

16

Informal Presentation



Standard #7: Planning for Instruction
Standard #8: Instructional Strategies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- 16-1** Summarize the informal presentation model.
- 16-2** Describe the teaching events in the informal presentation approach.
- 16-3** List common uses of the informal presentation model.
- 16-4** Describe the key planning considerations for informal presentation lessons.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- | | |
|--|--|
| 16-1 THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE INFORMAL PRESENTATION LESSON MODEL | 16-4c Advance Organizer |
| 16-2 TEACHING EVENTS IN INFORMAL PRESENTATION | 16-4d Checks for Understanding and Active Participation |
| 16-3 USES OF INFORMAL PRESENTATION | 16-4e Information Delivery |
| 16-4 KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS | 16-4f Extended Practice |
| 16-4a Content Analysis | |
| 16-4b Content Knowledge | |



Introduction

The second of the three models we have selected for this book is **informal presentation** (see Figure 16.1). It was chosen for its effectiveness, simplicity, and straightforward purpose—to deliver information to students clearly and concisely. Arends (2012) points out that this teacher-directed lesson model is very popular in schools today. He states that “presentations (lectures) and explanations by teachers comprise one-sixth to one-fourth of all classroom time and that this style of presentation increases

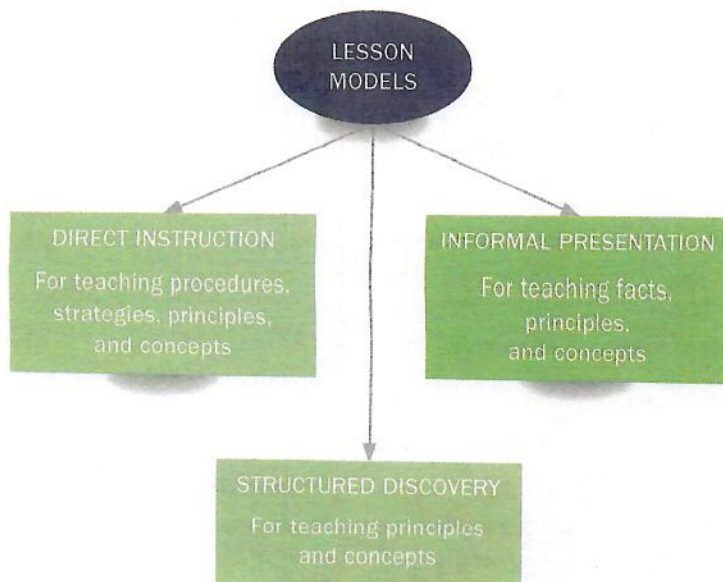
as students move up grade levels. Although considerable effort has gone into creating models aimed at decreasing the amount of teacher talk and making instruction more student-centered, the amount of time devoted to presentation of information has remained relatively stable over time” (p. 264). Arends also contends that this model’s popularity is no surprise because it provides a very effective way to help students acquire the wide range of information they are expected to learn.

16-1 The Fundamentals of the Informal Presentation Model

The main idea of this model is simple—the teacher first tells the students what they are going to be told, then tells them, and finally tells them what they were told (Moore and Hansen 2012). Careful planning can make these lessons effective in all subject areas with either large groups or small groups of students who are of varying ages and abilities (Arends 2012). Note that we are not advocating the use of a large-group lecture format where students are passive listeners. While this type of presentation may have value when used sparingly, in this chapter we are describing the use of an interactive presentation model.

An effective informal presentation lesson is designed to lead students to a specific objective through explicit teaching. The lesson content is delivered in a clear, interesting manner (technology and educational software are a big help here), and the main ideas of the lesson are emphasized through the use of an advance organizer (Ausubel 1960), graphic organizers, visual supports, and other techniques. Students are kept actively involved in the lesson and in rehearsing the new information in a variety of ways, such as asking and answering questions, summarizing concepts, discussing key ideas with a partner, or constructing examples. At the end of the lesson, students will explain, compare and contrast, define, describe, or apply the new information as outlined in the lesson objective.

Figure 16.1 Types of Lesson Models



There are several advantages provided by this lesson model. For one, it significantly benefits students who have reading or reading comprehension problems because it can serve as an accommodation for them. They are able to gain necessary information without having to rely solely on written material. It is also very time-efficient. Instructors can teach large groups as well as small groups of students the same information at the same time.

