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How to confidently present your research at conferences

AsiaEdit Author Success Webinar
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1 Making a good first impression

2 Holding audience attention

3 Tips for confident presenting

Introductions

1 Making a good first impression

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How should you start your presentation?

A
X

Hello. My name is X. I come from Japan, and I have a BSc from the University of Y, where I am now doing a PhD. My supervisor is Professor Z. I am based at the Department of A at the University of Y...

B
X

The title of my talk is "How to present your research at international conferences". Please look at this agenda slide for my talk...

C
X

International research conferences take place in situ and virtually in multiple disciplines. Researchers share the fruits of their labour to push the envelope....

Brief intro
Topic & findings
Outline
Everyday words

✓ Hello. I'm X, from Professor Z's group at the University of Y, in Japan. I'll be sharing our findings on what speaking styles work best for presenting research, to get the most out of conferences. My talk will cover A, B, and C.


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Messaging, tone, mood

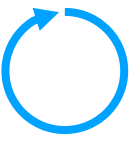
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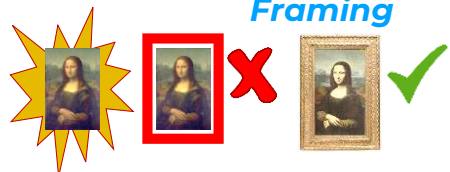
What you say & how you say it



Rule of 3





Full circle



Framing

- **Beginning**, middle, end of story
- **Tell them what you're going to tell them** → Tell them → Tell them what you told them
- **WIIFM** "What's in it for me?": **Frontload key point** → functional & emotional benefits not features
- **Beginning** grabs attention (hook) & links to end (anchor)
- **Q** is answered; **problem** is solved; **advice** is explained
- **Closure**, fulfilment, reflection → reinforces **key point**
- **AAAA: Attitude & approach** affect audiences
 - Perspective & formality, seriousness, optimism, friendliness
 - Attractive artwork, fonts, colours

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Presentation structure 1

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Frameworks

Journal article

Abstract

Intro
Method
Results
Conclusion

Intro
Q & Aim
Method
Results
Discussion
Conclusion

Talk

Conclusion
Agenda

Context,
Methods &
Results/Figures

Conclusions/
Interpretation
& Implications

Q/A

1. Grab attention:
Primacy effect, Anchoring, Framing

2. Hold attention:
Story line, reminders of agenda

- *Order of importance: IMRaD:*
Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion
- *Overall logical pattern: Problem - Solution*
- *Local logical patterns:*
Processes (Methods), **General/Specific** (Results), **Compare-Contrast** (Discussion)

3. Stay top-of-mind: What / So what / Now what?

- Recency effect, Take-home message
- Call to Action (Q/A, feedback, network)

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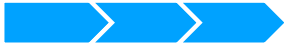
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Presentation structure 2


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Logical patterns




Time, process sequence




Order of importance, complexity, size



Cause/Effect, Conditions



Compare/Contrast



Whole/Parts, General/Specific

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Social goals

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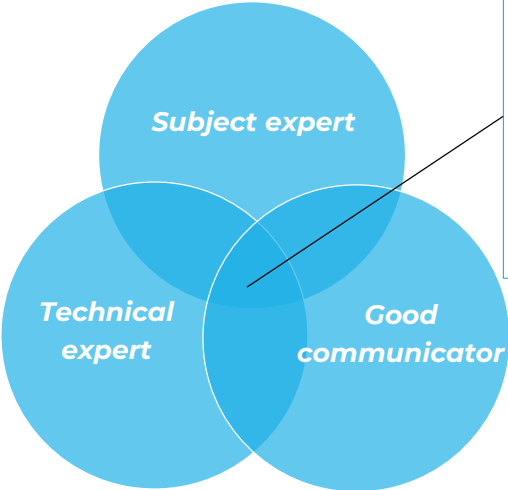
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Build your personal reputation



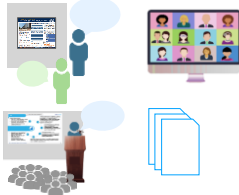
Triangulation

- Appropriate literature/theories, aim/approach, data sources
- Robust methods/tools, observers, data collection/types
- Reliable analyses, interpretations, conclusions



Professionalism

- Ethical, well-designed, well-done, well-reported study to advance field
- Logical, unbiased, engaging talk & Q/A; language fits community
- Knowledgeable, credible, personable, respectful



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Style & delivery 1

1 Making a good first impression

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Some presentation myths

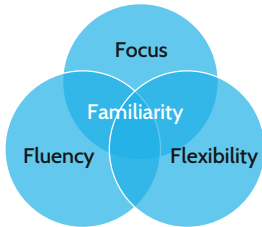
*It's, like, yeah, you know.
Um, what'd'y'all reckon?*

