



The distinction between seminars and tutorials is blurred, but both provide an opportunity for students and staff to participate in an organised discussion. Seminars tend to be more formal than tutorials, particularly at Honours or postgraduate level. Your tutor may ask you to:

- present a fully written essay complete with title page, abstract, charts and references
- present a paper from cue cards and lead the discussion or answer questions
- send a version of your paper to everyone in the group beforehand
- hand in a written paper about a week after the seminar.

## TUTORIALS

Tutorials are small group settings where tutors and students meet to discuss and clarify important points arising from the lecture, or from readings for the week. Tutorials and seminars require students to demonstrate their self-directed learning. The aims of the tutorial are to:



- provide learning experiences
- allow you to explore and clarify a topic by asking questions and trying out ideas
- encourage development of active listening and speaking skills.

Participation in tutorials can help you to develop independent thinking; the ability to argue, defend and support a case; the ability to present a viewpoint concisely and selectively; and the ability to discriminate between opinion and evidence.

For a tutorial to work well, students need to:

- prepare - do the reading!
- test out ideas
- ask questions
- summarise what others have said
- listen actively and intelligently
- encourage others to share their ideas
- provide illustrations and examples of supporting and conflicting evidence
- challenge ideas in appropriate ways.

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR A TUTORIAL

Remember, tutorials and seminars are for your benefit. The more actively you prepare and participate, the more you will learn.

- Make sure that you analyse the topic, and that you know the main issues.
- Check the recommended reading.
- Find out from your tutor what the exact requirements of the tute will be: will there be a written or oral presentation? What preparation is necessary if you are not presenting?
- Use summaries and notes to help you remember information.
- Try to have some questions prepared.

# TUTORIALS AND SEMINARS



## SPEAKING EFFECTIVELY



Students often feel uncomfortable about speaking in tutorials. Knowing what to say, saying it correctly and having the confidence to speak up are three essential aspects of effective communication. It takes courage to speak effectively in public, but the tutorial is an opportunity to develop this skill.

Students may lack confidence if they are not prepared, if they haven't understood all the material, or if they feel intimidated by other students' knowledge or confidence. Here are some suggestions:

- Begin in small ways: ask a question you have already prepared, or make a point you have understood well.
- Push yourself to make a contribution in each tutorial. Prepare it beforehand.
- Asking for clarification about a key issue or point is often the most intelligent approach!

## PLANNING A PRESENTATION

It is common for students to lead tutorials based on the topic for the week. You will be expected to give a talk and to generate discussion. You are not expected to give the 'right' or 'definitive' answer. Rather, through your reading, asking questions and initiating discussion, you should show that you are able to think 'around' the topic and come to terms with the main ideas.

- Begin by drawing up a rough plan of your talk.
- Read to gain an overview of your topic.
- Determine what the question is asking.
- Develop your own questions about the topic.



## STRUCTURING A PRESENTATION

Successful presentations are well structured. Some topics have clear guidelines about how to present the material, while others expect you to devise your own structure.

- Introduce your discussion with an attention-getting device (a key quotation, image, or anecdote), identify the issue(s) you will address, and give a context for the discussion.
- In the body of your talk, link your main points and order them. Provide supporting evidence for your statements.
- Use an outline of your talk to help others keep up: try a handout, or an overhead transparency detailing the main points.
- Summarise your main points in a conclusion.

[SEE THE GUIDE ON SEMINARS & ORAL PRESENTATIONS](#)

## INVOLVING THE GROUP

Active *participation* is a key ingredient of a successful tutorial presentation. The best tutorials occur when presenters give opportunities for the group to take part. Some ways to involve the group are to:

- give questions for pairs or threes to work on and report back
- ask students to write a definition of a key term
- organise an activity which makes a point (eg, in groups, make a poster).



Once you have decided on the form the presentation will take, make a detailed plan that allows for group work, questions, explanations and discussion. Transfer this to a single page of clear points, or to cue cards.



## PRESENTING WELL

A successful presentation depends on how you present your message, as well as what you say.



- Practise your presentation. Make sure you can talk about your ideas and keep to the time limit.
- Assemble your resources (handouts, etc.) and get there early to set up the room; practise using audio-visual aids.
- Sit where you can be seen and heard. The way you sit and breathe affects your voice. Sit forward a little and breathe deeply.
- Speak, rather than read. Speak more slowly than usual. For emphasis, use pauses, varied tone of voice and well-chosen words.
- Make eye contact with all members of the group. Start with two people and increase the number of people you make eye contact with.
- Give opportunities to clarify what you are saying: ask if the group understands.

Hay, I, Bochner, D & Dungey, C 1997, *Making the grade*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

McEvedy, M Rosanna, Packham, P & Smith, G 1985, *Studying in Australia: Speaking in academic settings*, Nelson, Melbourne.