# A Presentation on Conference Presentations

**The Political Communication Division's Presentation Guide for First-Time Attendees**

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# Preliminary Remarks

- You are here for a reason - your work impressed anonymous reviewers and has earned its spot on the programme.
- Everyone gets nervous before their presentation (yes, everyone!). Nerves are a natural reaction to presenting your work to a large audience.
- As a PhD student, you are at a different stage of your career, and people are aware of this. Your presentation will likely not be on the level of a seasoned academic, and that is completely fine.
- Every person's research and presentation style is unique. Take from this guide what you feel can compliment your existing style.

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# Structure

**Present from back to front**
- Start with the most important points (findings/takeaway messages) of your work!
- What is one sentence you want your audience to walk away with?
- Presentations can have an Appendix. Put any information that is not essential at the end of the presentation if you feel you might need it.

**A presentation is not a paper - don't treat it as such!**
- You will have to be selective about what information you keep in the presentation, as you won't have the space to elaborate fully on your theory, methods, results, and implications.
- For example: Are you especially proud of your methods? It's expected to focus on some areas more than others.

# On the Introduction

**Make sure you give all your relevant information**

- Your name
- Contact details (email, website, social media)
- University
- Status (PhD Student, postdoc)

**Humanize yourself!**

- A small joke/commentary can do wonders to engage your audience as more than a researcher. Are you still jet lagged? Dying of hunger? Overwhelmed by the wonderful programme? Share this with your audience!

**Tell your audience what your paper finds right away**

- "In this presentation, I will show that X, Y, and Z"
- Real-world examples help to catch people's attention

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# On the Theory

**Keep your theory as brief as possible**

- A conference presentation is not the place to showcase your vast understanding of the literature.
- Do not attempt to engage with every study you cite in your paper.
- You don't *have* to include all your research questions (or hypotheses) – listing them can take a lot of valuable time.

**Get to the point quickly!**

- What is the gap that your study fills?
- Use your theory section to highlight the relevance of your work: Why should your audience care? Repeat this throughout.

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# On the Methods

**Simplify the methodology employed**

- Assume your audience has some base understanding of your methods.
- If you are interested in people engaging with your methods, you can always ask your audience to approach you either during Q and A or after.
- If using survey methods, skip the operationalization of variables, especially if they are commonly used.

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# On the Results

**This should be the core part of your presentation: What did you find?**

- Because of time constraints, focus on key results
- Remind your audience how this relates to the story you are telling

**If you use figures/diagrams**

- Make sure it is large enough to read and intuitive enough to understand.
- Highlight the information that matters! This allows us to gauge what number/bar/line/arrow we should be paying attention to.
- Pause and allow your audience to understand what you are showing them.
- Use colour-blind-friendly colour pallets.

**If possible, avoid long tables**

- At the very least, simplify the information provided.

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# On the Conclusion

**Summarize your results**
- What did you find?
- Why does it matter?

**Make it easy for your audience to find you**
- Use a QR code that links to your website, Twitter profile, or preprint/published paper.
- Additionally, write out all your contact information.

**Invite the audience to engage**
- Let your audience know if there are specific elements you want comments on

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# Design

**The basics**
- Images = good | Lots of text = bad
- Introduce each bullet-point of text one by one to guide your audience (you don't want them trying to read your whole slide while you are talking).

**Add your name and contact details on every slide! You want your audience to remember who you are and how they can reach out to you**
- This can be as simple as your last name, but can also include paper title, email address, Twitter handle, etc.
- This is especially important because audience members will regularly take pictures of slides - make sure they can trace these back to you.

**Check if your university has an official template**
- This can take away a lot of the stress linked to formatting your work.

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# Preparation

## You generally have very little time to communicate a lot of information

- Prepare a script and memorize it.
- Time yourself! Make sure you are within the 12 minutes of the allotted time (shorter in high-density panels).
  Every minute you extend your presentation is a minute taken away from someone else's time.

## Predict questions and have answers ready

- Make extra (backup) slides that elaborate on interesting aspects you might have cut.
- Pro tip: Have a friend/colleague in the audience ask a question you really want to answer.

## When you practice

- Pause and let the information sink in, especially with figures.
- Be enthusiastic about your work: if you seem interested and passionate, others will also be.
- Check and remove self-questioning language: "I think", "I feel", "I tried."
- If you can stomach it: record your presentation and look for your 'filler sounds' ("ehhh", "uhmmm").
- Smile always - as humans, our natural response is to smile back!

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# Day of the Presentation

## Before the presentation

- Locate the room early, so you don't have any issues finding it.
- Have presentation on usb stick + email (backups).
- Some computers don't show presentation notes. Make sure to have them printed or on another device if you feel you need them.
- Avoid elements that depend on a room's technology capability, such as video, audio, and wifi.

## During the Q&A session

- If you receive several questions at once, write them down to make sure you address them
- Don't be scared of being unable to answer a question! This is common, especially in projects involving several people. It is perfectly fine to let someone know that you will check and get back with an answer later.
- It is completely fine to ask your fellow panellists your own questions.

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# Concluding Remarks

**Everyone has a 'first time'**

- Despite what pre-presentation anxiety might tell you, you are an expert in your field! No one has worked on your specific research questions for as long as you have - you will do great.

- Your presentation is an opportunity to inspire, engage and connect with others, and that's something to be excited about!

- A lot of other attendees are there for the first time, too!

**Remember, being invited to the conference is already an achievement!**