✗

Make it a conversation

Smile & look happy

Practice makes perfect



✓

- Audience engagement; “conversational” style
- Smile at beginning & end; show empathy
- Practice makes progress
- Practice means preparedness
- Practice builds confidence

- Script → notes; learn facts, key messages, difficult words, illustrations, slide transitions
- Speak naturally, talk into mic
- Improve with improv (improvisation):
 - Who spoke before you? (too long/short?)
 - “Read the room”
 - Q/A

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Style & delivery 2

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Professional informal style

Too formal ❌

1. A discourse analysis of 500 conference speeches was performed.
2. In the present study, it was found that overly formal language predominated among presenters.
3. In conclusion, it is important that researchers receive appropriate training before international conference presentation.

✅

1. We looked at 500 conference speeches.
2. Our main finding was that most of the presenters spoke too formally.
3. What did we conclude? First of all, it's important that researchers get presentation training.

- Personal pronouns
- More active voice, verbs > nouns, Qs, signposts
- Contractions, simple words, spoken grammar

Too casual ❌

1. Me and the team took apart 500 speeches.
2. The bulk of presenter lingo is, like, way too formal.
3. The bottom line? Researchers: go level up before jetting off to a speaking gig.

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1 Making a good first impression

2 **Holding audience attention**


3 Tips for confident presenting

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Verbal communication

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Which of the following are good conference styles?

"It's important to use the right speaking style when delivering your conference presentation."


A Teacher

- Slow; pauses to elicit responses
- Authoritative but friendly; can be interactive
- Unscripted, two-way




B News reader

- Serious, steady, low
- High-fall / rise-fall pitch segments; louder endings
- Scripted, one-way



C Show announcer

- Exciting, high
- Loud, dramatic high-fall pitch segments, choppy
- Scripted, one-way



1. Clear, projected, but natural voice & rhythm (not recited, monotone, chatty, shouty)
4. Pause after important points; repeat/paraphrase important points ✓
2. Low = serious; high = energetic
5. Facial/hand gestures, eye contact
3. Louder, slower, higher for important points
6. Refer to visuals in speech and by pointing

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Engagement 1

2 Holding audience attention

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Audience "involvement"

Use visuals

- Enhance message (is English the audience's 2nd language?)
- Refer/indicate
- Specify features clearly

Direct Qs

- Poll
- Quiz
- Ask for feedback/Qs

Indirect Qs

- Mock poll
- Mock quiz
- Rhetorical Qs

Inclusion

- *We (all), Us, Our, You*
- Fit language/technical/energy level of audience
- Appropriate hand movements, eye contact / eye "sweep" in stages

Verbs

- *Imagine*
- *Consider this*
- *Remember, Think*

Talk to, not at audience

- Welcoming, thanking, refer to event, *I'd like to tell you a true story*
- Show & tell (slide animation)
- Guidance & help (eg. section slides, what's next, repeat key points, explain abbreviations)

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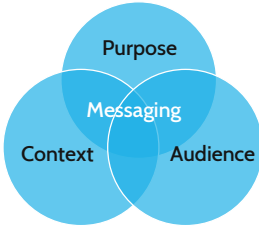
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Engagement 2

2 Holding audience attention


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Audience analysis, "dialogue"



Context/Venue:

- Mode, format, duration, time?
- Technical requirements, set-up/practice?
- Size of meeting, interaction?



Audience:

- Interests; demographics?
- Technicality/expertise?
- English level?
- Stance/background?

Purpose:

- Topic: theory/practice, basic/applied?
- Networking, updating, learning?
- Inform, persuade, entertain, motivate?

Level of detail, while still accurate:

- Amount of background/theory
- Definitions, explanations of terms
- Variety (pictures, Qs)

International audiences:

- Speak clearly; simpler words
- Avoid idioms, jargon, abbreviations
- Repeat, paraphrase, signal what/why

"Hostile" audience / New area / Against current paradigm:

- More evidence; justification of approach
- Repetition, elaboration, exemplification
- Anticipate objections

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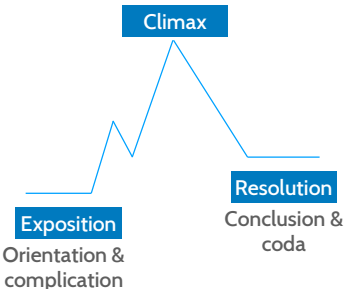
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Storyline

