

Unit 3 Dealing with Q&A

In this unit, you will be looking at the following:

- Asking questions after oral presentations
- Types of questions after oral presentations
- Speaking effectively: Intonation
- Answering questions after oral presentations
- Closing an oral presentation



The video excerpts for this unit can be found at www.garneteducation.com/passport-video

1 Asking questions after oral presentations

As you learnt in Unit 2, at the end of an oral presentation it is polite for the presenter to ask the audience if they have any questions. This gives people the chance to clarify anything that they weren't sure about or to ask the presenter for extra information.



- 1.1** You are going to hear a presentation about the Loch Ness monster, a legendary creature that some people believe exists in Scotland. First, match the words on the left with the definitions on the right. An example has been done for you.

paranormal

sturgeon

cryptozoology

statistician

hump

binoculars

authenticity

hoax

plesiosaur

submerge

computer enhancement

eel

log

predator

go beneath the surface

an attempt to make people believe something that isn't true

a piece of wood, typically in a cylindrical shape

the study of animals that don't exist, according to science

someone who studies data and statistics

a type of aquatic dinosaur

a long thin fish that looks like a snake

the supernatural; something that cannot be explained by science

an optical instrument that can be used to make faraway objects seem closer

a large round shape that rises above the surface

something that kills and eats other animals

the quality of being real, true or genuine

a type of large freshwater fish

a technical process used to improve the quality of photographs and films

1.2



8 Now listen to the presentation and try to think of some questions that you might like to ask the presenter. The names of some people that he mentions have been given to help you:

- Mr and Mrs Mackay • The London Surgeon • Tim Dinsdale

Make a note of your questions in the space below.

2 Types of questions after oral presentations

There are three main types of questions that people tend to ask after oral presentations. These are shown in the box below.

Type	Style of question
1	The 'Straight' question
2	The 'Give me more' question
3	The 'I didn't understand, so tell me again' question

2.1

Read through questions a–f. Decide which type of question each one is an example of and write 1, 2 or 3 next to it. The first one has been done for you.

- a) In your presentation, you said that there were other sightings of the monster on land apart from the Spicers'. Can you say a little more about those sightings? **2**
- b) I have a question. Do you think the monster might just be a very large otter?
- c) I wasn't sure what you meant when you said that the Spicers saw the monster carrying something in its mouth. Can you go over that part again?
- d) You said that the surgeon's photograph may actually have been a hoax. Can you go into a bit more detail on how exactly the hoax might have been carried out?
- e) You mentioned that Loch Morar on the west coast is actually deeper than Loch Ness. Haven't similar animals been sighted there, too?
- f) I still don't understand why the monster can't be a plesiosaur. Can you explain that part again?

- g) If there is a Loch Ness monster or family of monsters, why don't we find any remains of them around the loch? I mean, if these animals have been in the loch since the 6th century, then there must be some bones or something in there ...
- h) I'd like to ask something. When was the most recent sighting of the monster?
- i) In your presentation, you said that you think a sturgeon is the most likely candidate for the monster. I can see how this might account for sightings of humps and water disturbances, but how would it explain sightings of the head and neck?
- j) You said that Tim Dinsdale's film was computer-enhanced. Can you say a bit more about the procedures that are actually involved in that?
- k) You didn't actually say anything about the search for Nessie underwater. What work has been done at Loch Ness using sonar?
- l) What are the different types of fish in Loch Ness?

2.2 Some examples of language used in the three main question types are detailed in the Language focus box below. What particular language is used to refer back to something that the presenter said? Can you think of any other phrases for doing this?

Language focus 7

Question types

1 'Straight' questions

- a Why is the monster unlikely to be a plesiosaur?
- b I have a question. Why is the monster unlikely to be a plesiosaur?
- c You mentioned that the monster is unlikely to be a plesiosaur. Why do you think that is?

2 'Give me more' questions

In your presentation, you said that the sturgeon theory can't account for every single sighting:

- a Can you go into more detail about that?
- b Can you say a little more about that?
- c Can you give us some examples of that?

3 'I didn't understand, so tell me again' questions

I'm not very clear on how the process of computer enhancement works:

- a Can you explain about that again?
- b Can you go over that part again?
- c Can you run through that again?

2.3 Look back at the questions that you prepared for Exercise 1.2. Where necessary, use phrases from the Language focus box to improve your questions, and then practise asking them aloud.

3 Speaking effectively: Intonation

Intonation refers to the way that our voice falls or rises when we speak. Good presenters are very much aware of intonation because they know that it can affect the meaning of what is said.

A speaker's intonation indicates several things. Firstly, it tells us whether he or she is stating a fact or raising a question. It also tells us when the speaker is coming to the end of a sentence or section of the presentation, and when he or she is going to start a new point. Intonation also gives us clues about the emotional state of the speaker. A sharp rise or fall indicates strong emotion, e.g., surprise or excitement, whereas flat intonation signals emotional distance or even boredom.



