

Adrian Wallwork

English for Presentations at International Conferences

Second Edition

Contents

1 The Importance of Presentations	1
1.1 What's the buzz?	2
1.2 Giving presentations gives you visibility and advances your career	3
1.3 Simply attending, without presenting, is not enough.	4
1.4 Good presentations: typical features	4
1.5 Bad presentations: typical features	5
1.6 The key to a professional presentation.	5
2 TED and Learning from Others	7
2.1 What's the buzz?	8
2.2 Choosing a TED presentation and learning the benefits	9
2.3 TED example with use of slides: <i>Let's bridge the digital divide!</i>	9
2.4 TED example with minimal slides, delivered from a lectern: <i>The forgotten history of autism</i>	11
2.5 What might Steve have done differently if he had been giving a more formal version of his talk at an international conference made up of a multilingual audience?	12
2.6 TED example delivered from a lectern: <i>This is what it's like to teach in North Korea</i>	13
2.7 What can you learn from these three TED presentations?	14
2.8 Should you opt for TED-style presentations?	15
2.9 TED viewers rarely comment on non-native speakers' use of English.	16
2.10 Note down what you remember about the presentations you watch.	17
2.11 Assess other people's presentations	17
2.12 Using TED talks.	17

3	Why You Should Write Out Your Speech	19
3.1	What's the buzz?	20
3.2	Write down your speech	22
3.3	Don't lift text directly from your paper	23
3.4	Only have one idea per sentence	24
3.5	Be concise—only say things that add value	25
3.6	Simplify sentences that are difficult to say	26
3.7	Do not use synonyms for technical/key words	27
3.8	Only use synonyms for nontechnical words	27
3.9	Use verbs rather than nouns	28
3.10	Avoid abstract nouns	28
3.11	Avoid generic quantities and unspecific adjectives	28
3.12	Advantages of having a written script	29
3.13	Mark up your script and then practice reading it aloud	30
3.14	Use your script to write notes to accompany your slides	31
3.15	Use your speech to decide if and when to have slides and in what order	31
3.16	Tense usage	33
4	Writing the text of your slides	37
4.1	What's the buzz?	38
4.2	PART 1: TITLES - WHOLE PRESENTATION AND INDIVIDUAL SLIDES	39
4.2.1	Make sure your title is not too technical for your audience	39
4.2.2	Remove all redundancy from your title, but don't be too concise	41
4.2.3	Check that your title is grammatical and is spelt correctly	42
4.2.4	Deciding what else to include in the title slide	43
4.2.5	Think of alternative titles for your slides	44
4.3	PART 2: KEEPING TEXT ON SLIDES TO THE MINIMUM	45
4.3.1	Keep it simple: one idea per slide	45
4.3.2	Where possible, avoid complete sentences	45
4.3.3	Only use complete sentences for a specific purpose	46
4.3.4	Avoid repetition within the same slide	47
4.3.5	Use only well-known acronyms, abbreviations, contractions, and symbols	48
4.3.6	Choose the shortest forms possible	48
4.3.7	Cut brackets containing text	49
4.3.8	Keep quotations short	49
4.3.9	Avoid references	50
4.3.10	Don't put text in your slides to say what you will do or have done during your presentation	50

