another relevant du’a linked to attaining useful knowledge.

Subject Knowledge

- Read through your notes several times so that you are comfortable with the topic.
- Prepare answers to possible questions related to the topic. These may be asked in the study circle.
- Prepare any visual aids you may want to use.

Technology

We live in a visual culture so using visual aids are an effective way of enhancing learning. If practical, use technology to engage the audience, such as a short video clip and/or a Powerpoint presentation (including images).

NB. An effective Powerpoint presentation should be a summary of your talk including, for example, key Quranic verses and Hadith. It should not be the full text of your speech, otherwise the audience will be distracted by reading the Powerpoint Presentation and therefore not listen to you.

Relevance

In order to interest the audience, it is important to make your topic relevant to their lives:

- Make cultural references from TV shows, films, social media or celebrities.
- Relate to current affairs.
- Illustrate theory with practical examples.
- When relating incidences from the life of the Prophet, the companions etc., try to make a link to the present context.

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Rhetorical Devices

Rhetorical devices are techniques to enhance the effectiveness of your speech. These include:

- *Direct Address:* Direct address or engagement with the listener is an important way of developing a rapport with the audience. It is more inclusive to use pronouns such as we, us and our rather than you/your as they show that the topic of the talk is relevant to yourself as well as the audience.
- *Rule of Three:* Rule of three means listing three related words or phrases or even repeating a word three times. This is useful for emphasis.
- *Repetition:* Repetition of key words and key phrases in different parts of the speech is a good way of emphasising key ideas. Other techniques used are the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning or end of consecutive sentences.
- *Alliteration:* The repetition of the initial sounds of words is also a useful technique for emphasis.
- *Rhetorical questions:* Rhetorical questions are questions that the speaker asks while not expecting an answer from the audience. They can be used for emphasis and also to encourage the listener to reflect on the topic being presented. Also, they may be used to introduce a new point by following them with the answer to the question.
- *Contrast:* A good way of emphasising a point is through mentioning it in relation to its opposite.
- *Anecdotes:* Anecdotes relate examples from personal experience. This can be a good way of connecting with the audience.

Miscellaneous

Practise: Practise your speech out loud before delivery. Recording it can help to self-assess yourself.

Prompt: Use bullet point notes as a prompt.

Language: Use clear, not ornate, language.

Structure: Outline the main aspects of your talk at the beginning, then elaborate on them, then summarise them at the end. This will help the audience to retain key points after the talk.

Hook: Have a hook at the beginning of your speech: something that attracts the attention of the listener, e.g. a rhetorical question, a metaphor or a story.

Sentence Length: Short sentences are useful for emphasis; long sentences are useful for giving detail, explanation and elaboration.

Pace: Slow down the delivery of the speech to calm your nerves. Pause after key points that you want to emphasise.

Look at individuals in the audience: If you look at different people in the audience (look at their noses) during the presentation it makes the presentation more personal to them and can also help you to calm any nerves you may have.



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Interactive Activities: Use interactive activities such as asking the audience questions to discuss with the person next to them, or ask them to close their eyes to reflect on/imagine something.

End: At the end of your presentation, thank the audience for listening. Also finish with a memorable statement summing up your key message.

Questions: Questions are a good way for members of the audience to seek clarification and more detail. If you do not know the answer to a question, admit it and say you will find the answer by the next session.