See Teaching Plans 3 and 11 in the Appendix for examples of informal presentation lesson plans.

16-2 Teaching Events in Informal Presentation

Specific teaching events occur in an informal presentation lesson as the teacher leads students toward the short-term objective. (See Figure 16.2 for a more detailed description of each of the italicized words in the following list.) Here is a description of the general sequence of those events:

- Teacher begins by telling students directly what they will be doing and why—clearly stating the short-term lesson *objective* and the *objective purpose*.
- Teacher shows and explains the *advance organizer* for the content to be taught.
- Teacher presents the lesson content using a subject matter outline/organizer, a variety of visual supports to help clarify information, and frequent *checks for understanding*.
- Teacher provides *supervised practice* opportunities with feedback for students before they work independently to help ensure that they are practicing accurately.
- Teacher uses an *evaluation* following successful practice during which students perform the objective independently and individually.
- Teacher ties the lesson together with a *closing*.
- During the lesson, the teacher:
 - Uses effective presentation techniques and *interest-builders* such as use of voice variations, repeating key ideas, stopping regularly to help students process and so on to help make the presentation clear.
 - Keeps students actively engaged by using various *active participation strategies* such as note-taking guides, partner talk, and so on.

- Provides the students with supports and scaffolds as needed, but withdraws those as soon as possible.

Example 16.1 shows a brief lesson outline highlighting examples of the main teaching events in an informal presentation lesson on community helpers.

EXAMPLE 16.1: USING INFORMAL PRESENTATION TO TEACH ABOUT COMMUNITY HELPERS

Teacher: "Today we're going to learn about another community helper, fire fighters, because it's important for us to know who we can trust to help keep us safe."

Teacher: "Look at the Community Helpers (CH) poster we made yesterday [advance organizer]. It shows many people who help us in many ways. I'm pointing at pictures of CHs who help keep us safe. Do you know who they are? Which one will we learn about today—everyone?"

Teacher: "You each have a piece of paper that looks like this [show and read the outline, then read in unison]:

Firefighters
What they do
Where they work
What they wear"

Teacher: "We'll talk about each item, and later you will draw or cut out pictures to show what they do, where they work, what they wear." [Teacher talks through each section emphasizing key ideas.]

Teacher: [Show video of firefighters putting out a fire, working in the fire station, and riding in the fire truck. Show other pictures and lead discussion of each item in outline, completing each with words and drawings. Introduce surprise visitor—Tara's mom who is a firefighter. She's in full uniform and talks about her job.]

Students: [Ask questions of firefighter, look at books about firefighters, begin filling in outline with pictures (teacher monitors and helps).]

Teacher: "We'll close the lesson for now, but tomorrow we are going to visit the fire station. Tell your partner one thing you learned today."

Teacher: [Evaluate over the next couple of days by asking each student individually to answer each item in outline.]

16-3 Uses of Informal Presentation

Teachers generally use the informal presentation model to teach declarative information. That is, they teach facts or knowledge *about* something (Smith and Ragan 2005; Arends 2012). Factual information, principles, and concepts are examples of declarative knowledge. The direct instruction model (Chapter 15), on the other hand, is typically used to teach procedural knowledge (i.e., how to do something). See Chapter 1 for more information on declarative and procedural knowledge.

Teachers can organize declarative information in different ways, depending on the type of information that is to be taught. For example, if you are going to teach a principle, plan a clear principle statement in advance, along with many supporting examples, so that you can communicate it effectively to the students during the lesson. If you are going to teach factual information, prepare a **graphic organizer** or outline that depicts the relationships among ideas. This provides you with a mechanism by which to evaluate what information to include, and it can help ensure that the content to be presented is related and relevant. A concept analysis should be prepared when you are going to teach a concept. These methods of organizing content can help you prepare complete, cohesive explanations to use during the lesson body.

The informal presentation model is appropriately used to present a wide range of topics. In Example 16.2, you will find some examples organized into three categories of declarative knowledge.