4.4	PART 3: BULLETS	52
4.4.1	Limit yourself to six (standard) bullets per slide, with a maximum of two levels of bullets	52
4.4.2	Choose the best order for the bullets	53
4.4.3	Do not use a bullet for every line in your text	53
4.4.4	Be grammatical in bullets and where possible use verbs not nouns	54
4.5	PART 4: CHECKING YOUR SLIDES	56
4.5.1	Print your slides as a handout then edit /cut them	56
4.5.2	Check for typos	56
5	Visual Elements and Fonts	57
5.1	What's the buzz?	58
5.2	Use visuals to help your audience understand, but keep the visuals simple	59
5.3	Choose the most appropriate figure to illustrate your point	60
5.4	Design pie charts so that the audience can immediately understand them	65
5.5	Only include visuals that you intend to talk about	67
5.6	Use an image to replace unnecessary or tedious text	67
5.7	Only show a slide for as long as you are talking about it	68
5.8	Avoid visuals that force you (the presenter) to look at the screen	68
5.9	Make sure your slide can be read by the audience in the back row	69
5.10	Use background color to facilitate audience understanding	69
5.11	Choose your font(s) wisely, and limit different types of formatting	70
5.12	Remember the difference in usage between commas and points in numbers	70
5.13	Locate formulas, code, procedures etc between 'easy-on-the-eye' slides	70
5.14	Be aware of the dangers of presentation software	71
5.15	Only use animations if they serve a good purpose	72
5.16	Introduce items in a list one at a time only if absolutely necessary	72
5.17	A few tricks provided by presentation software	73
5.18	Final checks	74
6	Ten Ways to Begin a Presentation	75
6.1	What's the buzz?	76
6.2	Basic do's and don'ts at the beginning of your presentation	77
6.3	Decide how you are going to begin	77
6.4	Say what you plan to do in your presentation and why	78
6.5	Tell the audience some facts about where you come from	80
6.6	Show a map	81
6.7	Give an interesting statistic that relates to your country	82

6.8	Give an interesting statistic that relates directly to the audience . . .	82
6.9	Get the audience to imagine a situation	84
6.10	Ask the audience a question	84
6.11	Say something personal about yourself	86
6.12	Mention something topical	87
6.13	Say something counterintuitive	88
6.14	Moral of the story	88
7	Agenda and Transitions	89
7.1	What's the buzz?	90
7.2	Consider not having an "agenda" slide	91
7.3	Use an "Agenda" slide for longer presentations and for arts, humanities, and social sciences	92
7.4	Use an agenda to introduce key terminology	94
7.5	Only move to the next slide when you've finished talking about the current slide	94
7.6	Use transitions to guide your audience	95
7.7	Learn how to signal a move from one section to the next	96
7.8	Exploit your transitions for other purposes than simply moving to the next topic	96
7.9	Only use an introductory phrase to a slide when strictly necessary	96
7.10	Be concise	97
7.11	Add variety to your transitions	97
8	Methodology	99
8.1	What's the buzz?	100
8.2	First, regain the audience's attention	101
8.3	Give simple explanations and be careful when giving numbers	101
8.4	Give examples first, technical explanations second	102
8.5	Be brief and only talk about what is strictly necessary	102
8.6	Show only the key steps in a process or procedure	103
8.7	Use slide titles to help explain a process	104
8.8	Explain why you are not describing the whole process	104
8.9	Indicate where you are in a process	105
8.10	Tell a story rather than sounding like a technical manual	106
8.11	Bring your figures, graphs, etc., alive	108
8.12	Minimize or cut the use of equations, formulas, and calculations	109
8.13	Use active and passive forms effectively	110
9	Results and Discussion	111
9.1	What's the buzz?	112
9.2	Focus only on the key results, and keep the explanation short	113
9.3	Communicate the value of what you have done—put your results in the big picture	114

9.4	Explain graphs in a meaningful way	114
9.5	Avoid phrases that might make you sound overconfident, arrogant or critical of others	116
9.6	Tell the audience about any problems in interpreting your results	118
9.7	Explain whether your results were expected or not	119
9.8	Be upfront about your poor/uninteresting/negative results	120
9.9	Turn your 'negative' results into an opportunity for collaboration	121
9.10	Encourage discussion and debate	121
10	Conclusions	123
10.1	What's the buzz?	124
10.2	Be brief and don't deviate from your planned speech	125
10.3	Show your enthusiasm and remind audience of key findings	126
10.4	Make sure your final slides give useful information	127
10.5	Five ways to end a presentation	128
10.6	Write/Show something interesting on your final slide	131
10.7	Prepare a sequence of identical copies of your last slide	132
10.8	Learn what to say before you introduce the Q&A session	132
11	Questions and Answers	133
11.1	What's the buzz?	134
11.2	Learn to deal with your anxiety about the Q&A session	135
11.3	Prepare in advance for all possible questions	136
11.4	Give the audience time to respond to your call for questions	136
11.5	Get the questioner to stand up. Reply to the whole audience	137
11.6	Repeat the questions	137
11.7	Remember that it is not just your fault if you can't understand the question	138
11.8	Don't interrupt the questioner unless	138
11.9	Be concise in giving your answers	139
11.10	Always be polite	139
11.11	If you are attending an important professor's presentation, think about the value of asking her / him a question?	140
11.12	Think about how you might answer (or ask) generic questions	140
12	Attracting Audiences and Keeping Their Attention	143
12.1	What's the buzz?	144
12.2	Ensure you have an attractive title	145
12.3	Be aware of the implications of the time when your presentation is scheduled	146
12.4	Immediately make eye contact with the audience and maintain it throughout	146
12.5	Adopt an appropriate level of formality	147