- 3.1** **9** Listen to the two recordings of the statement below. In each case, does the speaker's intonation rise or fall? What effect does the intonation pattern have on the meaning? Complete the chart.


- The surgeon's photograph was a hoax.

Recording	Rising or falling?	Effect on meaning?
1		
2		

- 3.2** **10** Listen to the recording of sentences a–e. Mark whether or not the speakers' intonation rises ↑ or falls ↓ on the words that are underlined.

- Three quite common causes of monster sightings at Loch Ness are boat wakes, mirage effects and floating tree trunks.
- Sonar readings have proved that the monster exists, haven't they?
- Sonar readings can sometimes be false, can't they?
- Why not use a submarine?
- That brings us to the end of my presentation.


3.3 Sentences a–e are all examples of some common intonation patterns in English. What do you think these are? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

3.4  **11** Now listen to the recording of another two statements. What do you notice about the intonation of the words that are underlined?

- The monster may just be a large fish.
- It's possible that the witnesses were simply mistaken.


3.5 Work with a partner. Take turns reading sentences a–g aloud, paying particular attention to your intonation for the words that have been underlined.

- a) The works of three authors have been particularly influential at Loch Ness: Rupert Gould, Constance Whyte and Tim Dinsdale.
- b) The surgeon's photograph was exposed as a hoax in 1994, wasn't it?
- c) Newspaper reports aren't always very reliable though, are they?
- d) It may be that the monster feeds off the mud and sediment at the bottom of the loch.
- e) Could the loch be drained?
- f) It's possible that head and neck sightings are simply tree branches floating in the water.
- g) Scientists last visited the loch in 2003.


3.6  **12** Now listen to the recording of sentences a–g. Was your intonation the same?

4 Answering questions after oral presentations

In the same way that there are a number of phrases for asking questions, we can also identify language that is useful for giving answers.

4.1  **13** Listen to how the presenter deals with questions after his presentation about the Loch Ness monster. Make a note of the phrases he uses to acknowledge each question in the table on page 28 before he gives an answer.

Question	Response
a) I have a question. Do you think the monster might be a large otter?	It's certainly true that otters may have accounted for some of the sightings, particularly the ones on land.
b) I still don't understand why the monster can't be a plesiosaur. Can you explain that part again?	Let me try again. The main difficulty with the plesiosaur theory is that it's hard to see how such a creature could have got into the loch in the first place.
c) So what do you mean when you said that unexplained sightings are simply cases of mistaken identity?	There are a number of factors at Loch Ness that make it particularly easy for people to get confused.

- 4.2**  **14** Listen to the presenter giving more information in response to the questions. Make a note of the evidence he gives for each question.



- a) the monster being a large otter

- b) why the monster can't be a plesiosaur

- c) things that can cause people to see monsters

- 4.3** Sometimes you may simply not know the answer to the audience's questions. In cases like this, rather than pretending, or attempting to bluff your way out, it's usually best just to admit your lack of knowledge. You can always offer to find out the answer for someone later.

Some useful phrases for doing this are listed in the Language focus box at the top of the next page.

Language focus 8

When you simply don't know ...

Sorry, I'm afraid I don't know the answer to that.

Sorry, I'm afraid you've got me there; I simply don't know. I can try to find out for you though. See me after the presentation and we can sort something out.

Sorry, I have to be honest with you and say that I don't know.

4.4

Work with a partner. You are going to practise asking and answering questions. One of you is Person A and the other one is Person B. Look at page 31 and follow the instructions. Person A should begin by saying, 'That brings us to the end of my presentation. Does anyone have any questions?' Swap roles after finishing the task and do it again.

5 Closing an oral presentation

After dealing with questions from the audience, presenters should formally close their presentation. Some useful phrases for doing this are listed in the Language focus box below.

5.1



15 Listen to the recording and then practise saying these phrases out loud.

Language focus 9

Closing phrases

a Does anyone have any more questions? (no questions)
In that case, I'll finish my presentation here. Thank you for listening.

b If there are no more questions, I'll stop here. Thank you very much for your attention.

6 Individual study

Look back at the oral presentation you prepared at the end of Unit 2. If you had been listening to this presentation, what questions might you have asked? Using key phrases from this unit, write down at least three questions and practise both asking and answering them yourself out loud. If possible, try to record your voice while doing this.

Oral presentation top tip 3

Controlling your nerves



For many students, giving an oral presentation can be a nerve-racking experience and something that they dread having to do. For shy students, in particular, standing up in public and speaking in a foreign language may seem like a major ordeal. Unfortunately, as you learnt in Unit 1, oral presentations are becoming an increasingly important feature of university life.

However, all is not lost. The good news is that a basic understanding of how the human body reacts to stress, along with some practice in using stress management techniques, can really help to make the whole situation much more bearable.