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Tell a memorable story




Exposition
Orientation & complication

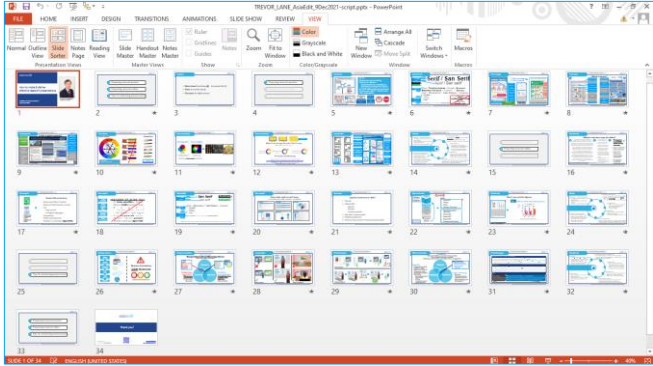
Climax

Resolution
Conclusion & coda

Mention human side:

- Thinking process for aim/approach
- Unexpected findings, lessons learnt
- Recommendations, benefits, societal impact





PowerPoint View > Slide Sorter

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Transition phrases 1

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Logic signal words

	First,... Second,... Third,... To begin with,... Then,... Afterwards,... Next,... Finally,...
	Most importantly,... Next,... The most important / biggest / most common X is..., Then comes...
	As a result,... As a consequence,... It follows that... If,...then ...because... Therefore,... Hence,... So,...
	Similarly,... Likewise,... Both... In the same way,... In/By contrast,... Unlike...
	Together... Taken together,... Overall,... In conclusion,... In summary,... To summarise,... To sum up,...

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Transition phrases 2

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Message signal words

	In addition,... Likewise,... Another feature/issue is... What's more,... On top of that,... Also,... Plus,... ...too... ...as well Furthermore, Moreover, Additionally
	In other words,... This means that... What I mean is... So, basically,... Essentially,... To put it simply,...
	On the one hand,... On the other hand,... Either/or... Neither/nor... However,... But... Even though... Although... Whereas... Nevertheless, Notwithstanding, Nonetheless, (Despite... In spite of...)
	For example,... For instance,... One example is... There are 2 types of... ...such as...
	There are 4 parts to... X has 4 parts... There are 4 reasons that... The most important... Especially... Most importantly,... Notably,...

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Signposting storyline

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Topic control phrases

Changing topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving on [pause]; in this slide/figure, we see that... So, we've just looked at X; let's take a look at Y <u>Now</u>, we turn to the results / What did we find?
Reminding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember in section 1, we looked at... Earlier I told you... / As I said earlier,... If you recall,...
Summarising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So far, we've seen that... My main point is that... / So, the key point is... In summary, there are 3...
Repeating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'll come back to this topic later This point bears repeating... In this model, we see again that...
Concluding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'd like to finish with these key take-home messages / Despite these limitations, we can conclude that... Future steps include... / Potential uses are... I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have

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Signposting illustrations

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Pointing phrases

Introducing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did we find? / What were our results? The next few images show... These graphs show that... / What these show is...
Locating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As you can see at the top left... / You can see here... If you take a look at the circled part, you'll notice... In this table, the last column shows that...
Highlighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'd like to point out the numbers in bold... The main feature of this slide/figure is... This arrow's pointing to...
Comparing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Here, we see groups A and B had a similar X X was higher in group A than in group B These differences aren't statistically significant
Explaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The level of X rises at this point because... We think the plateau here happened because... So, what do these results mean?

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Gesturing

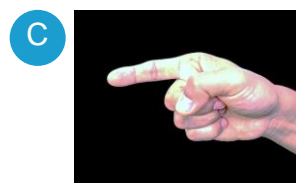
What do these mean?



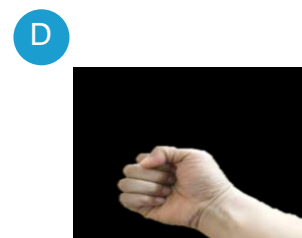
Count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5



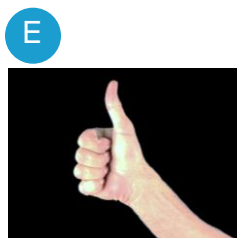
Offer, point, increase



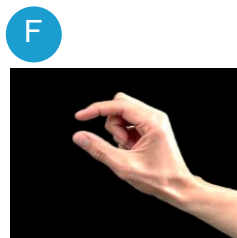
Point, blame



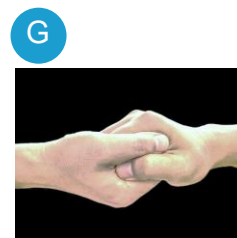
Power



Good



Little




Link, together

Mean what you say

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Communication beyond words



Confidence & personal connection

- Open body language
- Upright posture
- Eye contact without staring
- Keep hands close to body
- Match facial & hand gestures to message; look natural



Paralanguage

- Important words start higher, are louder, and are slower.
- Statements end with a ↓ high-falling intonation... Especially at ends of sentences.
- Did you know that general questions rise at the ↑ end? And if you're ↑ unfinished...
- Which questions ↓ fall at the end? (WH ones: when/what/why/who/where/how)
- Items in a list go ↑ up, have ↑ pauses, but ↓ fall on the last one.
- Change topics by pausing, then using louder, high-falling ↓ keywords.