EXAMPLE 16.2: TOPICS THAT COULD BE TAUGHT USING THE INFORMAL PRESENTATION MODEL

Factual information examples include

- History of the stock market
- Community helpers
- Differences between poetry and prose
- The story of Anne Frank
- Characteristics of mammals

Principles include ideas such as

- When the economy is sluggish, interest rates generally go down.
- Drinking alcohol can cause alcoholism.

- $E=mc^2$.
- Birds migrate when the weather changes.
- If plants get no water, then they die.

Concept examples include

- Symmetry
- Human rights
- Motivation
- Addition
- Literary devices

The following examples illustrate the variety of purposes the informal presentation model can address:

- Mrs. McBride includes content about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in a unit she teaches as part of her health class curriculum. She begins the unit with an informal presentation lesson on types of STDs and criteria used to classify them. In this case, Mrs. McBride is using this lesson to *present new information*.
- Mrs. Miller uses an informal presentation lesson to teach her students about various types of cloud formations. This information is to be used as background information for a series of lessons on causes of weather. Mrs. Miller is using an informal presentation lesson to *teach background information* for future lessons.
- Mr. Baish pre-teaches important content on simple machines from Chapter 5 in the science textbook to a small group of students. This is done before they read the chapter and participate in the lesson in the general education classroom. He is using an informal presentation lesson to *supplement written information for struggling readers* and to *increase prior knowledge* to make it more likely that these students will be successful.
- Mr. Davis follows a student reading assignment about the causes of the Civil War with an informal presentation lesson. The purpose of the lesson is to *help clarify previously studied information*. He clarifies the information his students gained from the reading assignment.

- Mr. Chin prepares an informal presentation lesson to *conclude a series of lessons* on the civil rights movement. He plans to summarize a number of key points and generalizations for which his students will be held responsible.
- Mrs. Brown uses an informal presentation lesson about volcanoes—complete with a working model—as an introductory lesson to a unit on landforms. The purpose of the lesson is to teach specific content and to *help create interest* in the upcoming unit.
- Ms. Bishop teaches informal presentation lessons on several aspects of computer technology. This content changes far more rapidly than student textbooks are replaced, so the information in her textbooks is often outdated. Ms. Bishop reads extensively to stay current in her field, but the written material she reads is not appropriate for her students. In this case, Ms. Bishop uses informal presentation lessons to *present information not readily available in other sources*, such as textbooks.
- Sra. Lopez made a video of herself teaching an informal presentation lesson on stem-changing verbs. She has her Spanish students watch it at home. The next day, she will use class time for conversation practice and games with these verbs. She is using this informal presentation lesson homework to *allow more time for in-class practice and feedback*.

16-4 Key Planning Considerations

Figure 16.2 provides a summary of the components and key content to be included in an informal presentation lesson. Some of the components are discussed in more detail here. Note that informal presentation lessons are not difficult to plan if the teacher begins with a thorough understanding of the content to present. When planning the lesson, give special consideration to the following elements.

16-4a Content Analysis

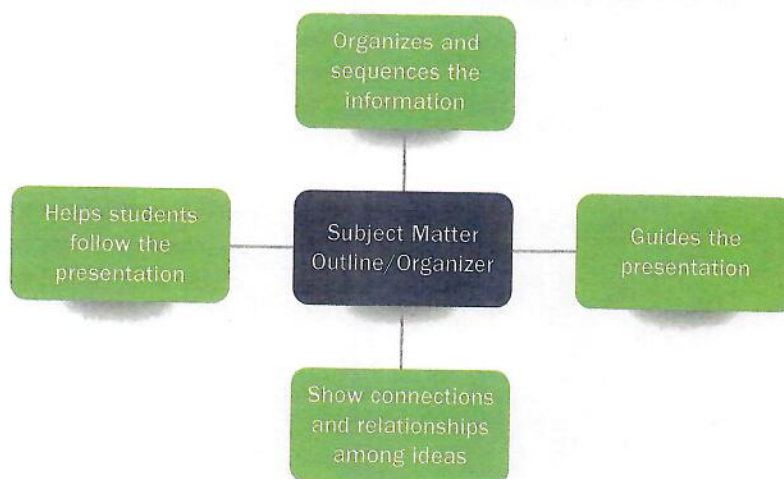
The **content analysis** for an informal presentation lesson will often include a subject-matter outline/organizer. We use the term **subject-matter outline/organizer** to include various types of outlines and graphic organizers, such as webs, maps, diagrams, and charts that depict connections

among ideas. See Figure 16.3. Whenever the goal is to teach about something (rather than to teach how to do something) and to teach factual information, a subject-matter outline can be an effective way to organize and sequence the information to be presented. A well-planned subject-matter outline/organizer will be used in the lesson body to guide the presentation.

