

Creating Effective and Engaging Presentations

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Building engaging presentation slides – Fundamental Rules

- N Start writing your speech/talk outline – DO NOT start putting together slides.
- N Use less text and more images – high quality images.
- N Focus on YOU and your presentation, NOT the PowerPoint – Your presentation should be legible from anywhere in the room/hall.

Best Practice Presentation TIPS

- 4 Use a consistent design.
- 4 Show one topic per slide.
- 4 Avoid information overload – Use the ‘Rule of Three’.
- 4 Display one bullet at a time.
- 4 Embed videos.
- 4 Ask and answer questions.

Blunders to avoid

- N Avoid unnecessary animations and sound effects.
- N Do NOT include content that does not support your main point.
- N Do NOT use the slides as a teleprompter.
- N Never give out copies of your presentation

before or during the actual presentation.

Making Conference Presentations

Attitudes about conference presentations

1. What is the function or purpose of a conference presentation?
 - To introduce oneself to the academic/professional community
 - To test out ideas and perspectives with a professional audience
 - To socialize into the norms and processes of the academic / professional community
2. What should one expect to accomplish by presenting papers at regional/local, national and international conferences?
 - To present the best possible work of scholarship and/or research, prior to publication
 - To get fair but strong critiques (during or after the presentation) from participants
3. How do these expectations change as one progresses through one’s career?
 - Realization that presentation and publication are about building a body of work that represents one to fellow scholars/professionals across space and time

- Sharpening of scholarship, writing and oral presentation skills
- Greater feeling of comfort and confidence within, as a scholar and presenter
- Crystallization of professional identities and preferences over time

Preparing for a conference presentation

1. What is the best way to prepare for a presentation? What are the useful strategies for practising?

- Stick to the deadline.
- Prepare *two* papers, not one – one for printing and one for oral presentation.
- Tight time constraints at conferences usually guide one what to do. Plan to use the time given *fully and efficiently*. Be well within your time limit. Make adjustments in your presentation.
- It is useful to provide ample conceptual, intellectual context for the presentation.
- Previous literature should be woven into the presentation. Have the hard copy to show you have done your ‘excavation’.
- It is difficult to know if people attend your presentation for the topic, theory, method, or findings. So, it’s better to aim for a more general audience.
- Plan the presentation and agree upon the roles of the co-authors as presenters.

2. Should one provide copies of one’s paper for the audience?

- Bring some copies to the session – one

for the Chair and a few spare ones, if possible.

- Bring a note pad for audience to write their email addresses.
- If you promise to send copies to those who give their email addresses, do send them.

3. Can one read from a manuscript or speak extemporaneously?

- Play to your strengths.
- You may use a written manuscript for complex and detailed material.
- A well-rehearsed, extemporaneous presentation will always be more appealing than a literal reading of the paper.

4. How does one respond to questions and comments?

- Allow questions *during* the presentation if the group is small. Ask the audience to hold their questions until the end if the group is large or hostile.
- You may anticipate questions by leaving out some details in your presentation.
- ‘Questions’ will often be statements or counterarguments expecting a response.
- *Know what your paper says. Do not overstate your claims. When you cannot answer a question, let it be.*
- If the question is not clear, ask for a restatement. Note that there are ‘performers’ among the audience.

- The Chair is generally supportive; sometimes they may not be. Write down meaningful comments, nod, look at the audience and/or the Chair, and respond briefly, if you can. Otherwise, follow them up privately.
- If the co-authors are not present, write down the meaningful comments, look at the audience and/or the Chair, and respond briefly, if you can. If you are not certain, state that.

5. The Presentation

- Improve your own standard of communication by seeking plenty of opportunities to speak.
- Seek friends who are willing to be frankly critical of your performance.
- Try to make your presentation a skilled and satisfying performance. It is a high point of professional communication.
- *Be prepared to perform – thoroughly and professionally.* A successful presentation is one that has been well-presented and received in the true spirit of academic dialogue and debate.

Checklist for Speeches and Oral Presentations

1. Developing the Speech/Presentation

- 4 Know your **audience** and **purpose**. Always put yourself at the receiving end. Think of the person in the back row. Do not think you are speaking to an audience. You are speaking to **a person**.

- 4 Choose an appropriate format of presentation
- 4 Begin with an attention-getter. You must win your audience at the outset and hold their attention throughout your presentation.
- 4 State your purpose clearly and preview the main points.
- 4 Develop your ideas logically and clearly. Keep your thoughts and ideas simple.
- 4 Limit the discussion to no more than three or four points. Prepare easy-to-follow personal notes to guide you through the presentation. Manage with a few notes on a single sheet of paper.
- 4 In longer presentations, include previews and summaries of major points as you go along.
- 4 Close the presentation by reviewing your main points and making a memorable statement.
- 4 Practise. Practise. Practise. It takes a lot of practice in private to be effective in public. *Practice makes perfect.*

2. Visual Aids

- 4 Use visual aids to show how things look, work, or relate to one another.
- 4 Use appropriate visual aids to highlight important information and create interest.
- 4 Limit each visual aid to three or four graphed lines, or three or four points.

- 4 Use short phrases.
- 4 Use large, readable type.

3. Delivery

- 4 Check the hall arrangements. Make sure the projection and audio-visual equipment works.
- 4 Feel confident. Remember that you know a great deal more about the subject of your talk or presentation than most of the audience do.
- 4 Stand up straight. Establish eye contact. Hold the attention of your audience.
- 4 Project your voice. Make sure everyone can hear you.
- 4 Keep your speech clear, loud, understandable, and appropriate to the occasion. Speak clearly and distinctly. Do not speak or go too fast.
- 4 Master a natural, relaxed image of yourself. Aim to keep your body in a restful, natural position.

- 4 Be sincere and genuine. If **you** don't believe what you are saying, how can anyone else? Speak with conviction and in your natural style.

- 4 Avoid all mannerisms in word or action. Use gestures in a natural, appropriate way. Gestures can be as eloquent as words.

- 4 Respond to questions without getting sidetracked or angry. Maintain control of your feelings in the wake of criticism.

[Editor's Note: This handout was part of the materials given to the participants of the two-day workshop on 'New technologies for 21st century teachers' organized by ELTAI in association with the Department of English, Loyola College (Chennai) on 6-7 December 2019. It has been reproduced here in the hope that young teachers of English might benefit from the tips and make effective oral presentations at conferences and make an impact professionally.]

Checklist for Manuscript Review

1. Does this article present and/or discuss **issues that are important and relevant** to the teaching and learning of English in an ESL/EFL context?
2. Is the **title** clear, short and appropriate for the content of the article?
3. Is the **abstract** brief, clear, inclusive and consistent with the content of the article?
4. Is the **introduction** relevant, meaningful and purposeful?
5. Is the **literature review** relevant to the article and focussed?
6. Does the article establish a clear **rationale** for the study and state the **problem** clearly?
7. Are the **techniques and tools** used appropriate for the study?
8. Are the **results** clearly presented and discussed?
9. Are the **findings** based on a robust analysis of the data and clearly presented?
10. Are the **conclusions** appropriate and reasonable, and linked to other studies on the topic?
11. Are **implications** of the findings discussed in the article?
12. Are the **references** appropriate, current, sufficient and consistent with in-text citations?

[See 'Manuscript Submission Guidelines for Authors' on pages 44-45.]