The introduction to *Giving Academic Presentations* lists several possible groups who may benefit from using the text. Students in these diverse groups face similar problems, especially if they have done little public speaking in an academic context. For example, they may not yet recognize the importance of carefully practicing and evaluating their speech before presenting it to an audience, which may make them appear unprepared. Or they may be unfamiliar with different types of speeches and how they give rise to different organizing and connecting strategies, which may make their speech seem disorganized. They may also lack confidence speaking in an academic setting, which limits their ability to be persuasive. In addition, when faced with a number of deficiencies, novice speakers tend to concentrate on improving some skills while neglecting others. Good academic speakers use a combination of skills and strategies. Speakers who successfully organize their presentation must also talk loud enough for the audience to hear them. Presenters who carefully prepare their speech and design their visual aids still need to practice it aloud to polish their delivery. *Giving Academic Presentations* teaches a number of speech-making skills and strategies as well as provides opportunities for students to use a combination of these skills and strategies during their presentations.

The text also emphasizes the importance of audience and the need for speakers to establish and maintain a relationship with the audience. One of the primary jobs of the English instructor is to help students recognize that skills and strategies they develop as presenters can enhance their relationship with the audience. Speakers who use strategies such as providing an overview, signaling what they are going to say next, preparing for and responding to questions and criticism, clarifying information, giving examples, using humor, etc., do so as a means of improving their relationship with their listeners.

**Notes for Individual Units**

This manual gives teaching suggestions for each unit in the text. The relationship of the instructor to the text is meant to be flexible. Instructors may wish to use each unit as it is written or may delete, modify, or add materials to suit their particular needs. Notes for units 1–5 contain suggestions for additional activities.
Answers to Tasks

Answers to tasks are often given in the unit itself. Some answers are not provided but become obvious as students work their way through the unit; others are included in this manual.

Videotaping Student Speeches

In each unit, students are expected to give a final presentation. When possible, instructors should videotape their students’ speeches. At first students may be nervous in front of the camera. However, they come to see the value of being able to watch themselves on tape. They notice problems that they may not have been aware of during their speech, such as foot shuffling, a lack of linking words or signposts, overuse of pausing and repetition, an undeveloped relationship with the audience, mispronunciation of key words, and minimal gestures and eye contact. They also notice strengths or areas that they have improved in, such as a clearer response to questions from the audience, a louder voice, and a more effective organizational strategy.

Students may also notice that they are making uneven progress. This is not unusual, and there may be several explanations. For example, students may have trouble dealing with longer and more complex speeches, or they may not have prepared or practiced as well. As students watch their videos, it is useful for them to think about new problems that have arisen and why.

For those instructors who do not have access to camera equipment, audiotaping is a less effective but useful option especially if it is combined with immediate feedback from the audience and instructor. If no equipment is available, immediate feedback is crucial.

Class Size and Problems with Classroom Management

Even for ESL instructors who work with small groups of students, teaching an academic presentations class can be a demanding and time-consuming experience. Depending on the length of the speeches, the instructor may only be able to allow for four to seven presentations in a 50-minute class session with little or no feedback from the audience. One exception is the introduction speeches. Instructors may be able to handle ten to thirteen of these in an hour with little or no feedback. Feedback can add three to five minutes to the presentation time, longer if audience members participate. Instructors wishing to meet individual students may find themselves in conferences of fifteen to thirty minutes or even longer.
Instructors may wish to consider the following suggestions for designing and managing an academic presentations class.

1. The maximum optimum size for this class is generally twelve students.

2. If the class is large, instructors may wish to choose from the following options.
   - Instructors may wish to divide the group in two on speech days so that one group comes on one day and the other group comes on the other.
   - Students can be assigned group presentations. (See below.)
   - Members of the class can present their final speech to the class on a rotating basis. Those not giving their speech in class can meet in small groups outside class and present their speeches to each other. Both the speaker and group members can then submit a written critique of each performance. If possible, a videotape of the group’s speeches should also be submitted to the instructor, and the instructor can then give oral or written feedback on performances not done during class time.
   - Students can present their speeches informally in a group during class. In this case, they might not stand but would still be expected to use gestures, eye contact, a visual aid, and so on. Members of their group can evaluate one another’s performance.

3. Oral feedback in class from other students and/or the instructor is very helpful. Peers can reinforce and add to suggestions given by the instructor. Initially they may be reluctant to make comments in class, but after several opportunities they feel more comfortable critiquing a fellow student’s work. Speakers appreciate feedback from their peers, especially those who can offer specific comments about the contents of the speech.

4. Prespeech and final written evaluations are an important part of the speech-making process. Evaluation forms are included in most units along with instructions. Unit 1 contains a sample completed evaluation. If speakers have been videotaped in class, they should watch their videos, either alone or with other class members, and complete the final evaluation forms at the end of each unit. If speakers have been audiotaped, they will not be able to complete the entire evaluation by themselves but may be able to rely on in-class feedback to round out the evaluation.

5. Some instructors find it difficult to listen to the contents of a presentation and critique it at the same time. They may wish to view some or all of the
student videotapes later and write down comments on an evaluation sheet. If it is required, grading can also be done at that time.

6. Where possible, it is recommended that instructors meet with students individually or in a small group at least one to three times a semester to watch their video and give individual feedback. The instructor can highlight recurring or significant problems as well as point out the speaker’s strengths. During interviews, the speaker and instructor can discuss such weaknesses as whether the speaker has too many or too few details, needs to use more stress on key words, should reorganize material, or isn’t using connectors effectively. In some cases, the speaker’s most serious problem may be loudness or speaking too fast. By working with the instructor, some students will be able to make immediate progress. For students who think that grammar is their major problem, during conferences the instructor can point out that grammar may not be affecting the quality of the speech nearly as much as other problems, such as topic choice, organization, or lack of audience contact. However, students whose grammar problems do interfere with the quality of their presentation can be helped during conferences.

7. Students can be asked to write out at least one of their speeches before presenting it. The instructor and/or other class members can provide feedback before the presentation and then during the presentation evaluate students on how they improved their speeches. Students, however, should generally be encouraged to work from an outline, rather than a written version of their speech.

8. Instructors may find it very helpful to have students present one or two of their speeches twice—once to the instructor or a small group and again to a larger audience. That way, they can receive feedback and then improve on their speech before presenting it a second time. This generally leads to less nervousness and a better presentation.

**Group Presentations**

With the exception of unit 6, the text does not include any pair or group presentations. This is because the text was envisioned for use in classes with students from diverse academic backgrounds. Even students from the same area of studies may not have the same area of interest as their colleagues. Furthermore, group work may not be valued in their department, and students may be expected to take on the entire responsibility for their presentations. However, instructors who use the text may be able to organize group presentations, especially if their students come from the same field of studies. The following are examples of possible group presentations.
• Object speech. One student presents background information and describes the outside of the object. The other presents the inside of the object and concludes.

• Definition and process speeches (pairs). One student presents the introduction and closing and the other presents the extended definition or process.

• Problem-solution speeches (a group of four). Each student presents one of the four parts of a problem-solution speech.

• Problem-solution speeches (a group of three). One student presents the situation and problem. The second student proposes one solution and justifies it, and the third proposes and justifies another.