12.6	Exploit moments of high audience attention	149
12.7	Don't spend too long on one slide and consider blanking the screen	149
12.8	Learn ways to regain audience attention after you have lost it	150
12.9	Present statistics in a way that the audience can relate to them	151
12.10	Avoid quasi-technical terms	152
12.11	Explain or paraphrase words that may be unfamiliar to the audience	152
12.12	Occasionally use 'strong' adjectives	153
12.13	Be aware of cultural differences	153
12.14	Be serious and have fun	154
12.15	Gaining and keeping your audience's attention: a summary	155
13	Handling Your Nerves	157
13.1	What's the buzz?	158
13.2	Standing up in public	159
13.3	Dealing with your English accent and grammar	160
13.4	Presenting negative or 'uninteresting' results	161
13.5	Handling nerves during the Q&A session	161
13.6	Prepare for forgetting what you want to say	163
13.7	Get to know your potential audience at the bar and social dinners	163
13.8	Check out the room where your presentation will be	164
13.9	Do some physical exercises immediately before your presentation	164
14	Pronunciation and Intonation	165
14.1	What's the buzz?	166
14.2	English has an irregular system of pronunciation	167
14.3	Dealing with your accent and pronunciation	167
14.4	Use online resources to check your pronunciation	168
14.5	Practise your pronunciation by following transcripts and imitating the speaker	169
14.6	Don't speak too fast or too much, and vary your tone of voice	170
14.7	Use stress to highlight the key words	171
14.8	Be very careful of English technical words that also exist in your language	172
14.9	Practise <i>-ed</i> endings	172
14.10	Enunciate numbers very clearly	173
14.11	Avoid <i>er, erm, ah</i>	173
14.12	Practise with a native speaker	173
15	Rehearsing and Self-Assessment	175
15.1	What's the buzz?	176
15.2	Use your notes (upload them onto your phone)	177
15.3	Vary the parts you practice	178

15.4	Practice your position relative to the screen	179
15.5	Don't sit. Stand and move around	180
15.6	Use your hands	180
15.7	Have an expressive face and smile	181
15.8	Organize your time	181
15.9	Cut redundant slides (but not interesting ones), simplify complicated slides.	182
15.10	Prepare for the software or the equipment breaking down	183
15.11	Make a video recording of yourself	184
15.12	Learn how to be self-critical: practice with colleagues	184
15.13	Get colleagues to assess the value of your slides	186
15.14	Email your presentation to your professor and colleagues	186
15.15	Do a final spell check on your slides	187
15.16	Improve your slides and your speech after the presentation	187
16	Networking: Preparation for Social Events	189
16.1	What's the buzz?	190
16.2	Exploit conferences for publishing your research and for networking	190
16.3	Anticipate answers to questions that people might ask you after your presentation	191
16.4	Learn how to introduce yourself for both formal and informal occasions	192
16.5	Use people's titles where appropriate	193
16.6	Prepare strategies for introducing yourself to a presenter after his / her presentation	194
16.7	Learn how to introduce yourself to a group of people	194
16.8	Identify typical conversation topics and prepare related vocabulary lists	196
16.9	Learn what topics of conversation are not acceptable for particular nationalities	197
16.10	Think of other safe topics that involve cultural similarities rather than just differences	198
16.11	If you live near the conference location, be prepared to answer questions on your town	199
16.12	Prepare anecdotes that you can recount over dinner	199
16.13	Practice being at the center of attention in low-risk situations	201
17	Networking: Successful Informal Meetings	203
17.1	What's the buzz?	204
17.2	Decide in advance which key people you want to meet	205
17.3	Email your key person in advance of the conference	206
17.4	Consider telephoning your key person in advance of the conference, rather than emailing	207
17.5	Think of how the meeting could be beneficial not only to you but also to your key person.	208