Careful preparation of the subject-matter outline/organizer can be of great benefit. First, it can help ensure that you select content that directly relates to the objective to be accomplished. Also, it can help ensure that the content is closely related to the big ideas and generalizations that are specific to the content area being studied. Next, it can help prevent errors in accuracy and ensure that the information to be presented is clear. In addition, when students have copies of the outline/organizer, it can help them follow the presentation more closely. Finally, it can simplify the planning of the lesson body because it is used to guide the actual presentation that the teacher makes to the students. These benefits mean that various active participation strategies, visual supports, and presentation techniques will become the main focus of the lesson-body planning rather than organization of the content.

A well-crafted subject-matter outline/graphic organizer can be an excellent resource for your students as well as being a guide for your presentation. You may choose to show the outline to the students during the presentation, or you may give them a copy, or partial copy, to use as a note-taking guide. Another option would be to give them the outline to use as a study guide. They can add more information to it from readings, interviews, videos, Internet sites, or other sources. The subject-matter outline allows students a way to see the main ideas of the topic in a clear, concise display.

There is no set rule about the amount of detail to include in the outline. Provide enough detail to ensure a clear presentation but not so much detail that the presentation loses focus. Emphasize the relationship between details and main ideas. Prepare an outline that is detailed, yet brief. Single words and short phrases should serve as cues for information that has been committed to memory by the presenter. These are preferred to lengthy sentences or narrative (Esler and Sciortino 1991). The outline, which should not be read, should serve as a reminder of what will be said.

Figure 16.3 What a Subject Matter Outline/Organizer Does

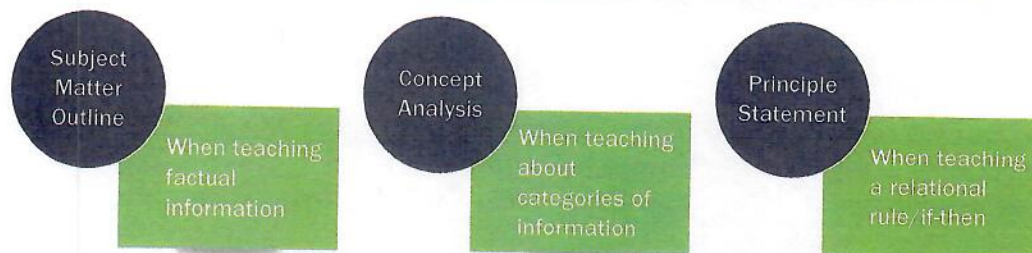
When you are going to teach a principle, include a **principle statement** in the content analysis. Remember that principles are relational rules that prescribe the relationship between two or more ideas. When teaching principles using the informal presentation model, a principle statement serves as the organizer for the presentation itself. It will be explained to the students in detail and shown in writing.

Be sure that you plan in advance how to explain the principle to your students. Begin by writing out the complete principle statement, including the condition and the result or the action that needs to be taken. It can be difficult to correctly or accurately explain the principle spontaneously during the lesson or activity. Next, carefully consider which words are best used as part of your explanation. Finally, be sure that you plan many, varied examples to illustrate the principle. It is important that your students can apply the principle to unknown examples (Smith and Ragan 2005).

Informal presentation can also be used to teach concepts. In this case, a thorough **concept analysis**

is the best way to begin the planning for this type of lesson. It will be well worth your time to make sure you have thoroughly thought through the various features of the concept in order to be clear when you present that information to students. Just like other content analyses, the concept analysis is likely shown to students directly and left up during the lesson as a reference for them and for you.