Stress and the human body

Whenever we feel stress, the body starts to release the hormone *adrenaline* into the bloodstream. Adrenaline increases the heartbeat, raises the blood pressure and can cause other bodily reactions such as sweating or shaking. Basically, adrenaline is our body's way of giving us some extra energy to deal with life's difficult situations, occasions that are often referred to in textbooks as 'fight or flight'. Even if you're not aware of feeling nervous *mentally* before giving an oral presentation, physically your body will still be preparing itself.

Of course, a certain amount of nervous energy can be a good thing because it keeps you alert. Oral presentations *ought* to be challenging, so you shouldn't expect to get rid of your nervousness completely. However, the secret of being a successful speaker is in knowing how to control that nervousness and making your nervous energy work *for* you rather than *against* you.

A simple way to relax is to put the presentation right out of your mind before you begin. This is best done up to half an hour before you begin, once you are thoroughly prepared. You will find that trying hard to remember what to do right up to the start of the presentation is actually counterproductive.



A routine to help you relax

Most books about stress management mention the importance of effective breathing, especially deep exhalation, or letting all your breath out. This is central to the relaxation technique below, adapted from Sandy Linver's book, *Speak and Get Results* (1994, Fireside, New York).

- a) First go through some basic stretching exercises to help you get rid of tension in your back and neck muscles:
push your shoulders back; bend your spine; gently move your head up and down and from side to side.
- b) Sit down, close your eyes and make a conscious decision to let yourself go. Keep your head upright, but let all your muscles relax. Feel yourself sinking deeply into your seat.
- c) Breathe out deeply. When you think you've finished exhaling, try to let out a little more. You should be able to feel your ribcage dropping every time that you breathe out. Practise exhaling in this way a number of times.
- d) Scan your body for areas of tension. When you find a place that still feels tense, mentally focus on getting your muscles to relax at that point. Keep doing this until you can find no more tension points.

If you practise this routine regularly, it will become an effective stress reliever that you can apply whenever you have to do something that makes you nervous.

Prompts for Exercise 4.4

Person A: Read the instructions below.

Person B: Turn the page upside down and read your instructions.

Instructions for Person A

You have just given a presentation about the Loch Ness monster. If anyone has any questions, you must do your best to answer them. In each case, make sure that you preface your answer with appropriate language to suit the question type.

Begin by saying, 'That brings us to the end of my presentation. Does anyone have any questions?'

Key information to help you answer any questions

- Sonar is like an underwater version of radar. It works by sending electronic sound impulses into the water. When these impulses hit an object, they reflect back and cause an echo that can be shown on a computer screen.
- The monster couldn't be a whale because, just like sharks, whales are saltwater animals. Loch Ness is a freshwater lake.
- Loch Morar has a similar monster tradition to Loch Ness, and there have been a number of expeditions there over the years. The Loch Morar monster is known as Morag, and Loch Morar is the deepest lake in the British Isles.
- As well as the monster, there have also been a number of UFO sightings reported from Loch Ness. Some people believe that monsters and UFOs are somehow connected.
- We shouldn't expect every sonar contact in Loch Ness to represent the monster. Some sonar echoes may in fact just be mistakes caused by the sonar beam bouncing back from rocks under the water.
- The surgeon's photograph from 1934 was exposed as a fake 60 years later – apparently, the picture shows a model mounted on a toy submarine. Another famous photograph from the 1950s also turned out to be a fake – in that case, the photo was of bales of hay covered with black plastic bags.

Instructions for Person B

Ask your partner the following questions. In each case, you should preface your question with appropriate language to suit the question type.

'Straight' questions

- You want to know how sonar works.
- You want to know if the monster could be a whale.

'Give me more' questions

- The presenter said that Loch Morar also has a monster tradition. You want to know more about that.
- The presenter said that other mysteries have been reported from Loch Ness, apart from the monster. You want to know more about that.

'I didn't understand, so tell me again' questions

- The presenter said that not every sonar contact in Loch Ness is likely to be accurate. Ask him/her to explain that again.
- The presenter said that some of the most famous photographs are now known to be fakes. Ask him/her to explain that again.

End of Unit Checklist

You have now completed Unit 3. Read through the statements below and make a record of your progress by ticking the most appropriate boxes.

5 = I feel very confident about this.

4 = I feel confident about this.

3 = I feel quite confident about this.

2 = I don't feel very confident about this.

1 = I still don't understand this at all.

For anything that you rate as a 2 or a 1, go back to that part of the unit and look at the material again.

	5	4	3	2	1
I know some useful phrases for asking questions at the end of an oral presentation.					
I know some different effects that intonation can have on the meaning of spoken English.					
I know how to modify my own intonation to achieve these effects.					
I know some useful phrases for dealing with questions at the end of an oral presentation.					
I know how to close an oral presentation.					
I know how stress and nerves are likely to affect my body.					
I know how to apply some techniques for controlling my nerves before giving an oral presentation.					