17.6	Find out as much as you can about your key person, but be discreet	208
17.7	Encourage your key person to come to your presentation or poster session	209
17.8	Exploit opportunities for introductions at the coffee machine ..	209
17.9	Be prepared for what to say if your proposal for a meeting is not accepted	211
17.10	Prepare well for any informal one-to-one meetings	211
17.11	Be positive throughout informal one-to-one meetings	211
17.12	A verbal exchange is like a game of ping pong: always give your interlocutor an opportunity to speak	213
17.13	Ensure that you follow up on your meeting	216
18	Posters	217
18.1	What's the buzz?	218
18.2	PART 1: CREATING A POSTER AND KNOWING WHAT TO SAY	219
18.2.1	Purpose	219
18.2.2	Types of research that might be better presented in a poster rather than a formal presentation	219
18.2.3	Deciding what to include	220
18.2.4	Using bullets to describe your research objectives	220
18.2.5	Other points in the poster where you can use bullets	221
18.2.6	Checking your text	222
18.2.7	Quality check	222
18.2.8	What to say to your audience	223
18.3	PART 2: WHAT SECTIONS TO INCLUDE AND WHAT TO PUT IN THEM	224
18.3.1	Title	224
18.3.2	Summary	224
18.3.3	Introduction	225
18.3.4	Materials and methods	226
18.3.5	Results	226
18.3.6	Conclusions	227
18.3.7	Your contact details	228
18.3.8	Other things to include (in a much smaller font)	228
19	Advice for Native English Speakers on How to Present at International Conferences and Run Workshops	229
19.1	What's the buzz?	230
19.2	Learn from seasoned speakers	231
19.3	Understand what it feels like not to understand	232
19.4	Watch TED to understand how it feels to be a non-native speaker	233

19.5	Watch TED to understand how to talk to non-natives	234
19.6	Learn another language!	235
19.7	Have two versions of your presentation	235
19.8	Ensure you adapt a presentation that you have given to native speakers and make it suitable for non-natives	236
19.9	Focus on what non-natives actually like about native speakers	236
19.10	Be careful of cultural differences	237
19.11	Avoid humor, but have fun	237
19.12	Explain key words	239
19.13	Choose appropriate vocabulary	239
19.14	Mind your language!	241
19.15	Speak slowly and enunciate very clearly	242
19.16	Workshops and seminars: try to reduce anxiety levels of the audience as soon as possible	242
19.17	Never equate a person's level of English with their level of intelligence	243
19.18	Take responsibility for any lack of understanding by your interlocutor	243
19.19	Ask your participants questions during workshops	244
19.20	Avoid saying 'OK?' to check understanding during workshops	244
19.21	Remind the audience of the big picture	245
19.22	Have recap slides in addition to or as an occasional alternative to questions slides	246
19.23	Reduce your talking time during workshops, seminars and training sessions	246
19.24	Timing and breaks: using exercises in workshops	247
19.25	Handouts	247
19.26	If you are a participant, never dominate the discussion	247
20	Useful Phrases	249
20.1	PART 1 PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS	249
20.1.1	Introductions and outline	249
20.1.2	Transitions	251
20.1.3	Emphasizing, qualifying, giving examples	252
20.1.4	Diagrams	253
20.1.5	Making reference to parts of the presentation	256
20.1.6	Discussing results, conclusions, future work	257
20.1.7	Ending	258
20.1.8	Questions and answers	258
20.1.9	Things that can go wrong	260
20.1.10	What to say during a poster session	262

20.2	PART 2: NETWORKING	263
20.2.1	Introductions	263
20.2.2	Meeting people who you have met before	264
20.2.3	Small talk	265
20.2.4	Arranging meetings	266
20.2.5	At an informal one-to-one meeting	267
20.2.6	At the bar, restaurant and social dinners	268
20.2.7	Saying goodbye	272
	Acknowledgements	275
	Sources	277
	Index	283