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Say what you mean

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Pronounce accurately and fluently



Clear pronunciation

- Increase (n) / increase (v), Project (n) / project (v), Separate (adj) / separate (v)
- Re-cover / recover, Re-sign / resign
- Analyse, analysis, analytical, analytically
- Green house / greenhouse, Glass house / glasshouse
- Ambiguity, lounge, launch, protein, colloquial, whistle, write, subtle sixth, 13 / 30



Natural connected speech

- English is stress-timed. Words are stressed for their importance or special contrast.
- Try to speak in chunks | rather than to separate every word, | like a robot.
- Some fast words have weak forms and are quieter. [s'm, h'v, 'n'er]
- Did you know that your words can blend? [dj, tch, mb]
- Extra sounds appear in between words: eg, "the idea is to eat less". [r, y, r, w]

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Q & A session 1

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Answering audience questions

L	Listen actively to Q	Oh, I didn't catch/get the whole question. / Sorry, I couldn't hear that. → Could you repeat that (last part), please? / Could you speak louder?
U	Understand Q	I'm not sure if your asking about... / I think your question is about... → Could you clarify (the question)? / Are you asking/referring to...? / Is your question...? → OK, thank you for that question / for raising that point
C	Check everyone understands Q	So, this question is about... / So, the question is... → The main issue here is... / There are <u>two issues</u> involved here... / As some of you may know,...
K	Know what to say, with evidence	Basically, yes... / Actually, no... / My initial answer is it depends... / The evidence so far indicates... / This was mentioned in my talk, so I'd like to take this opportunity to [clarify / elaborate / show these extra data...]
Y	Yield the floor	I hope that answers the question. / Does that answer the question? → We have time for one more question. / Are there any other questions?

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Q & A session 2

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Difficult questions

U N	Unexpected? Negative?	
L	Limitations	Thank you... That limitation didn't affect the validity... / We minimised the effect of... → Future improvements could... / We plan to...
U	Unknown	We didn't look at that aspect... / That was out of scope of our study... / The literature is mixed on that topic → The jury is still out / We're still waiting... → Based on X, it's plausible/likely that... / What we generally know is...
C	Can't answer now / contact later	I don't have the data here / A full answer would take too long;...basically... → You can email me and I'll get back you / We can discuss that at lunch
K	Knowledge gap / flaw in the Q	You mention X's work; they actually just retracted that paper because of [faulty reagents] / Oh, we didn't use that method/framework for our setting because... / I think those estimates only apply to X...
Y	"Yes, and" if disagreeing	I can see why you say that / I agree up to a certain point / You might be right → Our data show... / After correcting for... / Both models are valid

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Anticipate objections

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Toulmin model of argumentation

Backing
Support

Warrant
Assumption

Grounds
Observation, evidence, facts

Qualifier
Scope/certainty?

Claim
Interpretation, assertion

Rebuttal
Alternative view/s?

Strong claim:
Our findings definitively show...

Grounds:
From these results,... According to... Given that...

Warrant:
We assumed that... Following the principle of...

Backing:
The literature shows... It's universally accepted...

Rebuttal:
Granted,... Some might say... It's possible that...

Qualified claim:
So, generally / usually / in most cases...
Our findings suggest / indicate / imply...

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General tips

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Check guidelines:

- Requirements & deadlines; originality
- Presentation & publication
- Avoid **CON**-ferences & **predatory** journals: see ThinkCheckAttend.org & ThinkCheckSubmit.org

Prepare well:

- Match aim/scope, audience
- Allow production time; 1 hour per slide
- Interesting storyline, vary art types & detail (1 min, 2 min slides)

Practise:

- Clear pronunciation, beginning & end, key messages, topic transitions
- Paraphrasing, improv, short/long
- FAQs

Develop:

- Expressive tone for talks
- Phrase lists for talk & for networking
- Preparation checklists / rituals

Appear confident:

- Deep breath, pause to gather thoughts
- Sound natural, esp. if using PPT script; don't rush
- Upright posture; don't apologise in advance

Stage presence:

- Know "stage" space (inc. screen/poster, AV, mic position, laser, timer/clock, water)
- Check your appearance, body language
- Be collegial: eye contact, look at friendly faces, adjust delivery to audience

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Thank you!

