Presenting your speech

You will be assessed not only on the quality of your arguments, but also on how you present them. Keep in mind the following elements.

Pitch

The level of your voice and the notes it hits are referred to as the pitch. You must vary your pitch, otherwise you will speak in a monotone (on the same note), which gives your audience the impression that you are not really interested in your topic.

Pace

The speed at which you speak is called the pace. When delivering a speech, you should speak at around 120 words per minute. This is slower than the speed at which you would normally talk to friends in your first language. Speaking at 120 words per minute enables your audience to better understand, and also to think about, what you say.

Volume

Speak loudly enough that the back row of the audience can hear you comfortably.

Pauses

Pausing for two or three seconds, particularly after stating an important point, will help your audience to understand key points in your speech.

Pronunciation

Practise carefully saying words – particularly technical terms, people’s names and place names – before you present your speech. Stumbling over words when you are presenting suggests that you have not prepared your speech thoroughly.

Tone

When you write your speech, think about the emotions you are trying to elicit from your audience at each point in your speech, then carefully choose appropriate language techniques, words and phrases. For example, if you want to elicit outrage, use an angry tone; if you want to gain the audience’s sympathy, use a gentle tone.

Eye contact

Look out at the audience rather than down at your cue cards. Make brief, regular eye contact with various members of your audience.

Appearance

Although you will not be assessed on how you look, being dressed neatly suggests to an audience that you are genuinely interested in the topic and in them.