Concepts vary in complexity. Concepts can be broad (farm equipment) or narrow (Farmall tractor) and abstract (freedom) or concrete (fork). The more abstract or broad a concept is, the more challenging it is to teach. It is always necessary to spend time making sure that the concept analysis you construct is complete and accurate, but special care must be taken when planning for complex or complicated concepts. (See Chapter 1 for more information on concepts and Chapter 18 for information about teaching concepts.) Take a look at Figure 16.4 to see a summary of the content analyses typically used in informal presentation lessons.

Figure 16.4 Content Analyses Typically Used in Informal Presentation Lessons

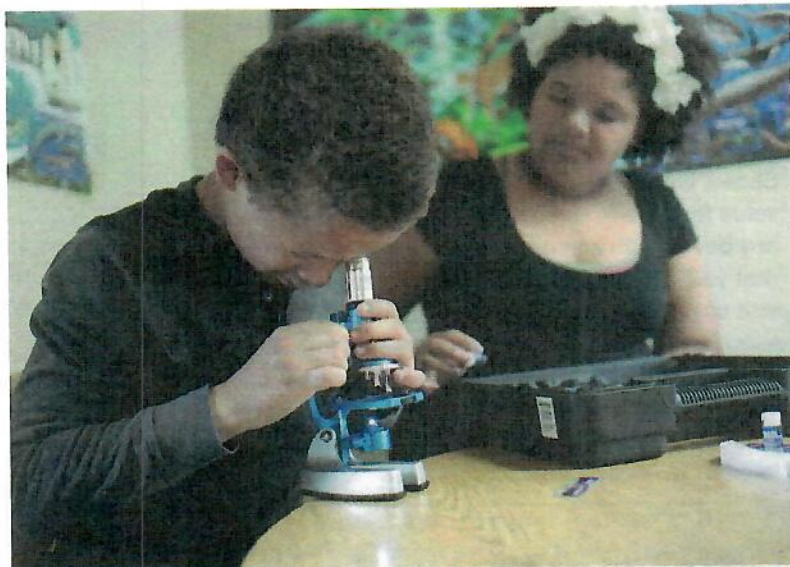


Photo 16.1 After giving an informal presentation lesson on science tools, the teacher has students circulate through centers to practice using each tool.

Carefully select, plan, and monitor all extended practice activities. It can be especially challenging to make sure the activities and experiences that are to take place after school will keep students engaged. The IES Practice Guide, *Structuring Out-of-School Time to Improve Academic Achievement*, describes evidence for its Recommendation 4: Provide engaging learning experiences. The panel describes specific ways to implement this recommendation. One is to incorporate practical examples and connect instruction to student interests and experiences. The other is to include tools or materials that students can relate to. The panel also says that while there is low evidence to support this recommendation, its value is based on expert opinion derived from strong findings or theories in related areas (Beckett et al. 2009). When planning any extended

practice activity, remember to carefully consider your students and their interests and experiences.

Here are some examples of extended practice tasks:

- Mrs. Rosenberg delivers a presentation on genetic engineering that is followed by small-group discussions of ethical considerations.
- Following a lesson presentation on electrical circuits, Mrs. Wines takes students to the local science museum to see the exhibit highlighting the role of electrical circuits in modern day society.
- Mrs. VanZee first presents basic information about different types of families around the world. Students then complete various “center” activities where they read, write, draw, and interview peers about their families.
- Mr. Ceccatti makes a presentation on three literary elements (simile, hyperbole, personification) that are often used in poetry. For a homework assignment, he has students find examples of each element in music selections of their choice (e.g., rap, soft rock).
- Mrs. Beatty presents information about cell division. Students then go to their lab stations to perform experiments.
- During her presentation on how to identify bullying behavior, Ms. Tassini uses examples (without names of course) of incidents that she has observed in her classroom and on the playground. Students are given an assignment to gather more examples of bullying (e.g., interview friends, look for examples on the TV shows they see that evening).
- Mr. Nielsen teaches an informal presentation lesson about parts of a research paper. Students then go to the library to begin collecting resources for their own papers.

Summary

Informal presentation is a teacher-directed lesson model that can be used to teach a wide variety of topics. It requires careful planning of oral explanations. In addition, carefully selected visual supports, including a written content analysis, is key to

making sure that content is clearly and accurately explained. Study of the information to be presented in the lesson will help make the teacher the “content expert,” which is instrumental to the success of this model.